

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 357

December 2002

CONTENTS

WHAT GOD HAS IN A DAY OF SMALL THINGS

SYMPATHY WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Edited and Published by:

E.C.Burr

50 Red Post Hill London SE24 9JQ

WHAT GOD HAS IN A DAY OF SMALL THINGS

David Wright

Malachi 3: 13-18; Luke 2: 25-40; Acts 1: 12-15; 2 Timothy 4: 9-11

D.J.W. We often remind ourselves that we are in a day of small things, and I wondered whether we might, in reading these scriptures, be encouraged to see what God has worked out in a few and what such persons mean to God. Paul tells us that in the last days, difficult times shall be there, and where we read in Malachi it was a day when men were saying, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we keep his charge". That spirit of things is prevalent and it may be that the enemy would whisper it in our ears, but over against that there are persons here who fear Jehovah. I wondered whether we could take account of certain moral traits which run through these scriptures. Here it is that they are marked off as those that feared God and spoke often one to another. It may have been insignificant as far as this world was concerned, but it was taken account of in heaven. It is very touching in verse 17, "they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure", bringing out how deeply God values such persons.

I wondered whether we saw that carried through into the New Testament in Luke, in such as Simeon and Anna. There again you get an impression that it was a small circle, but certain characteristics are drawn attention to with Simeon, that he was just and pious and that the Holy Spirit was upon him. I believe that we should bear in mind in our consideration together the greatness and importance of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Simeon was one who could prove the Holy Spirit's guiding. He came in the Spirit into the temple, and in that Spirit he was given great light in relation to the greatness of the One who had come in as a babe. Anna is spoken of as a prophetess, it says, "who did not depart from the temple" – a treasure in her heart so that she was one who spoke of Christ to all those who waited for redemption in Israel.

In Acts, I wondered whether we could look upon the one hundred and twenty as the fruit of the Lord's own ministry. You might say many persons were healed and blessed in the gospels, but the hundred and twenty represent more than that, they represent persons who had been constantly under the divine touch of Christ, and what marked them was continual prayer. The crowd of names might suggest spiritual personality which comes as a result of experience with Christ. Such persons were suitable for the launching of the dispensation in which we are and suitable vessels on whom the Holy Spirit could descend. In the next chapter, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and it says, "and it sat upon each one of them" (Acts 2:3): it would give them their own distinction. We know there was much blessing in what proceeded through Peter's preaching, there were three thousand converted, but we are now in the last days, 2 Timothy days, and much has entered into the history of the church publicly in the way of failure, and all in Asia had turned away from Paul. There has been much falling away from Paul's teaching in these last days, but you can see in the way that Paul writes how he valued those that were with him. There were persons who were with Paul, sympathetic with his teaching, supporting – "Luke alone is with me" – and then Mark is recovered, "for he is serviceable to me for ministry", a vessel fit for the Master's use. You get an impression that there were not too many vessels available, as in our day, and yet what could be wrought through them as being maintained in their relations with God and indeed what can be worked out in the last days of the assembly's sojourn here. I wondered whether it might be a line of thought that would on the one hand encourage us to see the divine resource available in a difficult day, but at the same time exercise us to show some of these moral features that are necessary for us to be fit for the Master's use.

E.O.P.M. It links very much with what we have been having locally. We have been considering the charge in Numbers, the charge of the order and the charge of the sanctuary, and this word that you started with, "what profit is it that we keep his charge" is a very relevant question for every one of us, and particularly in connection with

smallness, because the enemy can use smallness to discourage us. I just notice the note to “they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure” which takes us right back to the beginning of the history, God said He had borne them on eagles’ wings and brought them to Himself and they would be His possession (see Ex. 19:5), so that this line links us with God’s original thoughts in relation to what He was going to have with His people.

D.J.W. I think it does. Scripture makes provision for a day of small things and there may be just four or five of you together for the ministry meeting or the reading, insignificant as far as this world is concerned, but it is encouraging to see that heaven takes account of it and there is a book of remembrance. The book is for God. It shows His valuation and appreciation of persons who in their measure are prepared to be related to God and what He is doing in these last days.

E.O.P.M. I enjoy your emphasis on the power of the Spirit because five persons together for a ministry meeting or a reading, if they are there in dependence and self-judgment, have the whole wealth of what is available to us in the Spirit just as to fifty or a hundred.

