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RESURRECTION AND LIFE

John 11: 4; Romans 1: 4, 5, 10

D.M.W. The Lord Jesus is unique as the one Man out of death. He has demonstrated the surpassing greatness of God's power in resurrection. Literal resurrection for us is yet future but the power can be known now. The assembly is to be in the gain morally of all that will occur literally. Power is to be in testimony. Mr Darby referred to Stephen as a prototype Christian. He was in the power of resurrection; not only when he looked into an opened heavens but as he was bearing witness to the Jews. He helps us understand how the power of the Lord's resurrection is to be something of our experience now. Also, that power is needed as the service of God is set on following the Supper.

The Lord Jesus is the "resurrection and the life"; so that what we come into was set on by Him personally. In John 11, He is the Son of God. "That the Son of God may be glorified" has to do with the raising of Lazarus and the setting forward of what is found at the beginning of John 12. They were together in family atmosphere, "where was the dead man Lazarus" (v 1). They were free, and the Lord comes to them. There is response when He does so, especially on the part of Mary suggesting worship. I think the platform there is resurrection.

In Romans 1, resurrection may refer to others, perhaps that of Lazarus, but the verses read seem to point to our faith and experience while He personally is the "resurrection and the life".

Therefore, while He is unique, we are identified with Him, and it is for His glory that we occupy moral ground on the other side of death – "that the Son of God may be glorified". As doing so in our minds, we are ready to proceed with Him in a living, spiritual sphere as linked with Him in His things. I believe this to be the high level of Christianity as we proceed under His headship and in the power of His risen life. "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead" (2 Tim 2: 8) also may fit into these thoughts, and it may bear on the Supper too. We do not remember a Person as He was exactly,

because the emblems begin with His death, although we are free to bring in the attractiveness to heaven of such a life that was here and that Person going into death. He gave His life, which was so attractive to Go, “my blood poured out for you” (Luke 22: 20) – in absolute devotedness and in love for the assembly. In one sense He died that we may be associated with Him on the other side of death and be here in the “power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings”. First, it is “to know Him, and the power of His resurrection”, then, “the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death”, Phil 3: 10. Is this practical Christianity? To be conformed to His death may be in view of something future too, I think.

P.L.J. “I am the resurrection and the life” – I was thinking that resurrection is one thing, but life another. A distinction is made.

D.M.W. Do you think that title, while unique to Himself, is in view of ourselves?

P.L.J. That is right. I would look at resurrection being, as it were, coming out of one condition, but life is not coming out of that condition, but what we are brought into. The “resurrection and the life” go together.

D.M.W. Yes, and they are distinct as well. However, it is not only, “I am the resurrection”, but “I am the resurrection and the life”, going beyond just the thought of resurrection. The impression is that it is in view of ourselves that He is so.

P.L.J. I would say that because humanly speaking a person would say, well he is living if he is resurrected, but the Lord adds, “I am the resurrection and the life”. It goes beyond resurrection and leads into a sphere of life.

D.M.W. It seems important to link the thoughts together because we are brought into the life of Christ through resurrection. For us it is not presently physical, but moral and spiritual. He went the way of death for us that we might come into life now and experience the power of resurrection while waiting for the literal fulfilment. John 1 speaks of Him as the life being the light of men (see v 4). Life was in

Him intrinsically (we need the Spirit), yet it is for the glory of the Son of God that we come into resurrection morally, and live. He is always unique, and is so in power; yet He not only went through death and came out of it, but showed this as a pattern for moral power now when He raised Lazarus from the dead. It is for His glory as Son of God that we live in the gain of this now. He is unique as the “resurrection and the life”, and we are associated with Him in that way in Christianity. He intends for us to be in power and life now.

Rem. Do you think in John 12, “having made Him a supper”, they were on the platform of resurrection? It seems they were morally, and they provided for Him in life.

D.M.W. I think that is the point as a pattern for us. They are of His kind as He comes in as their Head. Another has said it was a headless family until the Lord came as their Head. It seems to show that resurrection and life go together in this family setting. He is the “resurrection and the life”, and Mary, Martha and Lazarus are together in a family way.

P.L.J. I think it is right that both are seen. In a sense resurrection is somewhat negative, if I can put it that way. Resurrection sets aside death. But the positive is brought alongside in “the life”; not only is death set aside but there is life.

D.M.W. Does baptism link with your thought? I was thinking of baptism in Romans 6, as removal from the sin system; not only baptised unto Christ but unto His death (see vv 3,4). It is in view of deliverance and walking here in newness of life. That is a real matter for our minds to grasp while we await bodily resurrection.

When we sit down at the Supper, one aspect in our minds is fellowship in His death (1 Cor 10: 16), which suggests that what is in view is having part with Him who is the “resurrection and the life”. As we drink into the cup, is He not peculiarly before us as One in resurrection power and life which prepares us in mind and affection to proceed on an ascending line to a scene entirely spiritual?

