

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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"TO US AND NOT TO THE WORLD"

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It is an interesting question that Judas raises: "how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?". Up to this time the Lord had been available to all, He had gone into their houses, He had sat at the well with the woman, many had seen Him; perhaps few had believed on Him but He had been available anyway. There is a change coming that the Lord is speaking of, He is going away, things are going to be on a different footing, and what the Lord says causes Judas to raise the question: "how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?". I believe it is a wholesome question. The Lord is bringing home to them that He is just as available, He is to be enjoyed just as freely, but there is to be exercise to find Him, concern that there are conditions so that the Lord can be known. The Lord in His own sovereign operations first moved in love toward us, when there was nothing that could be called a response. It says "in the due time Christ died for the ungodly", Rom 5: 6. There was not a spark of response to call out His affection toward us, indeed far otherwise, there was everything to repel Him; but it says, when we were without strength Christ died for the ungodly. Those are the initial movements of divine love, movements that divine Persons found a reason for in Themselves, not in us. Think of God finding a reason in Himself to come and bless us when we were without strength! These sections that we are speaking of now contemplate persons who have some strength, who have known Jesus and who will be exercised to be in the area where divine things are known. So many people today say they are at a loss, that they do not know, yet they form judgments about things; but beloved, unless we are in the area where divine things are current we will be wrong in our judgments and we will not know. It is a solemn thing to think of persons not keeping the Supper, not remembering the Lord and yet being very strong in their opinion and judgments about things. I do not think we have a right to form

judgments unless we are in an area where divine things are known.

The Lord spoke to the crowds in the gospels but He also taught in the house. He took interested persons up a mountain and He took a man away from the crowds. The Lord took persons into an area where divine things were disclosed; and unless, dear brethren, we are in that area we shall be astray in judgments and we will be at a loss as to how to move. So Judas' question brings out this word from the Lord: "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him". Persons who were once unlovable are becoming attractive to divine Persons and it is then that you get divine disclosures "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him". Divine things are not just general, they are specific; they are for all to walk in but certain persons get the gain of them through being in the area where they are known and enjoyed. So that in persons who have had touch with Jesus, who have had their sins forgiven it is expected that the work of God will grow and we become lovable, not in the amiable features of the flesh but as having divine interests at heart: "If any one love me, he will keep my word". Think of some formation taking place in persons. It will soon be displayed in its entirety.

What a display there will be when the work of God in its aggregate is finally seen! It will be said "What hath God wrought", Num 23: 23.

What a time of display there will be when that city comes down from God, when the earth is brought into reconciliation in fulness! But in the meantime there is something worked out morally in persons that divine Persons love. God shows it with Abraham. He says "Shall I hide from Abraham... ?" Gen 18: 17. He had a confidante in Abraham, one that He was able to disclose His mind to because he was in the way of obedience. It says "Abraham, being called obeyed", Heb 11: 8. So there are certain well-proven principles that we must move on in order to come into the gain and experience of divine thoughts. Abraham obeyed and the effect of that is that God says, Shall I hide from him? He is spoken of as the friend of God.

We may feel we are too young, that we cannot do much. We can obey, beloved, we can obey the expressions of love from Jesus. "If any one love me": that would touch a cord with every one whose

sins are forgiven. He does not here speak exactly of maturity or how well developed that love may be; He says "if any one love me".

Would that not include every one in this room? What an appeal to the affections! What an answer to Judas's question: "If any one love me"! The basis, beloved, of coming into divine things is that we love Him. There may be other questions to settle but I believe they could be resolved through this: "If any one love me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him". Abraham could have raised many questions; it was a very difficult move to make, the odds would seem to be against him had he calculated in human reasoning. That may well be in a difficulty that you are experiencing now, beloved, things may seem against you. "If any one love me, he will keep my word". It is a fine thing to get the Lord's word about any matter and I do not think He is slow to give it. Can we be trusted with it? Are we in the way that we can be trusted with the Lord's word about things? He trusts it to Abraham, His friend. God was about to do something that was affecting the earth, about to come in in His own way, and He said He would like Abraham His friend to know. God would keep us in the light of how He is moving. We feel very perplexed oftentimes about many things but the Lord here shows in answer to Judas's question that there is a way of getting the divine mind, of knowing how the Lord is moving: "If any one love me, he will keep my word". It can be tested; there is a need for us testing things, and we arrive at things through testing them. As to those disciples that we spoke about in John 21, what they saw on the shore, the overwhelming power of grace, captured their hearts. The Lord has His own way of showing us how He is moving in things if we make way for Him. It is my exercise at this time that in spite of the breakdown, in spite of what confusion there may be and so many held in it, divine things are going on and there is an area where they are to be enjoyed today. May we through grace and the Spirit's help be encouraged to be in that area. He is not today manifesting Himself to the world; the Lord will soon make Himself known to the world in a different form, but He is making Himself known today to His lovers, to those who are moving under exercise like those men in Matthew who came from the east. They had divine guidance because they had their eye

