

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE LOVE OF THE CHRIST

Ephesians 3: 19 (“... the love of the Christ”)

Exodus 21: 1-6

John 14: 30, 31

Ephesians 5: 22-27; 1, 2

SWD In this part of Paul's prayer, he desired for the saints that the Father would grant “according to the riches of His glory” (v 16), involving the strengthening of the Spirit's power. One of the things he mentions is, “and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”. It does not say to know *about* the love of the Christ, which in itself would be good, but, “to know the love of the Christ” which would involve what is experimental and experiential.

In Exodus 21, the Hebrew bondman is a beautiful type of Christ in taking up servitude: “the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many”, Matt 20: 28. It speaks of his love for his master, and I thought we can see that in John 14. As I recollect, it is the only time the Lord refers directly to His love for the Father. Scripture *often* speaks about the Father's love for Him. I thought “I love my wife” is perhaps set out in Ephesians 5, Christ “loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it”. “I love my children” is in Ephesians 5 verse 2: “even as the Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us”. These descriptions of the way He has gone and what He has done, are freshly calculated to endear Himself to us. In view of all this, a brother once said, ‘the measure of our love for Christ is the measure of our appreciation of His love for us’.

KAO I was thinking regarding the matter of the Lord's love for the Father that He says, “as the Father has commanded me, thus I do”. John 14 is the only time I think we have the Lord saying, “I love”. Do you think we might see something of that in Genesis 22 with Isaac, even though it is mainly presented as Abraham's love for Isaac, but the way that Isaac was with Abraham?

SWD This is very beautiful, that they went both of them together: “as the Father has commanded me, thus I do”; that involves Him delivering Himself up.

TSO He did always those things which pleased the Father, John 8: 29.

SWD Yes, but when this time comes, He says, “On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again”, John 10: 17. A brother who was blind, but was able to quote most of the scriptures, said that in John 10 the Lord gives the Father an additional reason for loving.

TSO Love is demonstrated, is it not? It is not merely a feeling but it is brought into display; it is real.

SWD It is a very extensive subject and we could expand it and look at John 3, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son” (v 16); He gave, and how love was demonstrated! He gave. So it is in every area, “Hereby we have known love, because *he* has laid down his life for us; and we ought for the brethren to lay down our lives”, 1 John 3: 16. I thought we could limit ourselves to this expression, “the love of the Christ”, in these three connections. It is something to build us up and encourage us in our most holy faith.

WSC Do you have more to say about the fact that the apostle did not say 'about' the love of the Christ.

SWD He knew what it was. He says, “the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me” (Gal 2: 20), which would be the equivalent to delivering Himself up. It was an expression of love for him personally that he retained and expressed in his love for the saints.

DMW These three scriptures in Ephesians refer to “the Christ” would there be something in that as to the anointing and what goes with the anointing? We often speak of that.

SWD The Lord Jesus was ever pleasurable to the Father, right from His coming into the world; how attractive to the Father's eye was that babe, that boy, that youth, that man. We have those eighteen years of which we are not told anything specifically from the time when He was about twelve until He began to be about thirty. They are the same length of time as that woman who was bound and unable to lift herself up. The Lord says as to her, “whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years”, Luke 13: 16. The same period of time in the Lord's life; I wonder whether there might be some reference to that in the hidden manna (Rev 2: 17), that perhaps the Father might share this with us sometimes, communicate with us. Perhaps you would say more about your impression of it, the love of *the* Christ?

DMW It is not “Christ” exactly, which refers to Him as a glorious

Person, but it is “*the* Christ”. It just appeals to me that when the anointing is expressed it is expressed in love and power.

SWD That was at the banks of the Jordan when He was anointed by the Holy Spirit and power, and went about doing good: “how that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself”, 2 Cor 5: 19. Divine love lay behind all that, “not reckoning to them their offences”. Paul says that God “was putting in us the word of that reconciliation”. In the same way, we are to reflect that attitude amongst our brethren and amongst our fellow men. Wherever Paul went the outgoing of his heart was, “Be reconciled to God”, 2 Cor 5: 20. Mr Darby leaves the “ye” out, the Authorised Version says ‘ye’ as if it was limited to the Corinthians. It was not limited to the Corinthians; that was the attitude of God to all men, “Be reconciled to God”.

DMW Would that be because God's eye rested on one Man?

SWD One Man, how beautiful that is; after the failure of the first man, and those that pursued that line, that there should be a Man of whom the Father could say, “in whom I have found my delight”, Matt 3: 17. We are to be occupied with Him; we could not have anything better. The truth generally is very important, “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 1: 3), and the detail of it. We can profitably converse and encourage one another, but what it is to concentrate on the Man in the glory, “to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”!

JAQ Are you suggesting then that this is not so much of an historical event, but a current matter?

SWD Very much so.

DMW Would you say it is personalised, as we get in Exodus 21?

SWD Yes, so John makes it very current in Revelation, “To him who loves us”, Rev 1: 5. Exodus 21 it is current. It is “*I* love my master, my wife, and my children”. That was seen in Christ when He was here. So He went to the cross and carried out the will of His Father, the Father who loved Him. The intention is that we should love Him in our measure as the Father loves. The verse in John 17 says, “I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known; that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them” (v 26); I think that is the Father's love for the Man of the gospels. “Hast loved me”, is the past tense; I think “may be in them” is that we should begin, in our measure, to love Christ as the Father loved Him and to appreciate all

the words of this life. They were a testimony to Him in the early part of Acts.

DMW I have often enjoyed that thought, that we can in measure love the Lord Jesus as the Father loves Him.

KAO I think what you have suggested is helpful, this matter of “the love of the Christ” involving these three aspects; His love for the Father, love for the assembly and His love for us individually, but do you think we need most help about the matter of His love for the Father? It is one thing to be conscious of His love for me, but it all springs from His love for the Father, does it not?

SWD It was demonstrated every day and every hour of every day so that He only has to say it once, “that the world may know that I love the Father”. That would, in its expansiveness, touch John 3: 16. Alas, it may not be realised because man in his arrogance will not believe. Thank God there are some, “but as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God, to those that believe on his name; who have been born ...”, John 1: 12. We are shut up to God's sovereignty.

LPC Are you linking the love of the Christ here with “the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”? He says, “No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends”, John 15: 13. Would you say that the “love of the Christ” is demonstrated in Him laying down his life?