P.L.J. So we break bread in a sense as baptised persons.

S.S. That life we are speaking of could not be enjoyed or experienced prior to resurrection, could it?

D.M.W. Not by us.

S.S. That is what I meant. I was thinking how resurrection is in view of ushering in a new order of things. You mentioned the verse in Philippians, "to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings", which is interesting because in Luke 24, the Lord Jesus says, "it behoved the Christ to suffer and rise from among the dead" (v 46). There the suffering comes first for Him and then the thought of resurrection, but for us practically, we have to be in the good of the power of His resurrection before we can properly be in the fellowship of His sufferings.

D.M.W. I think so.

K.M.P. There are three things: to know Him is first; then we are sustained in that through the power of His resurrection. That sets us on heavenly ground so we can be here in this scene for Him in the fellowship of His sufferings. He is the rejected One.

D.M.W. Do you think Mr Darby's reference to Stephen being a prototype Christian helps us understand practically how it is set on morally as a model while in mixed conditions?

K.M.P. I do not know if Stephen sets it on but his experience certainly gives light as to it. I think Paul was able to expand on the power of His resurrection. In Ephesians 1 he says, "Being enlightened in the eyes of your heart, so that ye should know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength, in which we wrought in the Christ in raising from among the dead, and he set him down at his right hand in the heavenlies, above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name named, not only in this age, but also in that to come; and has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all" (vv 18-23). There is a lot in that

scripture but in Ephesians 2 He has made us alive and “has quickened us with the Christ, ye are saved by grace, and has raised us up together” (vv 5,6). That is the power of resurrection.

D.M.W. So that in raising us up together and setting us in the heavenlies in Christ there can be a spiritual experience. There is power for such spiritual experience, especially as we are quickened for another realm, but I had not thought that was experience of the power of His resurrection for testimony?

K.M.P. No experience of it?

D.M.W. I did not think sufferings were contemplated in the verses read from Ephesians 2. I think that reference looks on to what we will reach actually, although something we can experience as having the spirit of it now, through the Earnest, as serving God in His own realm.

K.M.P. But I think the experience of it is in the fellowship of His sufferings.

D.M.W. I just thought there was a difference between the spiritual experience of Ephesians 2 and the moral experience of Philippians 3. There does not seem to be any attaining to or arriving at anything in the Ephesian reference. Philippians 3 goes on to say, “if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead”. Resurrection from among the dead is at the end, but the power of His resurrection is on the road, and the latter is a moral necessity for the scene of testimony as seen in Stephen. Does that help in following out the inquiry and understanding the apostle’s thinking?

P.L.J. So Philippians is the apostle’s present exercise while down here?

D.M.W. It is. The power of His resurrection is available for us now, morally, as seen in Stephen’s experience, who seems to be a prototype Christian. The features in Philippians 3 were seen in Stephen’s testimony (see v 10). The power was necessary for him to bear witness. Morally, he was as one out of death; after the Lord morally as being witness to another order of things. Morally,

Stephen was in the gain of Philippians 2, although the teaching of it waited for Paul. Literally, Stephen shows the fellowship of the Lord's sufferings, and he was made conformable to His death in a literal way as being stoned for his testimony. For us it may not be literal but we share the fellowship of His sufferings by bearing witness to a Man in another world, and we would be made morally conformable to His death too. In a sense Stephen arrived in his soul at the resurrection from among the dead because he saw Jesus standing supporting him in testimony. It seems that the reference to him as a prototype Christian is helpful, and the features are to be our experience now in a moral way.

K.M.P. Would the Spirit be the source of it? "Ye will receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you", Acts 1: 8.

D.M.W. Yes, and Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit (see Acts 6: 5; 7: 55). I think it is good to bring that in because none of these things are possible, not even life, without the Spirit. Therefore, we appreciate the Spirit and desire to be near to Him to know what He is doing mediatorially and to come into what He would do with us morally and spiritually now. What do you think?

K.M.P. The evidence that Christ is ascended and is seated at the right hand of the Father is that the Spirit is here.

D.M.W. That is right.

K.M.P. That is interesting because it all has to do with our practically entering into the life we were discussing in Luke 24. The Lord said that it behoved Him to suffer and to rise again and to enter into His glory (v 26). Later in the chapter He tells them to wait in Jerusalem "till ye be clothed with power from on high" (v 49). So it is not enough to have an understanding of the resurrection historically, but it is the *power* of His resurrection that is to be our portion. The 'power of His resurrection' would refer to the effect that the Spirit would have upon us as really having an understanding of the resurrection as to what it is and what He would have us come into. It is not just historical; it is the effect.