and their hearts set on finding the King of the Jews. Something had arisen in the heavens that had awakened their interest and "it came and stood over the place where the little child was", chap 2: 9. We need to have our interests aroused and exercise in our hearts that we may find how the Lord is moving today. Things were against these men; religious and political powers were set against them but they found a way, through dependence and guidance, to where the little Child was. May we be helped, dear brethren, to be in that area, to keep ourselves in it as Jude says: "keep yourselves in the love of God". You would have thought as to that day of which Jude is writing that everything was breaking up, but he says "But ye, beloved... keep yourselves in the love of God". Some of us may dwell too long in the confusion and breakdown, humbling as it has been, but Jude's word is "keep yourselves in the love of God". What an area to keep in! Who will ever exhaust that area of the love of God? How full it is! It is His nature, how He expresses Himself; God is love, keep yourselves in the love of God. Jude is saying that many things are coming in to try the saints, what is rising up in the apostasy, but he says the way through it is to keep yourselves in the love of God, an area that is very fertile and full. The suggestion is that we may wander out of the enjoyment of it; it is always there but it may be that through a lack of dependence, a lack of exercise and faith, we are outside the area where the love of God is enjoyed. We enjoy it individually, we know its help in our circumstances, but I think this would be even more than that - "keep yourselves in the love of God". It is something that is always fresh, not only what we have learnt about God and how we have proved Him in the past, but something that is always flowing, and Jude's exhortation is to keep ourselves in it. It would preserve us from becoming bitter, from hardness, from being legal, from being loose, from many things that are apt to overtake us. It is the answer to all these exercises that may be around us - "keep yourselves in the love of God". The way Jude is speaking here is that there is something being formed in the saints. There is something outside that is building up with increasing momentum, but all the time there is an area that the breakdown can never penetrate - "keep yourselves in the love of God". Think of that

verse that says "God commends *his* love to us". That is how He started, and that is how we first knew the love of God. What a commendation of His love to us in Jesus! Now He is saying, Do you have a taste for it? I think, beloved, we need help to have our senses exercised to have a taste for divine things. How hindered the people of Israel were through reminiscences of Egypt! They hardly had a taste for divine things. The manna was there and it says that they loathed it. So beloved divine things have come so near us but we are apt to regard them below their value. They reminisced about Egypt, they began to have wrong ideas about it and would have gone back; it was the opposite of keeping themselves in the love of God. All the time that manna was round about them. Was there ever a morning that it failed? They had just to go out and pick it up, there was never a morning but what God manifested His love and His patience toward them. "Keep yourselves in the love of God". Beloved it is all round about us. There are persons thinking that the day is one of poverty, complaining about all that has come in, when all around them is the love of God. The love of God is a real area, and those who have proved it and know it would encourage us all the more to be in it. May we be watchful, dear brethren, that things are not allowed that would hinder the flow of divine love among us: keep yourselves in it. It means that I am available, that I see to myself that there is no blockage in me, no hard spirit in me, no wrong thinking. As I keep myself in the love of God, and as you keep yourself in the love of God, we are joined together, feeding on the same food, thinking on the same things. There is nothing more formative than the love of God; so I repeat these words, *keep yourselves* in it, be watchful that other things do not spoil it.

Abraham deflected for a moment and went into an area where things were held up. We get other instances with the children of Israel - they were overtaken by sin and the cloud did not move on certain days it stood stationary in one place. Beloved, that was not in the love of God. We have known in assembly history that things have been held up because we have not kept ourselves in the love of God. So we should be exercised that nothing is holding us up.

Jude says "building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God". Every true believer has faith, and Jude gives that precious touch to it - "most holy faith". In broken times divine things become all the more precious and real; it is not only "faith" but "most holy faith". It is valued. Do we value what God has given us? He has given to each a measure of faith, and as the days are so broken, Jude says, Cherish it like this: "your most holy faith". It is what you have. "But ye, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith"; that is the principle that things are built on, they are not built on sight or on complaint but on "your most holy faith" that God has given to each one of us in measure. He would have it to be in exercise and function so that we are built up. Then "praying in the Holy Spirit"; a thing that I feel is constantly testing; you feel the danger of being formal or casual in your prayers. We would all pray morning and evening and at other times too, and we have often cause to pray in extremity, but Jude says "praying in the Holy Spirit". It is some fine touch given to prayer, not exactly a cry of need. It is praying in the Holy Spirit, a divine Person that is here. It is not just praying to the Father who is in heaven; praying in the Holy Spirit means I think that the Spirit is here in charge of things and you are seeking not your own will but that you might be with Him in the working out of divine thoughts. The testimony, beloved, is carried through in the Spirit.

Persons have deflected in times of breakdown and failure all along but divine thoughts are carried through in and by the Holy Spirit of God. Think of a divine Person coming here, not to the world exactly but into the assembly, into the saints, to carry things through to the glory and satisfaction of Christ. It is no tribute to men that the testimony has gone through; we are thankful for men who have been used to spread the testimony and through whom the ministry has come, we are thankful for their example, but the testimony has been carried through in the power of and by the Spirit of God. So I think that praying in the Holy Spirit would be that you have a divine ideal and divine interests in your prayers. "Praying in the Holy Spirit" is something we should be exercised about, not a formal prayer, not only a time of giving thanks, but something you would make definite

time for and be exercised about that you would be with the Spirit in the working out of things today.

Then Jude adds that word I have spoken about already: "keep yourselves in the love of God". I think it is a wonderful climax that such a thing is available today to Christians. It is not available to the world. O beloved, what an outlook we have! The rising tide of apostasy that Jude is writing about here is coming upon the world, but what believers can do at the present time is to keep themselves in the love of God. May it be our portion, may it be our joy as we are exercised to have the sense of it; as I have said, it is so near, just to hand. Jude says, Just keep yourselves in it. There is to be a watchfulness with us that divine things are not made common; they are to be well known but never in familiarity. O beloved, who can but be worshipful as we think of the love of God? It has come near us, met our needs, taken up our case and yet it is inexhaustible. The hymn writer puts it well; 'O the love of God is boundless, Perfect, causeless, full and free!' (No 212). Causeless: there is nothing to draw it out as I have said, and yet as we keep ourselves in it we become formed so that we are attractive to divine Persons and persons whom divine Persons can trust. I wonder if we are all like that in our local places, in our homes - persons that the Lord can trust. I think He is looking for such persons. While others may be bemoaning the breakdown, the Lord is looking for persons who can be entrusted with His secrets, with His manifestations. "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us?". Beloved, that has never stopped, that has never been interrupted for some; it may have been interrupted for me but some persons by the Spirit have kept themselves in the love of God and the manifestation has never stopped. How is it? We do well to enquire about these things, and it may be if I search my soul I feel it is not happening with me. Jude would encourage us to build ourselves up on our most holy faith, to pray in the Holy Spirit and to keep ourselves in the love of God.