SWD These allusions to delivering Himself up show the way that it is demonstrated.

I thought Exodus 21 gave us the type. The bondman says distinctly, “I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free”. It has been suggested that He could have gone free at the mount of transfiguration, I suppose; but, as it says elsewhere, “How then should the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?”, Matt 26: 54. What committal! I think this is all involved in the love of the Christ.

KAO As to the Lord's saying distinctly, we should be clear that there is no question about it. There was no question about it in regards to this bondman, and there is no question about it in regards to Christ. We may be frail in what we may enter into but without any question it is established.

SWD That is very good. Luke says that he writes his gospel, “that thou mightest know the certainty of those things in which thou hast been instructed”, Luke 1: 4. That is like the bondman saying distinctly; there is no question in mind whatsoever. We need to be founded and grounded. In this chapter in Ephesians we have both, what is agricultural and what is structural, “that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love, in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”, Eph 3: 17-19.

WSC When you are speaking about decisiveness, John was decisive; he said, “That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved”, John 21: 7. He does not call himself John in his gospel.

SWD I think it is a fine thing that every one of us, from the oldest to the youngest, is able to take these things in if we are to think of ourselves as the one that Jesus loves.

RMS Why in Exodus 21 was the bondman brought before the judges? How would that apply to us?

SWD I am not sure I could answer that.

WSC Paul says, “do ye judge what I say”, 1 Cor 10: 15.

JFK This was a picture of Christ. It was not done anywhere hidden. It was done out in the open and Christ allowed Himself to be on the cross, He was lifted up between heaven and earth for all to see and to witness. Would these judges be a picture of God's love to the world, and witness what men were going to do with this One on the cross?

SWD Very good, “that the world may know that I love the Father”. That is the last that the world saw of Jesus, suspended on the cross. He was taken down and put in the tomb where no one had ever been laid, and the world never saw Him again. But they will see Him.

WSC Judging is also a personal thing. Each of us has to do that personally: we need to judge.

SWD We had that recently in Calgary, the apostle's desire for the Philippians that they might “judge of and approve the things that are more excellent”, Phil 1: 10. I think we might say reverently that this is the most excellent of the excellent, “the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”. That means you cannot know it all. It is like the

old figure of the basket in the ocean, filled and yet not able in any way to encompass the ocean.

TSO We all may have to go over these things but it is in no way hidden. "God commends his love to us", Rom 5: 8. We need to see that His love is there, we cannot escape it. God is in no way hindered in being made known in testimony.

SWD I think that is very wonderful, nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord", Rom 8: 39.

KAO Is there something for us even in the added word in Exodus, "I will not go free"? It is not only that he said distinctly, "I love", but, "I will not go free". The piercing of the ear by the judges was the public evidence of his remaining as it says at the end of verse 6, "and he shall be his bondman for ever". Is that not intended to affect us that that is the position that Christ has come into?

SWD That is very wonderful. The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, that is the bondman. Nor did he come to be ministered to, but to minister.

KAO Do you think there is some link in that with His humanity, He remains a Man? As to the glory of His Person, we could never overshadow that, and yet it is, "the man Christ Jesus", 1 Tim 2: 5.

SWD Very good, "For God is one, and the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all"; we were contrasting the 'all' and the 'many' recently. The gospel in all its wonderful encompassing grace is for all.

DMW It is the anointed Man, is it not? It is "the Christ", He is the anointed Man. The question earlier as to the bondman being brought before the judges can be traced back to Psalm 82: "I have said, Ye are gods" (v 6) and the note there says 'judges', and the Lord repeats that in John 10, "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?" (v 34), so that the term 'judges' is a very typical term that the Spirit of God uses in Exodus 21. He could have gone back into the glory, in the right of His own Person, but He did not do that. He went back on the basis of redemption. John 10 goes on to say, "If he called *them* gods to whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), do ye say of him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am Son of God?" (vv 35, 36).

SWD “Sanctified and sent into the world”, that is the Christ. When He was exalted they were to “know assuredly that God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”, Acts 2: 36. The actions attributed to Him here in Ephesians 5 were in the days of His flesh, “delivered himself up”.

JAQ Is there an aspect of this too that is very precious that is brought out in Exodus 21, “then his master shall bring him before the judges”. Peter says in his preaching, “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus the Nazaraean, a man borne witness to by God to you by works of power and wonders and signs, which God wrought by him in your midst, as yourselves know - him, given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye, by the hand of lawless men, have crucified and slain” (vv 22, 23). There was a testimony of His Master and Father, “not my will, but thine be done”, Luke 22: 42.

SWD That is very good, and when you follow that a little further into the Acts when they pray they speak to God about His “holy servant Jesus”, Acts 4: 27. There is amplification of that in Isaiah, “Behold my servant”, Isa 42: 1.

TSO He was delivered up by, “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”, Acts 2: 23.

SWD That is the aspect of the Master, “I love my master”. The Lord filled that out perfectly in His life. We were reading in Luke this morning and the Lord spent a whole night in prayer before He chose the twelve (chap 6: 13), illustrating the perfection of the dependent Man, and yet who in His Person is no less than, “the Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever”, Rom 9: 5. I think the consideration of this should cause us to love Him more. There is an old hymn 'More love to thee, O Christ'. That would be one's desire in bringing this before the brethren.

TSO Would the matter of the bondman be important? It would take us out of the range of just thinking about this with our minds. Christ took up a bondman's form and came in on God's behalf. The way that He came in is remarkable.

SWD Philippians 2 is deliberate, “who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form”, vv 6, 7.

TSO That brings it down to us personally. He has come to serve and that is how love is made known and manifest. It is not something

merely out there, it is something that each of us can be a beneficiary of.

SWD And we can take character from it ourselves. Paul speaks of himself as, “Paul, bondman of God, and apostle of Jesus Christ”, Titus 1: 1. I do not much like the newer translations that insist on rendering that word as 'slave'; that brings in the idea of slavish fear. The Hebrew bondman is a very dignified idea. “If thou buy a Hebrew bondman”: do not lose sight of the fact that he really is a Hebrew and at the end of six years you have to let him go.

DMW The bondman is devoted to his master, doing everything that his master desires, for the pleasure of his master. A slave might be there by obligation and obligation only and he would like to get out of it as quickly as possible. I think your discernment is helpful. It is the descriptive word for the true Bondman, the One who was devoted to the Father's will.