D.M.W. I think that is right. Also, I think the Supper and in the subsequent service Godward we would desire to proceed on the basis of quickening. We are to be alive to what we are doing. We need that to answer to the verses you read from Ephesians and to reach a spiritual level of things where we are seated in the heavenlies in spirit and respond Godward. What do you say?

K.M.P. In Romans 8 it speaks of the Spirit quickening.

D.M.W. Yes, our mortal bodies, suggesting what is future. The scriptures note each divine Person with quickening power. The Father quickens, the Son quickens whom He will (see John 5: 21), and "it is the Spirit which quickens", John 6: 63.

K.M.P. Romans refers to the Spirit as the Spirit of life.

D.M.W. That is right and we do not have anything without the Spirit. The Lord Jesus had life intrinsically and He showed what life is to be before God in manhood. We need the Spirit for that.

P.L.J. And we have the things objectively in Christ but subjectively by the Spirit.

D.M.W. Exactly. That is a very good point because we have our link initially by faith but we appropriate nothing, even though we might apprehend it, unless it is by the Spirit. Christianity is to be experience and I think Philipians especially brings that out. For even Paul the apostle had not arrived at the resurrection from among the dead; everything was experience on the way to that. He had arrived at knowing Him, as you say, Christ objectively, and at the power of His resurrection in his testimonial experience. There is no question that he had the experience of the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death. But he had not entirely arrived because he says, "if in any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead". In a sense, Stephen went through it all in his soul and therefore, as he looked into an opened heavens, he said, "Lay not this sin to their charge", Acts 7: 20. He was being made conformable to His death and was like the Man He saw in another world. He set all that on morally in the witness he gave, and he was full of the Holy Spirit.

P.L.J. Is that what Mr Darby meant by referring to Stephen as a prototype Christian?

D.M.W. That occurred to me as we began to read these scriptures. I would not be dogmatic but it appeals to me as being so.

K.M.P. I think it is helpful what you say as to appropriation and apprehension. The power of His resurrection is appropriation, but simply to have a store of *knowledge* of the resurrection is apprehension. You might apprehend it as an historical fact but once we know the power of His resurrection, it has an effect upon us because of the work of the Holy Spirit; that is appropriation. I think it is helpful what you have brought out.

D.M.W. I think that is Christianity. Mr. Darby said also that the singular and most important aspect of Christianity is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. I would just suggest that getting near to the Spirit and being with Him – communion – is like becoming filled.

Early in the dispensation certain persons were marked out and even chosen as being filled with the Spirit: as a constant and consistent recognisable feature, they were wholly given up to Him. God took them up sacrificially and distinctly. We have to meet many responsibilities in the varied sphere of life down here and being near to the Spirit, in the gain of His presence and knowing of His working with and in us, exercises the spirits. Being in the gain of the Spirit so *that we can* be filled is an on-going exercise, while asking to be filled seems to be appropriate too.

K.M.P. We see the importance of the Spirit as expressed in the Lord's own sentiments, "And I will beg the Father" (John 14: 16) in relation to sending the Spirit.

S.S. Would you say as to being filled with the Spirit that Ephesians puts the responsibility on us? I was wondering *how* because it does not go on to explain it. The command is, "be filled with the Spirit", Eph. 5: 18.

D.M.W. The latter ministry of the recovery is very important if we are to be sustained in things vitally at the end. The last thing publicly in the unity of faith as we understand, is the truth of the Holy Spirit

worked out practically in the company of the saints, all other truth publicly is accumulated in the intelligence of the saints. That is vital. It has been said that Mr. Taylor brought as far as Numbers 21.

Therefore, is it not an exercise to be in the gain of the *character* of Ephesian truth and receive that as a command, “be filled with the Spirit”? We know the Holy Spirit objectively and that He bears witness to a Man out of death and in resurrection and glorified. Not only that, the Spirit forms and operates in love after that order of Man. When He is free to work *in* us, there may be some suggestion of being filled, and there is response to that working. I wonder if working out our own salvation (Phil 2: 12) is a result of the Spirit’s presence in the saints whether in the wilderness, household setting or assembly character of things? That may help us make way for His filling and our consequent response.

K.M.P. Do you think the primary evidence of one who is filled with the Spirit would be love? I was thinking of the passage in Romans 5.

D.M.W. Do you mean the enjoyment of love? Divine love?

K.M.P. Yes, because the “love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (v 5). I think that would be the first experience you look for in someone who is filled with the Spirit; there would be love for God, and “whereby we cry Abba Father”, Romans 8: 15. The other aspect might be love to the brethren because “he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God who he has not seen?”, 1 John 4: 20. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 is “love” (v 22). Love is the first thing, is it not?

P.L.J. I think we need to keep in mind too that a full vessel cannot be filled.

D.M.W. Very good.

P.L.J. An empty vessel is needed for filling.