D.J.W. That is encouraging. It would stimulate us to see the possibilities of our gatherings together in that light. The Holy Spirit is not limited by numbers – any limitation is on our side – but where there are these conditions I believe He would serve us. His service relates to bringing before us the glories of Christ, impressions of Christ which we can exchange, and would bring us to a valuation of one another too.

P.J.M. It is interesting that these persons are motivated by what is prophetic; it says, “Then they that feared Jehovah”.

D.J.W. I thought that stands in contrast to what is spoken of in verses 13 to 15. They were the conditions that were prevalent. In Matthew’s gospel it says the love of the most shall grow cold (see Matt. 24:12). We can be affected by what is prevalent around us. I think the more that we experience being together as those who fear

God and speak of Christ to one another; valuation of that experience would stimulate us.

P.J.M. It is easy to know what the world thinks (and naturally what we would think), “what profit is it that we keep his charge”, especially in a day of small things. You say, The meeting is getting smaller, there are fewer, what is the point; but what seems to affect these persons is that they had heard from God. God says, “Your words have been stout against me”. He is talking about the general mass of people. These persons were sensitive to how God felt and then they say, what we are going to do is to think about Him, His name, His rights and His charge. I thought you saw that in this protective circle of the second scripture that you read, those who were waiting and caring and had a view of the prophetic promises, and they say, no that is what we are waiting for, the world can come and go, but we are waiting on God.

D.J.W. In Malachi it was at the end of the dispensation, a previous dispensation when they were waiting for the Messiah, and no doubt they would be occupied with that, as we should be in relation to the Lord, at the end of the dispensation in which we are. I feel exercised that the thing should be known and experienced in our souls so that we are kept steady in an evil day; you come to it that you cannot afford to be without it.

P.J.W. The commendation for the sons of Zadok in Ezekiel is that “that kept the charge of my sanctuary” (Ezek 44: 15), when the children of Israel went astray. Do you think that would be something for us to think about? It was God’s people that went astray, but they kept the charge of His sanctuary in those conditions, and recovery came in.

D.J.W. There again, it was in a difficult day. All the settings here are difficult. I thought it would encourage us in the day in which we are because God is not unsympathetic with the pressures of the way, but as we seek to relate ourselves to Him in this way and to His things, the results are there for us to experience things that the world knows nothing about.

G.N. I wondered whether what underlies what you are bringing before us is an appreciation of the mystery. Would that help us as having an appreciation of Christ in the assembly as being separated to God and exclusively for Him, and help us in the last day in which we are?

D.J.W. I think it leads on to that, that the Holy Spirit is uniquely involved in the securing of the assembly for Christ and maintaining the assembly in freshness and vitality for Him. That is what has been departed from in the day in which we are, but these assembly truths as known and experienced are very precious things.

P.J.M. There seems to be no precedent for what God does here. It is something very attractive, “they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure ... and I will spare them”, and a book of remembrance is written. It is as though it is something new. I wondered how much divine Persons appreciate faithfulness in the declining times. We have a lot in Revelation 3 about the overcomer and what God will do for him. The time may be small and difficult and challenging, but the recompense is remarkable.

D.J.W. That is what I thought we might see, “they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure”, or ‘my own possession’, as the note says. God was looking for something from man and the mass had turned away, but that only underlines the valuation of those who feared Jehovah.

We do not have to be very old to see the tremendous decline in the fear of God generally, in this land and in many lands, and that has an affect on the behaviour of persons in a negative way, but our being maintained in the fear of God has a positive effect on our behaviour.

A.M. Solomon says, “In the fear of Jehovah is strong confidence”, Prov 14: 26. That helps us in our small day, but then the next verse says, “the fear of Jehovah is a fountain of life”. Does that involve drawing on the resources that are available to us?

D.J.W. That helps – we are intended to feel our weakness, but as we proceed along the path of faith and experience with God it gives us confidence in Him, and He answers the immediate need so that we are maintained. But then there is something beyond that. There

is the positive enjoyment of the truth. These persons that feared Jehovah and spoke often one to another would be in positive enjoyment of what they were proceeding with.

P.M. The fear of Jehovah suggests that He has rights and the thinking on His Name that He has the resource. In the setting in which the fear of Jehovah is spoken of here, where His rights have been denied, but in the midst of it there were persons who, in fearing Jehovah, were maintaining those rights, and in doing so affected God Himself. He brings in the resources in the thinking upon His Name, everything was there in God Himself.