SWD We have thought a little of His devotion to the Father in our passage in John 3; now in Ephesians 5, it is “even as the Christ also loved the assembly”.

DMW Does the thought of bondmanship peculiarly applied to Him, as we have thought of in Philippians 2, complemented by, “the Word became flesh”, John 1: 14? It is His own act, but that thought continues. Is He not serving now and will He not serve in the day to come?

SWD It is very interesting when the Lord describes Himself in the gospels in a future time, He says, “and coming up will serve them”, Luke 12: 37. I think that is exceedingly attractive. We see how He does it in John 13, the attractive scene when He “began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the linen towel with which he was girded”, v 5. It says, “coming up will serve them”; and that is after He appears in glory. He is just the same, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come”, Heb 13: 8.

RMS The scripture says, “For the love of the Christ constrains us” (2 Cor 5: 14): do you think that is appropriate?

SWD “The love of the Christ constrains us” is not exactly there binding us with rules and regulations as to the way we have to behave ourselves, but rather, “the love of the Christ constrains us”. That is very fine.

RMS What does that word mean? You said it is not being bound by rules and regulations, but how does it attract our hearts more?

SWD It says, "I drew them with bands of a man, with cords of love" (Hos 11: 4); I should think that is love's constraint.

KAO In the scripture in Ephesians 5 the exhortation is very practical about husbands and wives, and he says, "Husbands, love your own wives, even as the Christ also loved the assembly".

SWD What a standard. Do we love our wives like this? What a standard that is!

TSO The principle there too would go into John's ministry, "We love because he has first loved us", 1 John 4: 19. His love is there first, so if we need help on these lines, where do we go?

SWD The apostle's desire for the Ephesians was, "to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge". You see something of the detail of it in the way that He loved the assembly.

LPC Do you think the love of the Christ is also reflected in His joy in securing a company of believers to Himself? It says, "in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God", Heb 12: 2. Do you think there is eternal joy and a divine joy in Himself that He can secure those that are His to Himself; because of this joy He "endured the cross, having despised the shame"? That is also reflected in His love?

SWD I am sure that is what is indicated and I think you can link it with these three expressions of His love that we have been speaking about because He had His own joy in fulfilling the Father's will, and He has His own joy. We know something of it experientially on Lord's day morning; there is something of the Lord's joy in His assembly. Speaking humbly, it includes the joy that He has in every one of us as the trophies of His grace; that is very good, "the joy lying before him".

KAO "Christ also loved the assembly", it is difficult to see that He loved it when it did not exactly exist in a concrete way. The assembly in expression awaits His ascension and the Spirit's coming down. But on the other hand we have indications in the gospels, for example in John 13, "having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end", v 1. He loved something that was about to be brought into existence through His death, but there was a touch of it because of His reference

to His own, do you think?

SWD “Christ also loved” is in the past tense: I think He saw glimpses of it in His earthly ministry. Take the woman that cast in two mites, He said, “but she of her destitution has cast in all that she had, the whole of her living”, Mark 12: 44. I think there is a glimpse there of what He loved in the assembly. She is to be like Him, she is like Him. Paul saw (which was the light Mr Darby had as to the Head in heaven and the body here) that He is reflected, not only represented, but reflected in His body here. The same kind of feeling.

DMW “So also is the Christ”, 1 Cor 12: 12.

SWD The Corinthians needed a little help to come up to that, but you help the saints less by pointing out their deficiencies than by holding up the standard. Do you think that is right?

DMW I do. Since we are in mixed conditions and we have to keep short accounts with God. The question is, 'what is the standard?' I may think about myself and what I have done, my failure, but the standard is still the Christ. That way I can judge rightly.

SWD “Hereby we have known love, because he has laid down his life for us; and we ought for the brethren to lay down our lives”, 1 John 3: 16.

WSC I was wondering about Joseph. Pharaoh told all his people to regulate themselves by Joseph, Gen 41: 40. I was wondering about this matter of the assembly also in what you are saying. If we would regulate ourselves to stay in the area of the love of Christ, I think it relates to what we were saying about constraint, regulating ourselves.

SWD We have a hymn that refers that to the Lord personally:

'Twas mighty love's constraining power
That made Thee, blessed Saviour, die (Hymn 437).

Then, that is to have its affect on us. As I said earlier and I do not mind quoting it again perhaps we could get a hold of this: the measure of our love for Christ is the measure of our appreciation of His love for us.

DMW The idea of being in an honoured place is to be subjected to the Christ for a reason. And that is so that He can love us. That is the idea of being subjected, it is a place of honour so that we can be loved.

SWD That sentence peculiarly bears on our sisters. I have spoken of

this in the past at a marriage meeting. The bride at a marriage should have a certain dignity in being able to convey something of the subjection of the assembly. It is not exactly what a brother does, because, "But even as the assembly is subjected to the Christ, so also wives to their own husbands in everything". What a lustre that gives to the position of the wife in marriage. She can set out in herself something of what the assembly sets out in her subjection to the Christ. When you come to the brothers, it never says that the wife must love her husband, but what it says is, "Husbands, love your own wives, even as the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it". It is in order that this preventative service should be carried on, "that *He* might present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless". That is the first thing that the Father has in mind for us in chapter 1. There is no disparity.

TSO The love here is not only for something that He has loved, but it goes on. It goes on to our day. We should see that that is there and that it is true and that is so. Christ is moving in this way in relation to the assembly.

SWD "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father: to him be the glory and the might", Rev 1: 5, 6. What ascriptions we can make to Him, the One who has done it. His love is current. He loves us right now, every one of us. My desire is that we might not only know more about it, but know it too.

DMW "This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly", Eph 5: 32. We have it in another place, "my assembly" (Matt 16: 18); so this idea of own husbands and own wives is an important matter because the Lord Jesus is very jealous of the assembly. It is His personal possession. He personalises His love to the assembly; He wants to pour it out constantly.

SWD That is very good, "on this rock I will build my assembly", Matt 16: 18.

JAQ Would you think it would then be right to say that the assembly is a product of the love of Christ? And it changes everything as to our perspective and relations with the assembly if we see that, the greatness of that vessel, what the assembly means to Him. It is His.