D.M.W. That is what I thought might relate to the Supper; we have fellowship in His death. In this scene where our Lord has died we have nothing and His death is part of our fellowship at the Supper. As accepting that there is opportunity for filling.

P.L.J. I was thinking that too; you have to begin with an empty vessel.

Rem. Is what you are saying the practical evidence of being in the good of resurrection? In death, nothing of man in the flesh is left.

P.L.J. You mean death precedes it.

Rem. That is emptying everything of myself.

D.M.W. The emptying is as after Adam because, “remember Jesus Christ raised” (2 Tim. 2: 8) is that our thoughts are to be linked with a Man who is the Head of another order. I think the more we get over to His side in our thinking, the more free the Spirit is with us.

P.L.J. That was the Man who was raised.

D.M.W. Yes, and it was for us now – “raised again for our justification”. He is unique as the resurrection and the life but because He is that, we can enter into intelligent relationships on the other side of death. We could never be called His brethren until He had gone through death, and came out of death for us. It was His title all the way through but necessary for us.

K.M.P. Would you say too that the thought in Colossians 2 verse 12 brings in burial?

D.M.W. That is good. The operation of God is brought in there.

K.M.P. What we were in the flesh has to be put out of sight.

D.M.W. Not only crucified, or brought to execution, but removed. These are to be in our minds. The Lord’s death, burial and resurrection was vicarious. It would be blasphemy to think it belonged to Him, the Holy One of God, in the sense that some penalty attached for Him. No, the penalty attached to us. So what does the public execution of the Lord really mean? It means our execution! We have to come to that in our minds. Does that go with what you are saying?

K.M.P. Exactly. It is not just being crucified but being buried as well; the man is put out of sight.

P.L.J. That is our part.

D.M.W. Baptism speaks of removal, whether it be a person coming under exercise, a nation coming under conviction, like Israel, or a household coming under exercise. The platform of resurrection has to be established through death and removal in burial. We do *not* believe in baptism of infants exactly, but we do hold to the scriptural thought of household baptism. You cannot get on to the ground of Christian blessing outwardly unless removed from the world in figure by baptism, and practically, until there is some understanding of this in the parents of a household or in the individuals so exercised.

Baptism is removal of the man in a sin system, and is in view of being established on the ground of blessing in this world; it is the outward and public rite or ordinance linking us to God's house of profession on the earth.

K.M.P. Baptism is for this setting. That is what I was thinking about, baptism linked with burial. The man in the flesh is buried, out of sight here, so that we are associated with Christ in this scene. But resurrection does not have to do with this setting exactly; it is in view of another setting.

D.M.W. The *power* of resurrection is what we need in this scene, and I think that is seen in the witness that Stephen gives. He was actually in the power of resurrection morally as giving witness, and was filled with the Spirit. Also, he looked into the opened heavens, and that is our portion too for faith. We do not have an earthly portion. This scene is only the area of witness to what is beyond death, outside the world system, and we are to bear the character then of what is heavenly.

K.M.P. That is what it leads to, or is in view of, I mean.

D.M.W. As not having an earthly portion.

Rem. Do you think to the degree of reality that I go through burial, removal of myself, I can enter into the power of resurrection and the joy of life?

D.M.W. That maybe is why the verse in Colossians 2 was referred to. I think that is why faith is brought in there, "faith of the working of God who raised Him from among the dead" (v 12). We are not only

removed from one scene and the lawless principle to which man in the flesh is linked, but we are free to come on to new ground, ready in Colossians to go into the land. This cannot be appropriated except by the Spirit but it is to be in our minds. Faith enters into it as apprehending it in our minds. In Matthew 14, the Lord commanded Peter to come to Him on the water. I think getting over to the Lord's side of things is to be before our minds and as dependent on the Spirit there can be some resultant experience in life associated with Christ above the waters of confusion in the world, not occupied with ourselves or struggling with ourselves for removal to get over, or any of that sort of thing. We proceed in faith and in the power of the Spirit. We may not always get there because of mixed conditions and for getting our eye off Christ, but I think that is the objective.

P.L.J. Peter did not swim to the Lord, he walked. I think that would indicate the power of the spirit because humanly he could not do that.

K.M.P. It was not by natural means.

P.L.J. That is what I meant.

D.M.W. That is an exercise because what we are discussing is moral and spiritual. These things are not natural. The great danger is that the natural mind intrudes into these things. Something for man in the flesh on the earth has been sought in the realm of profession here. We have no earthly portion; death is the only portion we really have here. There is no use attempting to make man in the flesh better even by Christian moral values, and it is futile to make this world that crucified the Lord of glory a better place for Christians to live.

K.M.P. You mentioned in the giving of thanks for the emblems, "such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones", 1 Cor. 15: 48. That is us here; it is how God sees us. And, "even as He is, we also are in this world", 1 John 4: 17.