I just was impressed by the way Paul closes the two letters to Corinth: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all". There had

been much to speak of, much to exercise the saints, he had had to rebuke them, but he would not leave them without some impression of the resources that they have in the locality. He is not here speaking of some doctrine; he had spoken of doctrine and it is right that doctrine should have free course among us. Paul had had to get to the doctrine in the epistle, certain principles had to be in the lead because they were not acting rightly, but at the close it is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ he is speaking of. They could hardly have enjoyed it in chapter 5 of the first epistle if they had continued on that line. Some of them came together for the Supper and they hardly enjoyed the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the communion of the Spirit there because, he says, when you come together it is to take your own supper. But as he comes to the end he says, Let this be with you all. Well, beloved, what a close to two such epistles, where there has been so much correction! As they read through the epistles I do not suppose things had been completed even at this time, maybe some were feeling that there was so much still to do. Well, Paul says, that may be, but "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all". They had proved themselves that they were exercised. He did not say this to them in the first epistle or before they had put away the evil thing that was among them, but having done that, having moved in exercise, he says the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. O beloved, what a resource to have in local difficulties, what a resource to have in exercises that may well overwhelm us - the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. There may be severe matters, maybe matters that involve withdrawal, but the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit are still there. There is a very fine word about David. He was a man of war and we sometimes think of him like that but he was always ready to sing. I think this verse would explain something of that. If difficulties have become so great that we cannot sing there is something wrong. David is called a man of God not because he was a fighter but because he was a singer. The only reference to David as a man of God is in Nehemiah; it speaks of "the musical instruments of David the man of God", chap 12: 36. May we be

known as persons who are on God's side about issues, persons who are with God in seeking to provide an area here love is enjoyed. In doing things for God we will know the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit. I think it is a testing question, Can divine Persons be with me in what I am doing now? That is something to test ourselves by each day, in our individual life, in collective matters. I think the Corinthians would test themselves like that. There are things to do: is the grace of the Lord Jesus with me in doing it? Is the love of God with me in what I am doing? And do I know the communion of the Holy Spirit? Paul is saying as he closes the epistle, with many things still to be done I think, may this be with you and may you move in the conscious enjoyment of it. Well, may we be encouraged to move like that: broken, difficult, troublesome times, yet divine Persons to be known in the way they have displayed Themselves. The grace of the Lord Jesus, who could overcome that? Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor. O beloved, the grace that met the difficulty of the situation, the grace that absorbed the difficulty, absorbed the debt, grace that paid the price, that did what was needed to be done! "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all". May it be worked out with us in our various lives and various localities for His Name's sake.

GILLINGHAM

22 May 1976

THE SUN-RISING

A.B.Parker

Romans 5: 10; Numbers 2: 3; 3: 38

"We shall be saved in the power of his life": I believe that this refers to the power of Christ's present life. It is the same life that was expressed down here but in new surroundings. Jesus here was the heavenly Man. What was set out in Him was perfect. He is Jesus Christ "the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come", Heb 13: 8. He is in a new condition and, we may say, in new surroundings, in a sphere where there is vibrancy of response. I think that we should find encouragement in entering more into the activities of heaven. I do not mean only the activities of Christ in that sphere, but the sympathetic responses of the myriads of the heavenly host who, it would seem, are alert and ready for every fresh occasion to burst into responsive praise and worship. Hebrews 1: 6 would support that: it says "when he brings in the firstborn into the habitable world, he says, And let all God's angels worship him".

It is "let" - hardly a command but rather that they are just waiting for an opportunity to fill heaven with their praise. What a sphere heaven must be! Just think of the reception of Jesus into heaven: "... has been received up in glory" - just a few words, but who can express what that means? It is not received up into glory, but in glory. The glory of His going into heaven, the glory attaching to Him being crowned as King, His installation on the Father's throne, and the Father hailing Him as "a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec", (Heb 7: 17), established as such by the swearing of an oath - Jesus has been crowned with glory and honour. What were the feelings of the heavenly host in the presence of all this? How Michael and his angels would hail the Lord mighty in battle! How Gabriel and his angels would rejoice as Jesus was installed as Priest! We do not want to be fanciful in our thoughts, we need to be under the control of the Spirit; but it is wonderful to get lifted in our spirits from the realm of confusion, developing apostasy and daily trials to a sphere where everything is vibrant. What a moment it will

be when God says to the whole angelic host, *Now all can worship Him!* That will be in relation to His coming out in millennial glory: "let all God's angels worship him", Heb 1: 6. What a moment of triumph for the Man once rejected here! It begins with the heavenly host - priestly angels, military angels, *all* the angels. I did not intend to speak about this but it just flooded into my thoughts as I commenced to speak about Jesus where He is and how all heaven is influenced by the power of His life there.

What does Jesus do in heaven? Think of Him as the great Priest who has entered "into heaven itself" (Heb 9: 24), and in one sense not alone, because the priest's garments for glory and for beauty included the breast-plate and the shoulder-plates on which the names of the tribes were engraved, anticipating the day when Jesus would go into heaven with the saints held in His affections and supported by His intercessory service there. He sustains us in the presence of God as He ever intercedes for us, constantly making intercession. Moses made intercession for the people when they turned to idolatry: he asked God to forgive their sin - "but if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book", Exod 32: 32. That was Moses, typically anticipative of the feelings of Jesus expressed in intercession for those for whom He died. Moses did not die for the people but Jesus did. The Lord's intercessory service therefore is related to His great sacrifice. He gave Himself that we should not perish but have life eternal.