SWD “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?”, Acts 22: 7. It gave authority in the apostle's ministry and he never forgot that.

Turning to the start of Ephesians 5, “Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love. It is, *even as ...*”: “even as the assembly is subjected to the Christ”. This comes into all these things we have been speaking of, “Husbands, love your own wives, *even as the Christ also loved the assembly*”. Here I think it involves every one of us individually, “*even as the Christ loved us*”. It is not exactly the corporate vessel here, but “even as the Christ loved *us*, and delivered himself up for *us*, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour”. It is the burnt-offering as we have it expanded in Leviticus.

WSC Is any one exempt from this? Are there any believers that do not have to do this, walk in love?

SWD I do not think any one is exempt from it and I do not think any true believer is exempted from having this appreciation of the Christ having loved us and delivered Himself up for us.

WSC It is our responsibility.

SWD If we have really been affected by the love of the Christ, how could it be otherwise? In Galatians, we have the idea of biting and devouring one another, chap 5: 15. In addition to that, Paul says, “see that ye are not consumed one of another”. How foreign that is to these passages in which there is what is normal and what is for the delight and pleasure of the heart of God Himself.

DMW As we love God, a generation that is “of God” is coming to light: that would be the children of God. There is no misrepresentation of God in His children.

SWD That is John 1 again, “to them gave he the right to be children of God”, (v 12): children take character from their parents.

KAO Therefore, is it important for us as we speak about these things to read the passages before and after where we read. There are very specific things that are said, and we need help about these things that are practical. For example, speaking about fornication, “But fornication and all uncleanness or unbridled lust, let it not be even named among you, as it becomes saints”, Eph. 5: 3. The matter of forgiveness precedes where we read, or, “Let no corrupt word go out of your mouth”

(Eph 4: 29); I am not wanting to dwell on these things, but it is in the context of these exhortations that He says, “walk in love”. That is what marked the Lord Jesus in His walk. None of these things were seen in Him, it was a walk of love. We need help about these things.

SWD If we allow the divine love to flood our souls these exhortations will be easily followed up.

KAO I feel that sometimes we dwell a lot on the exhortation of walking in love, but we sometimes pass over these practical matters, because we do not like to touch them, and they touch on things that we find acting and working in us, but they go together. One side of it is the standard we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, but then this practical exhortation to help us as to how we walk.

SWD The best thing to do is to show it. Before 1 Corinthians 13, the great love chapter, he ends up chapter 12 by saying, “yet *shew* I unto you a way of more surpassing excellence”, v 31.

TSO That should involve suffering. The Lord never saw an answer in testimony publicly to His love at the time that He was here. We need to set ourselves for these things, regardless of what we may find.

SWD We had a hymn in the book:

Thy suff'ring love, Lord Jesus,
Our hearts delight to trace;
The love that sought and claimed us,
In strong yet tender grace.

Suffering love. I think perhaps if have grasped this we will have grasped quite a bit!

Villa Grove

8th December 2007

Key to Initials

William S Chellberg, Wheaton; Loi Pin Chin, Wheaton; Stanley W Drever, Calgary; John F Kaczmerak, Villa Grove; Jeffrey A Oberg, Villa Grove; Kevin A Oberg, Villa Grove; Timothy S Oberg, Villa Grove; Roger M Surtees, Villa Grove; Doug M Welch, Denton

“BY LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER”

Stanley W Drever

2 Corinthians 5: 14, 15

Deuteronomy 15: 12-18

Romans 12: 11; 14: 16-18

Galatians 5: 13

1 Peter 4: 7-11

What I want to speak about is servitude. In our reading we had the Lord Jesus typically as the Hebrew bondman in Exodus 21, and, while you certainly could not rule out that Deuteronomy 15 is speaking of the Lord Jesus too, I want to make an application in this case to us, because it is a Hebrew man *or* a Hebrew woman, “he shall be thy bondman for ever. And also unto thy handmaid thou shalt do likewise”.

Before we get to that, the passage in 2 Corinthians 5 says, “For the love of the Christ constrains us”. We had the love of the Christ before us earlier and what it is for us to be increasingly devoted to Him in every aspect of our lives; “the love of the Christ constrains us”. God “drew them with bands of a man, with cords of love”, Hos 11: 4. Through the influence of the Lord Jesus in relation to every one of us, affecting us by the way that He has gone, He helps us to arrive at the conclusion that we should no longer live to ourselves. It is easy to be taken up by self when you look at the world around us. It is increasingly, ‘I, me and mine’; and who collects the most wins, but in the soul it is not really so. The Lord Jesus said, “For what does a man profit, if he should gain the whole world”, Matt 16: 26. Nobody here is going to be so fortunate as to gain the whole world; you might get a few acres, but what if you did gain the whole world, “and suffer the loss of his soul”!

“The love of the Christ constrains us, having judged this”, that is to arrive, because of the love of Christ, at a sober judgment of all that is around us, “then all have died”. It was a scene of death totally under the eye of God when Jesus died. What a spectacle for the heavenly hosts to see the One who is their Creator suspended between earth and heaven, and die; “having judged this: that one died for all”. It does not bring in the many here, “one died for all”. That is God’s glorious glad tidings, it is for all, each one of us in this room, each one walking down the streets of Villa Grove, each one of us in the surrounding farming country in this area of America, and in all the world. The whole world, “one died for all, then all have died”. But He “has been raised up from

among the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom 6: 4), and "raised for our justification" (Rom 4: 25), and has "gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers being subjected to him", 1 Pet 3: 22.

"He died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised"; what an object for our souls our Lord Jesus is, how attractive He is in His glory! "We see Jesus, who was made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour" (Heb 2: 9); we do not actually see Him with our physical eyes yet, "on whom though not now looking, but believing, ye exult with joy unspeakable and filled with the glory", 1 Pet 1: 8.

We see not all things yet
Subjected to Thee, Lord: ...
We see Thee glory-crowned (Hymn 434)

That is faith. Faith sees Him there. It is precious, "like precious faith", 2 Pet 1: 1. It is not the portion of all sadly, not every one believes, not every one is attracted by this lovely Saviour of mankind. That is why I thought that hymn expressed something of our feelings towards Him. "That they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them, and has been raised". Living to Him involves servitude and that is a very happy matter. If you love somebody your joy and delight is to do something for them.