D.M.W. That is helpful. Say some more about it.

K.M.P. I was just thinking that we are so identified with Christ that we are viewed by God that way, "as He is". He has already gone into death, been buried and raised; and He is now seated at the right hand of God. That is how God sees us. There is power available to us in that by faith.

D.M.W. We can apprehend it all by faith. We want to appropriate it too. We would get heady, and perhaps have at times, and very theological and orthodox if it were only a matter of knowing. But the exercise is that it be more than that. If we deny the power of Christianity there is a warning, 2 Tim 3: 5. I think it is denying the Spirit's power. Philippians is practical Christianity and I think the exercise of being near to the Spirit and even to be filled with the Spirit is important for us individually so that we can add something to the collective sphere. That results in appropriation.

S.S. I have been thinking about a remark made about being filled with the Spirit; that a full vessel cannot be filled. I was thinking of Genesis where the wells were filled by the Philistines but Isaac and his servants re-dug the wells. I wondered if there would be a thought for us as to not being filled with dirt, which I thought linked with the Philistines and earthly mindedness. Dirt is earth.

P.L.J. That is an important point too, I think. There is such a thing as being earthly-minded, not necessarily worldly. We think of worldliness but what about earthliness?

D.M.W. In a sense I think earthliness and worldliness go together because in either connection we are drawing upon this scene. We are seeking a portion here where the lawless principle governs man. It is important that you mentioned the Philistines because they were offspring of Ham who committed terrible things at the beginning.

Philistines were in the land but were not there legitimately: they did not cross the Red Sea and that aspect of the death of Christ is not apprehended. Being earthly-minded comes under severe criticism in Philippians, "enemies of the cross of Christ ... who mind earthly things", Phil 3: 18,19. Earthly-mindedness in Revelation comes under severe judgment. Being earthly-minded or earthly takes

character from Edom where there is no real spiritual sensitivity, and Ham with no respect or care when he uncovered his father. "Love covers a multitude of sins". It is terrible to deny the power practically of the death of Christ and the presence of the Spirit when we get on that earthly-minded line. In principle, we are enemies of the cross because the cross finishes the character of man distasteful to God; it finishes the earthly man after flesh.

P.L.J. It has to do with one's whole outlook, perspective, interests and bent.

D.M.W. It was mentioned this morning that union is having the same motives and interests. Union and one-mindedness do not seem possible if we have different things from His before us.

S.S. What would you say about the exercise of Isaac and his servants to re-dig those wells? Is that a practical word to us?

D.M.W. Yes. If there is water, which speaks of refreshment and satisfaction, to be found, it means we must dig by the power of the Spirit. That is, we get over to the Spirit's leading and this line of things, and our motives and interests are formed by Him in love to the Lord Jesus and to His people. You mentioned love, and I believe that is the important element for maintaining the unity of the Spirit.

How often we fail by breaking in on brotherly relations, but the Spirit will keep to His level of unity. He wants to keep us on that level, and not deny the power for the truth. We want to have a love of the truth because the unity of the faith goes with the unity of the Spirit (see Eph. 4). But we have to be careful about brotherly feelings and relations, which would never make light of evil or infidelity to Christ.

P.L.J. I think too that digging would involve exercise, do you think?

D.M.W. Yes. I think that is just what it is.

P.L.J. Things do not come automatically but exercise is involved.

Rem. I think it says those wells were dug by Abraham but Isaac and his servants had to re-dig. Do you think it shows our personal responsibility to dig? We speak of being earthly-minded and the verse in 1 Corinthians 15 has been referred to: "as is the heavenly

one, so also the heavenly one". Also, in Colossians 3 "if therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth", (vv 1,2). That is what we are speaking of as to present exercise. Do you think that is impossible unless we are with the Spirit? Naturally speaking, I cannot desire the things that are above.

D.M.W. It has been thought that it can be arrived at through prayer, reading the scriptures and accredited ministry, all extremely important, every aspect of it, but it is arrived at, I believe, by being near to the Spirit. Being so, things begin to open up in the scriptures and ministry and it becomes real enjoyment and exercise to the soul, rather than simply an intellectual pursuit. It is the Spirit who leads us into this area of things.

Rem. When Paul was in prison he was in the Spirit's power. He was not reading ministry yet he would encourage Timothy to give himself to reading (see 1 Tim 4: 13). He was there as in the Spirit, and so John on the Isle of Patmos (see Rev 1). What he entered into was in the Spirit's power. Obviously, that is testing as to how much one comes into such a state.

D.M.W. So, take Mr Darby for example, it was not so much what he knew, not his intellectual ability exactly, great as that was; it was his nearness to the Spirit, and that is seen specifically in his hymns and in the character of his ministry as one who thought according to the scripture.

P.L.J. And that requires a suitable state, not just understanding teaching and things like that.