Think of the myriads of persons there are in this world at the present time. How many prayers are being uttered at this very moment? How many prayers are going up to God? how many persons are dying? How many persons are there who need the personal touch of Jesus? How much crowds into just one moment! Not one is overlooked; heaven is a sphere of activity such as we cannot comprehend. We are finite whereas what is transpiring in heaven is infinite. We speak to the Lord and have the consciousness that He hears, and yet there may be millions of persons speaking to Him at the same time, and all can have the consciousness of being heard! This is to the human intellect

impossible but it is true, absolutely real. Let us enter into these great matters more fully.

Now I want to speak about the sun-rising. You may wonder what connection there is between what we have been saying and the sun-rising. The sun is in the heavens and as it rises it typifies the way Christ, in heaven, can come into the believer's life every day so that we are saved by the power of His life. How does the sun rule the day? You do not hear any sound as it rises. It rules by influence - the power of life and light. This is a very great thought as to rule.

The great ultimate idea of rule is God's headship. God Himself will be the source of regulation, influence and control in eternity. But while we are here our time is regulated by days - day after day. The scripture says "grace upon grace" (John 1: 16); that is, I suppose, grace for today and grace for tomorrow and grace for every day. I link this with the idea of the sun-rising. There is much more to this subject than I can fathom or tell but impressions have come over my soul which I seek help to touch on briefly. There were those of whom I have read who were placed in relation to the sunrising, and I believe it suggests the idea that impressions of Christ in heaven should come into our lives morning by morning. The writers of the gospels must have had a very wonderful sense of Jesus as the light of the world - the sun-rising. The sun at its meridian and the sun as it set - what portrayals they have given of the life of Jesus here! but as impressions come into our souls of Jesus here, our hearts go out to Him *where He is* - where He "*ever liveth*". Matthew's gospel has to do with administration and may connect with Moses in the passage we have read.

He and Aaron, who may link on with Luke, dwelt toward the sun-rising at the entrance to the tent of meeting. It would suggest administration as tempered and regulated by the priesthood. This would lead us to search out Matthew's gospel (authority) and Luke's gospel (priestliness). Luke gives considerable detail about the incoming of Jesus. What tender feelings are expressed in relation to it! What feelings there were on the part of Simeon when he took the Babe in his arms and blessed God, the glory of the Son of man

opened up to him as he uttered "a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel", Luke 2: 32. He saw "the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings", Mal 4: 2. Matthew tells us about an area where the people were sitting in darkness but they have "seen a great light, and to those sitting in the country and shadow of death, to them has light sprung up", chap 4: 16. That was when Jesus came from Nazareth to Capernaum. That is the way Matthew presents the commencement of His service - a glorious sun-rising. Then you get on toward midday in the gospels and we are told about Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. Matthew tells us that His face shone as the sun. The three disciples saw the sun at its meridian - noonday. Then, when Jesus died, he tells us that "there was darkness over the whole land", chap 27: 45. The footnote tells us that it was over the whole earth. This is what Matthew tells us.

We could say much more of what the gospel writers recorded, but I want to speak of personal experiences. We can only touch the edge of this subject which is tremendously great, like the waves at the shore when you realise that the whole ocean is before you, but you can just take account of the waves. I want to raise the question of how Jesus comes into our lives day by day. How many of our mornings are cloudy! how many are overcast! but how bright are the days when we have the conscious sense that Jesus has come into our lives in some fresh way! So, to refer to the people, those who encamped eastward toward the sun-rising were those under the standard of Judah. What an area of consideration that opens up! What was Judah's history? We may well start with the word that "the genealogy is not registered according to the birthright, for Judah prevailed among his brethren and of him was the prince", 1 Chron 5: 1. The moral basis was laid for the incoming of Christ when Judah prevailed among his brethren. How many of us prevail amongst our brethren? There is plenty of opportunity for it. It involves sacrifice, tremendous sacrifice; for Judah it involved that he was prepared to be a servant forever. Oh, what heaven must have felt as Judah was prepared to commit himself to perpetual servitude so that Benjamin,

the son of the father's love, could return to that father. Think of how the Lord Jesus would come before us as the great antitype of Judah saying "I love my master, my wife, and my children' I will not go free", Exod 21: 5. He is devoted in service to maintain what is for God's pleasure. He is still serving! He has been appealing to us this very day, seeking to awaken in our hearts a deeper appreciation of His sufferings to provide the means to reserve us from uncleanness as we go through a wicked, corrupt and violent world, that we may have unhindered access into the presence of God. He is concerned that the service of God be maintained in power. I believe that He desires to give God a moral basis for terminating the present dispensation and gathering the saints into glory, not as a fag end, but as those who are entering deeply into the feelings of God in intelligent understanding of what He is looking for currently. We need to stand, as it were, and observe the terrible burning of the red heifer; we need to feel with the priest as he would cast in the scarlet, the cedar and the hyssop, speaking of features of man naturally, of Adam's order, that have been removed in the death of Christ. The scarlet is what distinguishes me naturally; the cedar wood, pompous religious pride: "God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men" (Luke 18: 11); the hyssop, the kind of person that never amounted to anything distinctive, never did anything outstanding, just the ordinary kind of a person: that must go too. The end of *all* flesh has come before God. We should ponder this, that man after the flesh, no matter what his character, has been removed from before God's eye in the death of Christ. When we come to that we are ready increasingly to appreciate the Man who did everything according to the will of God, who never came under yoke to any other.