That is why I read Deuteronomy 15. I do not exclude its application to the Lord Jesus. The parallel scripture in Exodus 21 is primarily the Lord Jesus, but I do not think Deuteronomy is about Him primarily. I think it is us, our attitude towards one another; so that we joyfully take up service and love to do so. There is a very appealing picture in Hosea: Ephraim had been a real problem for God. He said, "I it was that taught Ephraim to walk", Hos 11: 3. The divine feelings come out in that prophet, but Ephraim went his own way. Sometimes the children of believers are like that. There has been some appeal of the love of Jesus to them and their children, but when they get older the children forget about that and go their own way. You can see that course all the way through Hosea; "refractory" is one of the words describing Ephraim as you proceed through that prophet, chap 4: 16. What you come to at the end is that "Ephraim is a trained heifer, that loveth to tread out the corn", Hos 10: 11. At that time they spread out the crop on the threshing floor; threshing could be done with a flail, but

they could also bring in animals to walk over it until it was all threshed out. Then they winnowed it by throwing it up in the air so that the wind would blow the chaff out. That is a lovely figure of servitude; "Ephraim is a trained heifer that loveth to tread out the corn".

"And it shall be, if he say unto thee", and remember this can be a brother or a sister, "I will not go away from thee, because he loveth thee and thy house, because he is well with thee, then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear and into the door; and he shall be thy bondman forever. And also unto thy handmaid thou shalt do likewise" - what affects the saints in relation to this is that they are to remember that they have been bondmen in Egypt. The Lord said, "Every one that practises sin is the bondman of sin", John 8: 34. Sometime in our history we have to come to that that we have been bondmen of sin. When Paul speaks to the Romans he says, "thanks be to God, that ye were bondmen of sin, but have obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which ye were instructed", Rom 6: 17. He is saying now that God's righteousness has affected you so that "he died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised".

I thought that the allusion to bondmanship in Deuteronomy 15 was very beautiful. It says here, "Let it not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee; for double the worth of a hired servant hath he been to thee, in serving thee six years; and Jehovah thy God will bless thee in all that thou doest", what a lovely description of the attitude that we should have towards one another in our localities.

This is what leads me to Romans - you would covet to be able to get across what the Spirit would have said without too much elaboration. Sometimes the incisiveness of the word can be dulled by my elaboration. Mr Darby said, 'Aim at the conscience ... Say little, serve all, pass on'. Romans 12 says, "as to diligent zealousness", which is quite descriptive, "not slothful; in spirit fervent; serving the Lord". "Serving the Lord", as Christ's bondman. We remarked earlier that the apostle loved to take up that very descriptive word in his epistles when he spoke of bondmen; James speaks of it too, "James, bondman of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ", James 1: 1. Would you not love, in some little way, to be characterised by that; "in spirit fervent; serving the Lord"? Phoebe was that kind of a sister (Rom 16: 1), and we have them in most of our localities, fervent persons. Fervency in their spirits, serving the Lord, and how attractive that is! It is open to

every one of us: we can serve. The Lord Jesus brings it down to such simple terms: “whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward”, Matt 10: 42. That is servitude in the very simplest terms.

Then in chapter 14, “For he that in this serves the Christ”, that is being characterised by “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that in this serves the Christ”. This presentation of the kingdom is exceedingly attractive. Sometimes we think the kingdom is a little bit of a rigid idea, that we had better smarten up or we will be in trouble, or sometimes we like to throw our weight around. It is one of the failings of humanity that we men like to throw our weight around; we have had some experience of that. Sometimes it takes a good deal of discipline to erase that feature - “Let not then your good be evil spoken of; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that in this serves the Christ” - it is fascinating the way the term “the Christ” comes in from time to time: “serves the Christ”, the anointed Man, chosen of God - “is acceptable to God”. Would you like, beloved brethren, to be acceptable to God? Paul says that he was exercised in all things to have in everything a conscience without offence towards God and men (Acts 24: 16), which would be a parallel idea: “he that in this serves the Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men”. I thought service from this point of view becomes exceedingly attractive and might encourage every one of us.

“By love serve one another”, that is the only way; if you do it any other way it would not be acceptable to God, and probably in the long run would not be approved of men either.

Peter's first epistle is fascinating, as is all scripture - in the first place it is God's word. I remember a preacher holding up a Bible and it made such an impression on me of the value of this book that I have never forgotten it, all scripture is divinely inspired and profitable, and it is fascinating. I would encourage the young people to steep yourselves in the word of God, saturate yourselves with the word of God, learn the scriptures. I am not decrying the ministry, but never put the ministry ahead of the scriptures, always put the scripture first, and then the ministry. I will tell you why: beloved Mr Darby - and I would encourage you to read his ministry - said, the sun needs no light to see it by (Collected Writings Vol 6 p 3). and he was talking about the scriptures.

I read in 1 Peter chapter 4, "But the end of all things is drawn nigh", so that in the light of that it is the way in which we are to conduct ourselves. He ends his second epistle similarly, "All these things then being to be dissolved, what ought ye to be in holy conversation and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God", 2 Pet 3: 11, 12. What kind of persons ought we to be? What is suitable to those that have like precious faith, to those that in the wonder of God's sovereignty have been brought to know and appreciate the truth, to those that have come to Jesus by faith and accepted Him as Saviour, and to those who "have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise", Eph 1: 13? What wonderful privileges to be among a company like this. "But the end of all things is drawn nigh: be sober therefore, and be watchful unto prayers" - that is good and important - "but before all things having fervent love among yourselves, because love covers a multitude of sins". All those irritating things that might bring in difficulty amongst brethren, fervent love covers all that. So you can say it does not matter, it is not important. Paul said to the Corinthians, "if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved" (2 Cor 12: 15); he was not going to stop loving them, regardless of what they said about him, regardless of how they criticised him, regardless of how they made fun of him. They said "his presence in body weak, and his speech naught", 2 Cor 10: 10; you can almost hear some of those Corinthians saying that. He says, "if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved". His feelings for the Galatians are the same, "my children, of whom I again travail in birth until Christ shall have been formed in you", chap 4: 19. That is what he had in mind, that Christ should be formed in the saints; that would be our objective in a gathering like this, that Christ should be formed in you, but from this angle of servitude. That is why I read Exodus 21 and Deuteronomy 15. And now, "before all things having fervent love among yourselves, because love covers a multitude of sins". "Hospitable one to another, without murmuring". I remember a poem written about Priscilla, as to whether she was griping when Aquila brought somebody home to tea very unexpectedly, "hospitable one to another, without murmuring". "Each according as he has received a gift", did you know that it was a gift to be hospitable? What a fine thing it is. It pleases God. "Ministering it to one another, as good stewards of the various grace of God" - this is testing "If any one speak as oracles of God; if any one minister as of strength which God supplies". You can understand how Paul would say, "But to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think", Eph 3: 20. It

says, “as of strength which God supplies; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the might for the ages of ages. Amen”. That is the objective; let us “encourage one another with these words”, 1 Thess 4: 18