D.M.W. No, it required a suitable state as is evident in his hymns. I think for us it is nearness to the Spirit; He dwells in us statewise.

S.S. I think it is good what you say that it is not by prayer and reading that we appropriate. It is the emptying of the vessel in order that the Spirit may fill us. As a result we can be brought into things by the Spirit's power. It is not *me* entering into it exactly, but having

been emptied myself and being filled with the Spirit, I am brought into it by the Holy Spirit.

D.M.W. I think it is *me* as after another order of manhood.

S.S. Exactly. I meant that it was not by my power or because of what I do.

D.M.W. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts”, Zech 4: 6.

P.L.J. But He uses the Word.

D.M.W. He uses the Word, but it is not by reading the word to build up knowledge. It is not that, and I think carefulness as in communion with the Spirit behoves us or the enemy might oppose the truth by us if we are reading merely for knowledge, orthodoxy or for some reputation among the brethren.

Rem. You mean by just using head knowledge?

D.M.W. Yes, by thinking we can enter into things merely by the study of scripture or ministry, or by prayer. If we leave out the Spirit, we have left out the most important aspect of our exercise for prayer or reading, and we cannot appropriate anything apart from the Holy Spirit.

P.L.J. Well, we know the scriptures were indited by the Spirit; it is not a human composition.

D.M.W. Mr Darby was a scholar in languages but said a very important thing about scripture: you cannot understand the words, no matter how much language is known, until you understand the thing itself. We may acquire knowledge with the intellect but we cannot understand things divinely in that way.

K.M.P. Would the Bereans be a good example? They searched the scriptures.

D.M.W. “Receiving the word with a readiness of mind” (Acts 17: 11), and then they searched the scriptures. They did not doubt; it was not a matter of suspicion or reserving some independent judgment.

In Mark 10, the Lord uses the words, “evil suspicions”. But the

Bereans received the word with all readiness of mind wanting to make it their own. They wanted to appropriate it and that was impossible without the Spirit. No doubt, they looked into things but in dependence on the Spirit.

K.M.P. That is what I was thinking, how they received the word, then searched in a sense to confirm it to their own hearts and souls as to what they had believed. We come to the scriptures ready to receive, not to pursue intellectually a certain line of thought we have had already.

D.M.W. Again, we are helped by what Mr Darby said, he said when reading the scriptures, he came as a little child and wanted to be spoon-fed. The Spirit feeds dependent ones.

Rem. In John 14 it says, “the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things” (v 26). It is not something we can acquire through theological study or through mere intellect.

D.M.W. You would not question motives. Even pious persons who attempt to establish themselves through theological schooling and such, you would never criticise or doubt their motives, some may be good, some ulterior. But it is not a scriptural line, although there may be good intentions. None of us can be guided into the truth without the Spirit (see John 16: 13). The Spirit uses the word and confirmed ministry of the recovery to our souls.

Rem. Is it not interesting that the impression you had of considering resurrection and life has led us to speak as to the Spirit? It shows that to be in the good of one or the other can only be as we are near to and dependent upon the Spirit.

D.M.W. I think the longer we are in fellowship, the more we desire to go over things we had not experienced in our previous connections, and in the sense of making it practical to our souls. We knew and owned the Spirit historically and doctrinally, but there is far more to Christianity.

K.M.P. The scripture reads, “the Holy Spirit ... shall teach you all things”. That is an interesting statement because it really would go

even beyond the written word.

D.M.W. It may have to do with divine counsel. The word is not bound, but I think there is safety for us within the bounds of scripture.

K.M.P. Ministry is not on the same level as scripture but the fact is that ministry has been the result of the Spirit coming in and teaching, opening things up.

D.M.W. He has a mission and is wisely accomplishing that mission. He is using the scriptures and even the ministry of the recovery, to teach and confirm our experience with Him, and to guide us into all the truth.

P.L.J. And He is still here.

DENTON

8 July 2001

Key to initials

P.L.Johnson; K.M.Pearson; K.M.Pye, New York; S.Selman;
D.M.Welch

GOD'S INTEREST IN ONE SOUL

J.Strachan

Acts 8: 26-40

I would like to speak about God's interest in one soul. God is interested in all men. God desires that "all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth", 1 Tim. 2:4. There are no exceptions to that: God means "all men". God is presenting the gospel for reception by all men at the present time. But God can become very particular at times and He can express His interest in one soul. Now, there is a company of persons here today, but maybe God is interested in one soul present. I wonder, is it you? Is God looking down on you? You may say, Well, I am just one in the company. But God is interested in you personally if you are here this afternoon with a need that has never been met.