The garment of Jesus was woven without seam, from the top throughout. That may not have been the customary way to weave a garment but it was the unique way in which *His* garment was woven. From His very birth the will of God controlled Him. That whole precious life, worked out in warp and woof - the warp being the absolute recognition of the will and pleasure of God; the woof, the fulfilling of it every moment in every day. No wonder that when, by

faith, a woman touched the hem of his garment, she was healed!

How do we face each day? It is a challenge to me; I trust that you do better than I do. In our three-day meetings here it was said that our first thoughts each morning should be of the Lord Jesus. What a sunrising! The Lord Jesus wants to come into our thoughts when we awake, and then in the household reading morning by morning? The enemy tries hard to cause it to be given up. The manna was gathered before the sun arose, but the reading of the precious word first thing in the morning causes Christ to come before us and the sun-rising takes place. The day takes on fresh, new, living character. You are helped to go through the day in buoyancy. It is a wonderful thing to get a fresh shining of Christ in our hearts every morning. One would seek to encourage us in this, especially where there are children in the house. Try to get at least one impression each morning. Think of John 8 for instance: Jesus "early in the morning" came into the temple and taught the people. Then, in the presence of corruption and of self-righteousness - conditions that fill the world at the present time - He stooped and wrote on the ground. We are not told what He wrote. It is left to the spiritual discernment of persons to understand, but something was written in relation to the existing condition and the sun rose in the heart of that poor woman, to whom He said "go, and sin no more (v 11). Can we assume that she did not sin any more? She now had power because Christ was in her mind and heart; the Sun of righteousness had risen in her life. What an impression, early in the morning, for that woman! She was now held by the cords of a Man; the love of Christ would constrain her. What a wonderful thing it is when Christ comes into our lives! Do we need divine light? He may bring light in through the word or He may fill our souls with light as we kneel and pray. It is a wonderful thing to get into the presence of Jesus - into the presence of God. The light that shone in Jesus here is still shining in Him in heaven. He is the true lamp-stand in the holy place. Let us get into that sphere where He is, with our hearts sprinkled from a wicked conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Can we hear Him say, You are clean by reason of the word that I have spoken to

you? Can we hear Him say, He that is washed all over needs not to wash save his feet? Oh that Christ may shine freshly into our hearts morning by morning!

When we pray we are prone to speak constantly of our own matters that we carry every day, but do we take enough time to get into matters that affect the testimony or the growth of the saints? Do we spread these matters out before the Lord? Hezekiah, in a day of great trial, with overwhelming power of the enemy imminent, went into the presence of God and spread Sennacherib's letter out before Jehovah, saying, in principle, Read this: I have read it; hear the words of Sennacherib who reproaches the living God! Think of him asking Jehovah to read the letter! How do we get into the presence of the Lord about problems, for there are unsolved problems. Do we spread them out? Are we free to do so in that holy environment? The great High Priest has the names of the saints on the breastplate and on His shoulders. How am I going to speak to Him about them? He is carrying them in His affections. Am I critical, or can I say "he whom thou lovest is sick" John 11: 3? Oh, you may say, Lazarus was a very lovable man! Is that the basis on which the name is on the breastplate? We may say that Mary would be the most loved person at Bethany, but the word is "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus". Mary's name is not mentioned; she is referred to as Martha's sister. It adjusts us in our thinking; the saints are loved according to purpose, dear brethren! The names on the breastplate, and on the shoulder-plates, are there according to divine regulation.

In the light of that I must be regulated as I pray for my brother or sister or the brethren in a locality. The weak brother is the brother for whom Christ died; he is on the breastplate, he is on the shoulder-plate; he is represented in the bread of presence on the pure table in the holy place. The table is representative of Christ and the way He is supporting the saints. Thus we are able to pray feelingly and with a definite end in view, that we may all be conformed to the image of God's Son. May we have more power in prayer!

In closing I would like to suggest, dear brethren, that we take to heart whether Christ comes into our life each morning, bringing in

light, and the warmth and the power of life. We are to be saved by the power of His life, and that can be experienced morning by morning. When John introduces Jesus in his gospel he says "In him was life, and the life was the light of men", chap 1: 4. The reciprocal working out of it is that as the light of life comes into the soul it produces life. The Lord Jesus Himself said "Because I live ye also shall live", John 14: 19. May He, in the power of His life, sustain, preserve and keep us in the consciousness of an unbroken link with Himself as we go through each day!

PLAINFIELD NJ

30 October 1976

GREATNESS

A.A.Bellamy

1 Chronicles 29: 10 -12; Luke 9: 37-43 (to 'God'); Acts 2: 4-11; Nehemiah 4: 15-23

The simple impression, dear brethren, upon one's mind is as to greatness. When God displays the fruit of His work in the aggregate to a wondering universe there will be no need to stress this thought of greatness but we need it now in the time in which conditions in the world are depressing; and the saints, I believe, would be fortified in the sense of the greatness of God Himself. David comes to this thought of the greatness of God at the close of his ministry; to other features too which he brings in besides. What we have read from Chronicles is a doxology, a man addressing God in the sense of what is His - "Thine", he says, "is the greatness". Man's greatness is a poor thing at the best; we could not look for greatness there. It is a great thing, dear brethren, to look away from man, to be fixed - as David says, "my heart is fixed" (Ps 108: 1) - fixed in the sense of God's greatness, that what He has undertaken in the purpose of His love He will accomplish because, as David says, Thine is the power - the greatness and the power. He purposed in Himself, He had not to rely upon anyone. His is the power; and then, in the working out of His purpose, there is the glory. It is the glory that we are brought into touch with, the glory of His grace. Thine is the glory, David says. God has not operated in obscurity; He has come out in the revelation of Him self and that has involved His glory, the glory of His grace.