Villa Grove
8th December 2007

WHAT WE CARE FOR

Alistair M Brown

Romans 8: 4-6

Philippians 2: 19-21

These two scriptures have been in my mind since the weekend, dear brethren, when our brother serving in Brechin had before him the service and operations of the Holy Spirit. Our brother did not read this passage in Romans 8, but it connects with what was before the brethren as to the energy with which the Spirit operates in the believer to bring about what answers to Christ, what is according to Him. We read the passage in Philippians 2 on Lord's Day, and I wanted to link these two scriptures. They both refer to caring and what we care for, or what we mind. It says in Romans 8, "For they that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh; and they that are according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit". It seems to me that that is associated with what we care for. Timothy was like-minded with Paul and he cared with genuine feeling how the saints got on. I seek to make a link between these two passages.

The reference in Romans 8 is a searching one. It challenges me as to whether I am according to Spirit. If I am, I can test that because I will mind the things that are of the Spirit. That is, I will care about and give priority to the things of the Spirit. If I am according to flesh, I will give priority to and care about the things of the flesh; what gratifies me here, what entertains me here and suits me here. The whole bent of what the apostle writes in Romans 8 is that if I do that I am promoting what leads to death. If I am here according to Spirit, and if I care about the things that are of the Spirit, I am in the line of what leads to life, life according to God, and that will become apparent. Just to link to what our brother was saying on Saturday, what is of the Spirit leads to life and will be marked by energy and will be marked by caring for what Christ cares about. That is quite a test. But the power for this is in the blessed Holy Spirit Himself. It requires displacement; it requires us to make definite committals to walk according to Spirit, to be those that are according to Spirit, so that we might mind the things of the Spirit. That does not happen by itself. It happens as a result of committal and exercise. It happens, too, as a result of judging of and approving "the things that are more excellent", Phil 1: 10. Minding the things of the Spirit is a result of Christian exercise, giving place to the Spirit and not giving place to myself and what I want to do. What I want to do is "the

mind of the flesh”, and it leads to death. The “mind of the Spirit” leads to life and peace, and it is infinitely more attractive to the mind that is governed by the Spirit. I would just encourage myself and all of us to be definitely exercised to mind the things of the Spirit, to be according to Spirit. If so, we care about the things that are according to Spirit.

I can quite understand somebody here saying, 'But that is not how I feel. When I look within my heart, that is not the desire that I find'. That is because the flesh is in each one of us, and it always has a tendency in a particular direction. What the apostle teaches us in Romans 7 and Romans 8 is that we have to identify what is of God in us. There is what has been put there originally by the sovereign work of God in new birth and then brought to fruition in conversion. We have to identify that and feed it so that it grows and gets stronger, and we identify that as the real “I”. That is what Paul says in chapter 7. Who is the real “I”? I would encourage myself and all of us to identify what finds satisfaction and delight in Christ. If we find that our hold on Him is weakening, or our gaze is turning away, then ask the Spirit to help. That is what I have to do, ask the Spirit to help to give me these desires. That is one of the things that the Spirit does in the believer, He helps us to feel rightly according to Him. That would mark those who are according to Spirit, “they that are according to Spirit,” mind “the things of the Spirit”. So we can ask the Spirit for help to walk according to Him and mind His things, to care about the things the Spirit is engaged in.

I thought that a clear link between these two scriptures is the great matter in which the Spirit is engaged at the moment, and has been for almost two thousand years. It is to adorn the assembly, to bring about in the saints here conditions of heart and faithfulness in walk that are according to Christ, that is, what answers to Him as His counterpart. That is the Spirit's great work. He has not been deflected from it for almost two thousand years. You might say that blessed, divine Workman has been proceeding all that time to bring about results that are according to Christ, that are true to Him according to that great pattern. And if we mind the things that are of the Spirit, if we care about them, then we need to care about - and we will, it is not a matter of need to, we *will* care about the things that the Spirit is doing. In other words, we will care about the saints. We will care with genuine feeling, like Timothy, how the saints get on, as Paul did. Paul was a great workman too, but he has passed off the scene although his ministry remains. The Spirit has not passed off the scene. The Spirit's labours continue and

they are blessed labours. The Spirit is labouring with each one of us here. He is labouring on a very broad front, but He is also labouring with you and me, and we can be with the Spirit in His labours in caring for one another. It is something practical that we can do to mind the things of the Spirit, because in doing so we will be recognising and caring about what is of chief interest to Christ here. We can also say, if we care with genuine feeling how the saints get on, that we will not be caring about ourselves. So we will be marked by the mind of the Spirit that Paul speaks about in Romans 8. That is a practical example of how we can look away from ourselves and be taken up with the things of the Spirit: by caring about one another. It also means that we will not be looking at the world around, because we will be thinking about one another, and that is a fine thing too, not to be taken up with the world. To link back with what was said a minute ago, the world is really what gratifies the flesh, and if we are thinking about the world, then we are walking according to flesh and not according to Spirit. But if we are caring with genuine feeling how the saints get on, then we are not concerned about or taken up with or interested in the world and its things. The things of the Spirit on the one hand, and the things of the world and the things of the flesh on the other, stand in contrast to each other. We are to be taken up with the things of the Spirit, and a prime example, certainly in Paul's mind as he was writing this to the Philippians, was that they might be taken up with caring with genuine feeling how the saints get on. That seems to me a very healthy, practical manifestation of walking in Spirit and being according to Spirit and minding the things of the Spirit.