God was very interested in this man, this Ethiopian. God is interested in persons irrespective of their colour or their religion or their particular place in society. This was a coloured man in whom He was interested in this chapter; and in chapter 9 He was interested in a Jew, and in chapter 10, He was interested in a Gentile. God is interested in everybody, but He would come right down to where each one of us is in our relations with Him. God wants every one of us, each individual, to have personal relations with Himself. That is why He showed such interest in this man, and this man responded.

That would be our hope this afternoon, that as we present the gospel, you will respond to the presentation of God's interest in you.

So this man was crossing the desert. This particular part of the world often comes into the news these days. Men operate in this area, but God operates too. God was operating here, and His angel sent Philip to go to this desert, to this particular way. You might say, Why would He send Philip there? Philip had been doing a great work. He had been preaching in a certain city, there had been many converts, and there had been great joy in that city. You might say, Why did God take Philip away from that? It was because He was

interested in this one man. Oh how intense God's interest can become at times! He took Philip away from this great work that had been proceeding in the city of Samaria, where there was great joy, great results, so that he might speak to this one man.

This man was crossing this desert. He was quite a personality, "a man in power under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, who had come to worship at Jerusalem". He was a man in a good position, with a good sense of responsibility, I have no doubt, but there was something lacking in his soul at this point. God would take account of you and say, Maybe there is something still lacking in your soul yet. This man had come to worship at Jerusalem and there must have been a certain desire after God on his part. Now God takes account if there is some desire in your heart after Himself. He had come all this long distance from Ethiopia to worship in Jerusalem, having some *feeling* after God. God takes account if you have some *feeling* after Him. Indeed He arranges our circumstances in view of there being some *feeling* after Him. Maybe you have never thought about that; God having to do with the particular circumstances you are in, the family you have been born into, the city you live in, the kind of employment you have. He orders things so that you might have some feeling after Him.

Well, this man is journeying back to Ethiopia and he is reading his Bible, reading from the prophet Esaias. Maybe you have never thought of this before, but heaven is interested in persons who read their Bibles. I would encourage the young people here to read their Bibles. God is interested in persons who read their Bibles. You might say, Why is that? Why would it be different from any other book? Because it is a book that is divinely inspired. I know that the idea of inspiration is largely set aside in the world today, but nevertheless it is the truth. God has given a record for men to read that is divinely inspired, and that makes the Bible different from any other book you might find in the world. Heaven is very interested in persons who are prepared to read a book that has come from God Himself. It tells us about God in His relations with men. God wants to have relations with men, and He wants men in relationship with

Himself, and He has given us this book, the Bible, to help us to understand how that can be brought about.

Now, he was reading his Bible and Philip was told to “approach and join this chariot”. Here was this man crossing the desert in his chariot and Philip running up heard him reading. The Lord’s servants are ready to approach you just where you are, ready to be available to you, so that if you have any problems, like this man had, you might be able to get your questions answered. Philip goes and joins this chariot and says, “Dost thou then know what thou art reading of?” He raises this question. You, may, read your Bible but do not understand. Now God would put someone alongside you to help you to understand what it is all about. Oh, how good God is! How He would provide for us if we have some little spark of interest in Himself! If we read Bibles and turn to Himself, He is ready to say, “Dost thou then know what you art reading of?” So as he is reading this passage, he says to Philip, “How should I then be able unless some one guide me?” He was feeling the need for some help in this, “And he begged Philip to come up and sit with him”. Philip did not need much invitation. He was just ready to sit alongside this man and help him with his problems. When there are problems in our lives it is a fine thing if there is someone available to help us to resolve them.

Well, he was reading this passage, “He was led as a sheep to slaughter, and as a lamb is dumb in presence of him that shears him, thus he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment has been taken away, and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. “And the eunuch answering Philip said, I pray thee, concerning whom does the prophet say this? of himself or of some other?” Isaiah was not speaking of himself, he was speaking of One who was to come. Isaiah “saw his glory and spoke of him” (John 12: 41); it was a glory that eclipsed the glory of any other man who had ever been on the face of the earth. That is the Man that Isaiah had written about. That is the Man the eunuch was reading about. So Philip, it says, “opening his mouth and beginning from that scripture, announced the glad tidings of Jesus to him”.

That is just what we want to do as we are here this afternoon, to announce the glad tidings of Jesus in this company, in the presence of those who are here this afternoon.

These are wonderful glad tidings. These are the glad tidings that God has concerning His Son, because Jesus is the Son of God. Although He was here in lowliness, available to men, approachable by men, nonetheless He was a divine Person. He is the Son of God and He was bringing God near to men. How wonderful that is! How God approached men in the Person of Jesus! God took account of what was needed in the race. The whole race had fallen under sin and under the effects of it, and God took account of all that, so that is why Jesus is presented in this passage as being a Sufferer, One who was going to suffer, One who was going to die. He was here in holy, spotless perfection and He went to the cross to be a sin-offering. Paul announced as glad tidings "that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he was raised the third day, according to the scriptures", 1 Cor 15: 3,4.