These are great matters to stabilise us in a scene which has every feature of breakdown. There is nothing of the character of breakdown as you take account of the blessed God - His infiniteness, His greatness. How far above us He is! He is able to make us feel how far away He is from us as God. God is a spirit, He dwells in light unapproachable, inaccessible to the creature, and yet how near He can be; as Paul said to those to whom he preached, "he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17: 27) - the same God. The God whose is the greatness and the power and the glory is not

far from each one of us. Wherever you may be, in whatever circumstances of extremity, He is near. David goes on to speak of the heavens and the earth being "thine". God is a great owner of property: what property He has as Creator! - "Lord of the heaven and of the earth" (Matt 11: 25) and "possessor of heavens and earth", Gen 14 : 19. Thus Abraham was blessed by Melchisedec - "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heavens and earth". He could have made His people the richest, in a material sense, upon the earth, but He has not. He possesses those things, they belong to Him, that God whom David is blessing here, the same God whom Jesus praised when He was here in manhood. "At that time, Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth". Think of the sway of God! Do you know it in your soul dear young brethren? David says here "thine, Jehovah, is the kingdom". It is His kingdom. We have spoken of His King, of the exaltation of God's King upon the hill of His holiness (see Ps 2: 6); God's King is God's Son, and the word is "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry", Ps 2: 12. We cannot trifle with God. Some have attempted it alas! with dire consequences. The anger of God has been borne witness to once in the history of time when Jesus died upon the cross, and it will be borne witness to again in regard of the wicked. Let us be sobered by these things in the sense of the greatness of God. Then it is in His hand to make all great. I do not know what the estimate of each person in this company is of himself or herself but I would draw the attention of each to the fact that God has in His hand to make all great and strong. That is His thought - every man and every woman, every brother and every sister, young and old. Many of us look back upon a very chequered history. There have been times of very great weakness when we have faltered - or, as the scripture says, "stumbled". The prophet says "he that stumbleth among them at that day shall be as David", Zech 12 : 8. Have you ever thought of being like David? "In thy hand it is to make all great and strong".

I turn to this remarkable passage in Luke which brings out wonderment in people at the things which Jesus did and their

astonishment at the greatness of God. I think we need to be affected as these persons were affected - "astonished" not simply at the greatness of God but the *glorious* greatness of God. How He has come into His own creation, how He has come into the time that He made and has used in order to lift the fallen creature out of that condition and to return him, as this child here, to his father. That is the cause of the wonderment. Here is a child under demoniacal power, a case beyond the ability of the disciples at this time but not beyond the ability of Christ. Did He rebuke the man? No, this is Luke's gospel; it is the glory of His grace, it is the power of the Saviour to rebuke the unclean spirit and deliver the child from its power and to give him back to his father. There is a touch in it, I believe, of the fulfilment of the purpose of God, man secured in sonship eternally for the Father's glory and praise. Do you wonder at it? Are you astonished? I can say I am. It bows my heart to think of the power and the greatness that Jesus has. Earlier in the chapter we see His greatness on the holy mount, the Man who is incomparable with all others; even Moses, even Elias, great as they were, marvellous in the accomplishment of the mission that God gave them, yet neither was as great as Christ. "*This* is my beloved Son" (v 35) - that is His greatness - "hear him". Think of God saying that to us, dear brethren, when He might have had Christ just for Himself. When Jesus came to the days of His receiving up and could have gone back into heaven as a man to be alone eternally, at that point He set His face to go to Jerusalem, in the determination of divine love, to the securing of the lost sinner, yes indeed of degraded man, but the securing of those purposes of love divine that were going to have men for Himself in the liberty of sonship.

In Acts it is not the glorious greatness of God but "the great things of God". They are here, and persons filled with the Holy Spirit are speaking about them. The power of communication was the Holy Spirit. It is a remarkable point in the history of God's ways. It is the reversal of the confusion of Babel when men decided that they would become great and centralise everything. The divine comment is that they will be "hindered in nothing that they meditate doing",

Gen 11: 6. Is it not like the world and its goings on at the present time? Men are virtually saying, We will not be hindered in anything that we meditate doing, we will have a system built up and energised by our own will. Now God brought in confusion governmentally upon that state of affairs. Centralisation was defeated so far as men's objectives were concerned. It will yet be achieved under one man, spoken of as the man of sin. Meantime there is He who hinders and there is that which hinders (see 2 Thess 2: 6,7), but the forces at work today are the forces that were at work at the time when they proposed to build the tower of Babel - "a city and a tower, the top" or head (see footnote) "of which may reach to the heavens", Gen 11: 4. Thank God for the glorious light of the Head of the assembly; He is the Head of the body, the assembly. Well, in this passage they were speaking of the great things of God. Paul had not yet come on to the scene. He is in reserve: "an elect vessel", the Lord says, "to me", Acts 9: 15. Is not that precious - "to me"? not simply "an elect vessel" but "to me". The prophet Micah says of Jesus, speaking to a locality, "And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall he come forth unto me... ", Mic 5: 2. "Unto me" - I think we would get an impression afresh at this moment of that: "a people for a possession", 1 Pet 2: 9. It is unto Him that there is to be a people for a possession at this present time. That was the great objective in Paul's ministry. As I say, he had not appeared yet, he was in reserve. Having completed his service he says "I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God", Acts 20: 27. What communications there have been, and remain, concerning the mystery! "This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly", Eph 5: 32. There have been communications - and there still are, thank God - concerning these great things of God. So let us be encouraged. It is not a question of numbers at all; it may be among a handful that there is much food - as it says, "Much food is in the tillage of the poor" (Prov 13: 23) - a handful meeting in dependence on the Lord and the Spirit in the light of the assembly: "where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them", Matt 18: 20.