It is a very attractive matter that Paul was able to send Timothy, a young brother, to the Philippians, knowing that he cared with genuine feeling how they got on. You get some sense of Paul's sorrow when he says, "For all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ". What a view Paul had! He saw the saints as the blessed possessions of Jesus Christ and what concerns Him here. The "things of Jesus Christ" would include pre-eminently the saints, and Timothy and Paul cared for them together. They were like-minded. In their minds, the whole bent of their thinking and in their feelings - because both mind and heart come into this - they were "like-minded" and caring "with genuine feeling". They thought and they cared in the same way as each other for the things of Jesus Christ, and that included pre-eminently the saints, and what they had in mind was the blessing of the saints. That is a completely different view from the world, or someone

who is in flesh. People in the world have a view which puts themselves at the centre, but the believer is to have a view that puts Christ, and the Spirit, and the things of Christ, and the things of the Spirit at the centre. If we do that, what will be in our view will be the saints, and we will care with genuine feeling how they get on. If we do so, then we will be ready to serve them in whatever little way we might be able for. It becomes a consequence, not an automatic consequence exactly but an organic result, of what marks us in being like-minded, and in caring with genuine feeling. There will be an outflow towards one another. As we had on Lord's Day afternoon in considering this chapter in Philippians 2, that is normal Christianity. It is what the Lord Jesus has in mind as normal relationships and links among His own, and there is blessing, great blessing, in that. We can enjoy these things, but there is more to it than that. If the saints are marked by these features of genuine care for one another, then there is actually an expression of Christ seen, powerfully and really and authentically expressed in the links of Christians together. This is not on a social basis, although we enjoy one another's company, but as a result of being minded according to the Spirit's mind and according to the mind of the Lord Jesus, in caring with genuine feeling about the things that the Lord cares about. That is the result features of Christ coming out into tangible and morally glorious expression.

May we be encouraged by these thoughts. For His Name's sake.

Grangemouth
17th November 2007

WHAT GOD HAS CHOSEN

David A Brown

1 Peter 2: 4

1 Corinthians 1: 27-29

John 15: 16

Psalms 78: 67-72

I would like to say a word, dear brethren, as to what God has chosen. Firstly, I trust that everyone in this room right down to the youngest here has made the right choice for themselves in relation to having, by faith, Christ as Saviour, an absolutely crucial matter and decision that anyone can make, and which everyone must make, and which has eternal consequences. What God has chosen has affected my heart, because God operates on completely different principles from natural men. Indeed, it is interesting to look at scripture and see how awry men have gone in terms of their decisions. Now if you look at a man like Abraham, he was a man of faith, the father of the faithful indeed, but he made a wrong choice as to Ishmael. He said, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!", Gen 17: 18. He had to be corrected as to that. That showed that the natural came before what was spiritual just at that point in Abraham's history. Ishmael had to be cast out, Gen 21: 10. He was superseded by Isaac, typically the heavenly Man, and every other man in our view, dear brethren, as our brother has been saying, is to be completely eclipsed by the glory, blessedness, moral worth and supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Samuel went a bit awry as well. There were quite a number of brothers before David came along and Samuel looked on the outward appearance, but Jehovah has to say, 'No, that is not whom I have chosen', 1 Sam 16: 7-10. These persons, Abraham and Samuel, came into alignment with God's choosing, and it is fine to be like those who align themselves with the divine view.

Peter in his writing here, what does he say? He speaks of men and he speaks of Christ being cast away as worthless by them, but he then says, "but with God chosen". Dear brethren, what a blessed choice God has made in establishing that Man for His eternal pleasure and glory, "but with God chosen". You might say, 'Why does scripture say that?'. Could God have made any other choice? No, but it is in contrast with what men have done with Jesus. God has chosen Him. He is precious, He is precious to God, and I ask, 'Is Christ precious to every one of us?'. The Spirit would make Christ precious to every true

believer. One who was cast away He was cast away by men. The Lord Jesus, that blessed Saviour of ours, was cast away as worthless by men. He could not fit into any part of man's society. It was impossible for the Lord Jesus to fit into any part of man's society or to fit into man's thinking. Cast away as a Man here, cast away as He went on that road to the cross. How the Lord Jesus felt that. Indeed, when He came in, He could say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven roosting-places; but the Son of man has not where he may lay his head", Matt 8: 20. He was cast away by men, dear brethren, but with God He was chosen. What a contrast to what I am naturally as away from God, but when we align ourselves with what God's thoughts are as to Christ, what enrichment these thoughts are for our souls. It says, "To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God ..." that is the contrast between man according to nature and God's thoughts. His thoughts are higher and greater than our thoughts. Let us be in sympathy with the thoughts of God in relation to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I just leave that, a very simple impression, with you.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul is writing, I suppose, to some who needed a lot of help and a lot of adjustment, and they had set themselves up really according to men after the flesh. And that is why Paul writes to them as to the cross, and he speaks to them as to the crucifixion and as to coming amongst them "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling", 1 Cor 2: 3. How Paul felt the position that the Corinthians had set themselves up in. What is the answer to that? The answer to that really is in what Paul says here about God choosing the foolish things. He did not choose the things that were attractive to the Corinthians. They would set men in high places. They looked upon men in all their greatness and what they had achieved, and that is what marked Corinth at that particular time. They were eating and drinking to themselves. They were establishing things according to their own credentials and according to their own principles and according to their own rights and according to their own thoughts. Dear brethren, that will never do. God has established things, He "has chosen the foolish things of the world, that he may put to shame the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world, that he may put to shame the strong things; and the ignoble things of the world, and the despised, has God chosen". In their eyes Christ was foolish and He was weak. He was One who was ignoble, One who was shameful, but in the eyes of those who are enlightened, enlightened by faith, enlightened by the

Holy Spirit, Christ is precious. Paul, I think, was seeking to bring that in, what was the complete antithesis to man's thinking. That is how God thinks, "so that no flesh should boast before God". So, as we have already had tonight, it is the ending of the flesh. What God is promoting is what is of Christ in the saints, and what the Spirit is promoting is what is of Christ in the saints. So something was arrived at in the Corinthians as a result of Paul's ministry, and you can see that in his writing at the very end. How precious that last verse of 2 Corinthians is, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all", 2 Cor 13: 14. There was something established, we might say a bridgehead established in the affections of the Corinthian saints that Paul could link on with.