How God has provided for men in the gospel! How wonderful that is, how He has provided for our needs, we who were sinners, guilty before God! That is what we are. But God has taken account of all that, and He has made the provision that is needed on the part of guilty sinners to have to do with Himself.

So Philip presented the glad tidings concerning Jesus, One who has come here, One who has come near to men, One who has suffered on the cross. Think of these sufferings of Jesus, not only at the hands of men, but sufferings at the hand of God when He took our sins upon Himself. He suffered vicariously in those three hours of darkness on the cross and finally He said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", Matt 27: 46. He was suffering at the hand of God, forsaken by God, so that our sins should be atoned for, so that we could have the forgiveness of sins. What a great thing that is, the forgiveness of sins as presented in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ for those who believe. So Peter could say that He suffered for our sins in view of bringing us to God (1 Peter 3: 18).

That is what God had in mind, to establish relations with men, to

bring us to Himself. It required that the whole matter of our guilt should be met and that we should have forgiveness of our sins. The Lord Jesus “has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification”, Rom 4: 25. God is wanting to have men in relation with Himself; He wants us to be consciously in His presence without any trace of guilt. He is saying, This is how I have Christ in my presence and I want you in just the very same place. Then we have “access by faith into this favour in which we stand”, Rom 5: 2.

It is a wonderful thing that persons who believe the gospel come into all the favour of God in which Christ stands, so that we can have “peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ”, Rom 5: 1.

These blessings are available to you on the principle of faith in Christ.

Where the eunuch finished reading it says, “his life is taken from the earth”, meaning that Jesus had left this scene by way of death, and now He is living in relation to another world. Then as they came upon a certain water the eunuch said, “Behold water; what hinders my being baptised?” He said, in effect, He has left the world by way of death and I can have part in this world no longer. I am going to leave it too. It is a great thing for a believer to come to that in the conviction of his soul that he has no more place in this world where Christ has died. He is going to live his life, the rest of his time, in relation to the Man who lives in another world. What a thing it is to find that life opens up to you in a different way altogether! You do not find your life in the world where Christ was crucified. You find your life in relation to Him in another world where He lives to God.

And *you* can live to God. You can live on this principle, another principle altogether. Men in the world live on the principle of living to themselves, but a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is secured on another principle, to live to God. You too can live in relation to this Man in another world. That is what baptism means that you are prepared to be identified with Christ in His death, and live in relation to Him in another world.

“And he commanded the chariot to stop. And they went down both to the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him”.

How fine that was: “they went down both to the water”. He found company. You find company in persons who are prepared to be identified with the death of Christ. That is how you find yourself in fellowship with others, that you are prepared to be identified with others who are like-minded. You are prepared to leave the world and be identified with persons who find their life in relation to our Lord Jesus Christ. “But when they came up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip,” – He had no doubt other things for Philip to do – “and the eunuch saw him no longer, for he went on his way rejoicing”. It is a wonderful thing to be able to go on your way rejoicing, in the consciousness that you have received the gospel and you have a living link, by faith, with our Lord Jesus Christ. That is what God wants to bring us to, a real, living link with our Lord Jesus Christ by faith, so that you are not simply a professing Christian, but you are a real believer with a living link with Christ in glory, and the consciousness of that by the Spirit.

Philip was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord; he knew what it was to have relations with the Holy Spirit. Now God wants you to have not only a link with Christ, which enables you to go on your way rejoicing, but to receive the gift of the Spirit so that you can live in the enjoyment of a link with Christ, and live in the enjoyment of the things that God has made so freely available to give to those who believe. God’s great end in the gospel is that believers should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; a result that causes your affections to move towards God, so that you become responsive to God. You become a subject of the kingdom of God, which is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit”, Rom 14: 17. I wonder if everybody here is conscious of having a link with Christ in this way? It makes you a subject person under the hand of the Lord Jesus.

You are prepared to submit yourself to Him and to enjoy “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit”. It is not the kind of joy that the world seeks to impart; that is effervescent. It is a real joy that springs from your living relations with God. Philip moved on and preached the gospel elsewhere. God shows great interest in one soul and then He moves on; but He is ready to wait if

someone needs to have a real link with Christ. That is what God is aiming at in the gospel, that you might have a real link with Christ in faith and the conscious sense of having received the Holy Spirit.

This man was reading from Isaiah 53. Do you know what the opening verse of Isaiah 53 says? I will tell you: "Who hath believed our report?" Now, I have sought to tell you something of the gospel.

I just leave that question with you, "Who hath believed our report?" Have you believed? Are you a believer in the Lord Jesus? Will you go out of that door unbelieving, or will you say, I will put my faith in the Lord Jesus? May you believe, for His Name's sake!

GLASGOW

24 February 2002