Finally, in Nehemiah, it is a great work. He says in chapter 6 "I am doing a great work" (v 3); he would not go down to those who were harassing the work and meet them in the plain of Ono. In the passage read we see the work distributed; the word is "every one to his work". The Lord says in Mark "it is as a man gone out of the country, having left his house and given to his bondmen the authority, and to each one his work", chap 13: 34. Are you one of His workers? You say, I am young, I do not have any ability. The Lord would enlist every one of us as a worker. You have to find what your work is, find your place in the body, what your function is; then you will not be in anyone's way, you will be able to fulfil what is required in regard of the work: "to each one his work". Here they are building, they are active in difficult times. "Difficult times shall be there", 2 Tim 3: 1. We do not quite say that; we say, Difficult times are here. We are in those times now, and the work is going on, building and burden-bearing and loading, and both hands committed to the work, defensively and constructively. Let us have our hands full in this sense in regard of the work. It is not a matter of what is going to pass away in its results but of what is going to lead to more for God, because the two great choirs were yet to walk upon the wall that they built. We are moving on to the Lord's day and the service of God, and the work is going on, "to each one his work", and people have their hands full with their work here. God says through the prophet "I work a work in your days", Hab 1: 5. He is doing that.

What is being brought through the critical times through which we are passing is evidence that the work is going on. It is divine in its source and character, and involves persons who are intelligent and understand that it is a great work - noble persons; and rulers too, persons who have learnt the principle of rule in regard of themselves and are yielded as bondmen to God, persons who understand the sway of God through Christ in their souls. So Nehemiah speaks to them and the rest of the people; he says "The work is great and extended, and we are scattered... one far from another". Then there is the trumpet, and there is the ability to assemble; a fine word this - assemble. It is one of the words that the Holy Spirit teaches, a choice thought in a day of breakdown. "Thither" , it says, "shall ye

assemble to us; our God will fight for us". The Lord says "Fear not". It is a matter of God's greatness, not ours. The time will surely come for display. What magnificence will be seen! - the holy city coming down out of heaven having the glory of God. That will be the time of display. Meantime it is the time of work, and it calls for all that we have. There is no time for sleeping, they did not even put their garments off; it is a full-time matter. Oh let us be energised again!

David said "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, slumber to mine eye lids, Until I find out a place for Jehovah, habitations for the Mighty One of Jacob" , Ps 132: 4,5. It bears upon each of our localities; whether we would give a little more time, even though we may be tired, to the defence of the testimony in a military way, and a little more time to the edification of the body of Christ, to promote the upbuilding of itself in love; that is the great end in view. The workmen will be discharged finally, they will not be needed any longer. "Well, good and faithful bondman", Matt 25: 21. May we, dear brethren, have such an appraisal as that. The Lord would say "What *she* could she has done", Mark 14: 8. What we can do let us do. For His Name's sake!

EDINBURGH

7 September 1974

OUR EYES

R.Stenhouse

Proverbs 4 : 25; 23: 29-32

The Lord says in Luke 11, "when thine eye is simple, thy whole body also is light; but when it is wicked thy body also is dark" (v 34). The direction of the eyes is of all importance. It tends either to blessing or to disaster. One can go through every book of the Bible and there is reference to the eyes in some way - looking, beholding, and so on. We could refer to many instances but I just want to refer to a few of them.

The first is, as we all know, in Genesis: "the woman saw that the tree was good for food", (chap 3: 6) a tree to be desired. That is like what John says in his epistle: "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life", chap 2: 16. She saw self-gratification. Dear brethren, all weakness comes in through self-gratification. She saw and disobeyed the divine command not to touch it. That one act of disobedience has come right through every dispensation to our time, to this very night. We do not need to linger on that; she has many companions at the present time bent on self-gratification.

Then, if we go further in the book of Genesis we come to Lot and Abram. Abram was told to lift up his eyes to see the land God would give him, but Lot, what does he see? He saw the well-watered plain of the Jordan, a fine place for his cattle and for his family, but finally he finds himself in Sodom. And what is the outcome? A life of misery. As Peter tells us: "and saved righteous Lot, distressed with the· abandoned conversation of the godless, (for the righteous man through seeing and hearing, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul day after day with their lawless works)". When he spoke to his sons-in-law it says that "he was as if he jested", Gen 19: 14. His wife, we may say, was nominally in fellowship but her heart was still in Sodom. She looked back from behind. So that scripture is important: "Remember the wife of Lot",

Luke 17: 32. The most sorrowful thing of all was an ill-begotten family, Moab and Ammon, who were marred by inveterate hatred of the people of God. That is the outcome of looking on the well-watered plains of the Jordan.

We go further, and in the way of contrast, to Genesis 24. I love to think of it: Isaac lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold camels were coming, and Rebecca lifted up *her* eyes and saw Isaac (see vv 63,64). Compare that, dear brethren, with what we get in Thessalonians. Where does the meeting take place? It does not take place on the earth; it does not take place in the heavens; "we... shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord", 1 Thess 4: 17. Is that our daily outlook - the coming of the Lord? Every morning when we waken do we say, Will the Lord come to-day? It will be a wonderful gathering time, to meet the Lord in the air.

Then as we move into Exodus we have not only the individual but the corporate thought. It says of the children of Israel, when they saw that Moses delayed to come down, "for this Moses, the man that has brought us up out of the land of Egypt, - we do not know what is become of him", chap 32: 1. Is that our attitude to-day? They sat down to eat and drink and rose up to sport. Do we know what has become of the Lord? Do we know where He is or are we like that wicked bondman who said "My lord delays to come" (Luke 12: 45) and then goes on eating and drinking and to be drunken, forgetting that the Lord has long patience, waiting until He gets that word from the Father. Then further on they despised the good land. The spies came back with evidence of what was in that land. What do they say? "And we were in our sight as grasshoppers, and so we were also in their sight", Num 13: 33. A brother said here lately about the grasshoppers that they have legs above their feet. So, dear brethren, it is better to be a grasshopper than a giant. You can get off the ground anyway and there is no giant greater than a board of the tabernacle which was ten cubits high. Remember that! We are all greater than giants and we are all set together in sockets of silver.