Well in John 15, just to be simple as to these things, this is a wonderful verse. It says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you". Naturally we would not choose divine things. We would not choose Christ according to the flesh, for it says in another passage that He has "no beauty that we should desire him", Isaiah 53: 2. There is nothing there that would attract us naturally, but the Spirit induced thoughts and feelings that would make Christ attractive to us. But the Lord Jesus says here, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you". He is saying this to the disciples of course, but I was just thinking how it would affect us and apply to us, "and have set you that ye should go and that ye should bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide". I was just thinking of this as we are freshly affected by the greatness of divine thoughts. In Ephesians it says that God "has chosen us in him before the world's foundation", Eph 1: 4. I sometimes wonder if the greatness of that has entered into my soul. On the one side we have the responsibility that we all have as believers to answer to what comes to us. On the other side we have the greatness of God's thoughts that "he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation", and as we come in attraction to Christ we come to realise that, yes, God has made the right choice. How wonderful that is, "chosen us in him before the world's foundation". Let each one of us see to it, therefore, that as we realise the greatness of what God's thoughts are for us in choosing us before the foundation of the world - that is counsel - that we might go and that we might bear fruit to God. As our brother here often reminds us, there is no stability on the side of responsibility, only on the side of divine purpose. God's purpose is stable because it is linked with that blessed Man in the place that He has in the presence of God.

Well simply in Psalm 78, we touched on this where we were on Lord's Day. God has rejected certain things. "And he rejected the tent of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim". We may have chosen Joseph and Ephraim, but He "chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved ... And he chose David his servant". God's choice was based on moral principles, the moral worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ drew out the affections of the Father towards that blessed Man. In His life here, everything that was in Christ drew out the Father's affections and, as we have noticed in 1 Samuel, really Jehovah's affections were drawn out and we can see in Christ, the true David, how divine affections were centred in that blessed One. So He "chose David his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds". Well, we are often reminded of that secret history, how that really prepared David for his great exploits, and you can think of that in relation to Christ Himself, what a secret history He had with God, a secret history that no-one knew about. We do not read about it, but how precious it must have been, a Man who lived here, but His relations were always with His Father in heaven; so it was a heavenly testimony that was rendered here by Christ. And here, just to touch on this, "And he rejected the tent of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, But chose the tribe of Judah". Our Lord came out of the tribe of Judah. He sprang out of the tribe of Judah, Heb 7: 14. How great Christ is! How great is that Man who will fill our affections eternally! May He fill our affections, the Man of God's choice, "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father", John 1: 18. How precious that place is! May He draw out our affections freely and in a fresh way tonight, that glorious Man who will fill our affections and our hearts eternally. May the Lord bless the word.

Grangemouth
17th November 2007

THE KIND OF MAN THAT GOD CHOOSES

David Spinks

Philippians 2: 5-11

I would like to say something about the kind of man that God chooses. God does not choose things that are seen with the natural eye, but He sees a character of man here, humble, obedient, the One who was the Bondman. This One goes on, having no place in this world, but that character is of great worth to God, it is of great worth to heaven. I think there is a great encouragement to us. I think there is something that God finds in believers today that take on this character, "For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus", Phil 2: 5. This is the pattern. As our brother has been saying, there is only one pattern, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. I have only a very simple impression but I am encouraged by what our brother has been saying.

Christ has been cast out as worthless by man. Men were so near, and they took account of Christ, but they cast Him out; they rejected Him. They could not see the beauty that was in the Lord Jesus. As a result of our time together, as the Lord has spoken to us, do we see beauty in Jesus? Do we see beauty in God's Man? I think that would be a wonderful encouragement for every heart here if we are to leave this room tonight and say, 'I have seen something in Jesus I have never seen before', because there is something beautiful, some beautiful characteristic feature in Jesus that has never been seen, and never will be seen, in any other man. But there is something, I believe, that has been formed in every believer which God is taking pleasure in. There is a principle in this; God exalts that character of man. Although Jesus is unique, and He is unique in every way, God exalts this character of man. This is a wonderful portion of scripture, and it is often referred to. It is something for every true lover of Jesus to contemplate, this One here who "did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form". Think of the Bondman, that One who says, "I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free", Ex 21: 5. Think of the scope that is in that thought, "I love my master". Think of the One who is ready to serve, One who was here not in relation to His own will, "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. That is the perfection, the beauty, the loveliness that is in Jesus and in no other. That is what God could see. Think of the beauty of what God could look down on. He saw a blessed Man here, and God could take joy and satisfaction in every footstep of His

pathway here because He could see the moral perfection that was in Jesus. He could raise that blessed Man and He had a basis on which to do so. You may say He had a righteous basis to do so. I think that is a wonderful thing to take account of, that God could take great satisfaction in this blessed Man in His walk here, who satisfied Him in every step of His pathway. "Taking his place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death". Think of that beautiful moral feature that God loves to see in every believer, the characteristic feature of obedience. It is natural with every one of us to be disobedient, but obedience is a wonderful thing that God takes account of, as we have the power of the Spirit, and have our eye on that blessed Man. I think it is something that is to mark the believer as we are left here, this character of obedience. If we are obedient persons, there is something being worked out morally in our souls that God can take account of which is building us up and strengthening us and bringing out these features that God finds His satisfaction and pleasure in. There is nothing else being formed in the saints at this present time. God is working at the present time to form Jesus in the hearts of the saints. I think that is a great thing for the young ones to take account of that God is doing something with every one of us, and He is forming us like this blessed and glorious Man. So it says here, "becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross". We often use this passage of scripture in the gospel, and it is something, I am sure, that affects every one of us, that this blessed Man was prepared to go that way in suffering love to manifest and to make known the love of God. Then it goes on to say, "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name".

I bring this forward as a result of what our brother has said, that God has chosen this Man. And I think this passage of scripture which we have read would say why God has chosen Jesus, because of His moral worth, because He was here as a Man. He was not just here as a Man in perfection, but He was here as a Man who portrayed every feature that God desired to find in man, and He was here as a Man who was prepared to go into death and to remove every hindrance, every obstacle that stood in the way between God and man, bringing out from that point onwards an avenue by which God can come out in blessing towards man. God loved to raise this blessed Man from the dead, He loved to take Him out of the grave because He could see a universe of people who were going to be formed like this blessed Man. We see

these characteristic features, and if they are seen in the world, they are looked on in dismay. But God takes great satisfaction in this character, wherefore God has chosen this Man. May we be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

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