One could speak of many more things but one just leaves these for the brethren to look over for themselves when they have time for meditation. The remarkable thing about the eyes is that they either lead to blessing or to disaster.

Coming to the New Testament, what did John the baptist say? Looking at Jesus as he walked, he says, "Behold the Lamb of God" John 1: 36. And what an effect that had! Only five words, you say, just like five words in a ministry meeting. What does it do? He preaches two of his disciples away from himself. They followed the Lord and say to Him "where abidest thou? He says to them, Come and see". They abode with Him that day, and that day is the eternal day. It is our privilege to come and see where the Lord dwells. He invites us to *come and see* and enjoy eternal things now in the Spirit.

So we can come to Stephen too. Stones battered him to death but they did not trouble him. The heavens opened and he *saw Jesus* (see Acts 7: 55). What an outlook! Have we any other object before us, any other person before us than Jesus, the only One who can satisfy the heart? "All the rivers", Ecclesiastes tells us, "run into the sea, yet the sea is not full", chap 1: 7. There is nothing here that can satisfy the heart, but this Person can fill the heart. "*He saw... Jesus*".

I just want to refer to the object which the apostle Paul has in Philippians: "Brethren, I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing - forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus", chap 3: 13,14. That was his object, the world crucified to him, he crucified to the world, only one objective before him.

And finally, dear brethren, what touches my heart is what we ourselves are going to see. In Revelation 22 it says that His servants shall serve Him and shall see his face (v 4). That face once so marred and smitten is now resplendent with glory, a glory indeed which outshines the sun's glory. We were speaking on Lord's day of the apostle Paul. He saw a light out of heaven. How great was his

appreciation of that glory! - a light above the brightness of the sun. So what is our outlook? Is it in regard of things here? If it is it will mean disaster; but an object before us like the apostle Paul means blessing.

In regard to Proverbs 23, I do not think any one of us can exclude ourselves from these six things. I cannot anyway. Have you ever had woe? ever had sorrow? contentions? complaining? wounds without cause? redness of eyes? Why, dear brethren?

Because we have been *looking* at the wine when it was red when it sparkled in the cup; that is, self-gratification, anything that attracts as to what stimulates the flesh. Well, it definitely says here, "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it sparkleth in the cup, and goeth down smoothly". We know the effects of indulging the flesh or giving way to what is attractive to it. I believe at the present time there is a great need for nazariteship. In the Old Testament it was voluntary but it is not voluntary to-day. It is called for. Power lies in nazariteship. The Lord is not here and He is calling for true nazirites, walking as He walked separated to God.

May we all be marked by a simple eye and not looking upon the wine when it is red or when it sparkleth in the cup. We will be reading about Samson. What was his downfall? He saw and he saw and he saw. Weakness comes in because of self-gratification.

Dear brethren, may our outlook be just the simple eye and knowing where to put things, what is natural and what is in regard to the flesh. The remedy is: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall no way fulfil flesh's lust" (Gal 5: 16), and "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth", Col 3: 5. The Colossians were in danger of the other aspect of the flesh. In Philippians it says "See to dogs, see to evil workmen, see to the concision", chap 3: 2. What is the concision? I understand the concision is the mutilating of the flesh. It has not been put to death, you are still thinking of something that is good in the flesh, trying to reform it, trying to do something to make it more pleasurable. But what does the apostle say? "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch" (Col 3: 21) and he goes on to speak about ill-treating the body, trying to make something of the flesh. Let

us beware of the concision. The remedy is, Put to death the deeds of the flesh and do not fulfil the lusts of the eye. So my point at this time, dear brethren, is a simple eye: "when thine eye is simple, thy whole body also is light".

EDINBURGH

10 August 1976

THE CHILDREN'S VALUE

It is to be noticed that when the Lord Jesus said "How much better then is a man than a sheep! " it was not exactly a question but an exclamation. We could also rightly say 'How much better is a little child than a lamb?' for there is no real, or moral comparison. It is true that both are the handiwork of the same faithful Creator. The Scriptures, however, teach that the life of a beast goes downwards into the earth in some way unknown to us, whereas the spirit of a human person returns to the God who gave it. Hence we all have to answer to Him for our lives. This makes us very careful even when we know that Jesus died for our sins and we cannot come into judgment. Already our spirits can rejoice in God our Saviour and if the price at which we have been bought is the Redeemer's blood, who can tell the value set upon us?

Through the Gospel writers we can tell how heaven values the young. Children in Capernaum were amongst those whom the Lord called and took in His arms - perhaps it was a girl who was set as an example to the great apostles! In the deep ways of God it was the little boys of Bethlehem who had the honour of being the first martyr-sufferers of Christian times, though not old enough to know it. From the lips of the children of Jerusalem came the purity of praise to the Lord Jesus in just a very few simple words. But now that the Saviour is exalted in heaven itself the children of the place where you live can come by faith to Him for blessing, can be a witness and sing His praises.

The Scriptures also show how the young can be of special value just where they are because of some unexpected event. In one instance a girl was able to run with a message vital to the safety of king David. She was evidently serving in the house where the ark of God was and it would be dangerous for the older ones to leave.

Later history shows that our Lord's lineage springing from Judah depended at one time on an infant named Joash. He was the only member of the royal family saved alive at a time of great sorrow. In much later times a maid named Rhoda was able just as a door-

keeper to make way for the apostle Peter amongst the Christians assembled to pray for him. The actual words of the Bible show that his voice was very clearly in her mind. Are his writings clearly in your mind?

J.C.Evershed