D.J.W. That is the burden of what I have today, that on the one hand there is much to discourage, but on the other hand we need to take account of what there is in the way of resource. As we do so I think it paves the way for the fear of God being deepened in our hearts.

The deeper we are in the fear of God, the more we are sensitive as to His rights and the way that they are discerned here, but as pursuing the path of righteousness, we prove the resources that are available to us in Christ on high and the Holy Spirit here. That is what moved persons in the early 1800s – the truth of Christ glorified on high and His body here, and that defined a path for them. In taking that path they also proved the divine resources that there were.

P.M. God has rights over every man, and He has rights in relation to His house. It was those rights that were denied here: that would link with what you say as to the working out of assembly relationships with divine Persons, would it?

D.J.W. I am sure that is right. I just feel that we should keep before us the positive enjoyment, the end in view. I feel, for myself, that you can get unduly occupied with difficulties and the pressures of the way, and in a day of small things you tend to think of what you have not got, but I think God encourages us to see what we have and take it up in faith and be in the enjoyment of it.

J.A.B. Would that be implied in the “thinking upon His name”? These persons of whom you have read, from verse 13 to 15, did not

understand God. They said, Why should we walk mournfully before Jehovah? As you are saying, there is much to be borne in the testimony, but when we think upon His Name, when we get to God, then as you have been saying, there is much to enjoy and nearly four hundred and fifty years later, Simeon and Anna were in the full enjoyment of that, as thinking upon His Name?

D.J.W. That is why I read the passage in Luke because I thought that very thing, Simeon and Anna bore the characteristics of those persons in Malachi and therefore they were ready for the divine appearing in this little child. The moral characteristics that marked them made them suitable vessels who could get the full gain of the light that came in in Christ.

P.J.M. It is a fine link, she “spoke of him to all those who waited for redemption in Jerusalem”.

D.J.W. I have known old sisters like this, those who have quietly gone on consistently. They cannot contribute publicly to an occasion like this, but many a time you speak to them and they will speak to you about an impression of Christ. Such persons are valuable in every local assembly and in the testimony.

D.E.R. How is God to be served today?

D.J.W. I thought that firstly we take account of what pleases Him, and that determines our path, our interest, that they are not in the world, but are bound up with the Lord in His interest in His people.

God Himself gets much from our assemblings together, and we would be those who are in liberty to have part in the service of God.

We have often been told that we are here for the service of God and for the testimony. Having part in liberty in the service of God is the inside position, as it were, but we are here for the testimony too, involving that people can take account of what we are as formed in the truth and that we do fear God, as seen practically in our pathway here, and therefore we are a witness to Him here.

D.E.R. It seems that there was an outward form in serving God, both in Malachi and in Luke, but God was not pleased with it. In Malachi discernment came in as to those who truly served God and

those who served Him not: it was not in ritual or form, or in name, but it was in life and vitality.

D.J.W. There is very much profession in the day in which we are which would link with what you are saying, but this would involve reality – our own individual relations with the Lord and with divine Persons. No service for Him can flow other than from a healthy individual link with divine Persons.

P.J.M. It is quite specific here, “there was a man in Jerusalem” and this is what he was like, he was “just and pious, awaiting the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him”. There is a whole lot in that!

D.J.W. I thought we might take note of that, “just and pious”. In the world you do not see much of those features, but I think they are features that are formed as we cultivate our link with Christ. Who was as just and pious as He? Simeon was formed in those features, therefore he was one who could experience the guiding of the Holy Spirit. He could be sensitive as to when He appeared, He knew instinctively what there was in that child and that he was set for the fall and the rising up of many in Israel. In fact the light that he received was tremendous because it looks on to our own day, “a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel”.

P.J.M. You might say, but Simeon it is a baby! It is wonderful how spiritual things are communicated by spiritual means; the Spirit was upon him, he comes in the Spirit, he speaks in the Spirit, and suddenly you have this opening up of what God was going to do through this baby. Things are not what they seem even in a day of small things.

D.J.W. They are certainly not the way many persons would have been looking for the Messiah at this time. They would have expected Him to come to a palace with great pomp, and that is really why so many of His people missed Him. But not so with Simeon; Simeon was fully intelligent as to the way that God would work, the way that He would come in in Christ as a lowly babe in the perfection

of manhood to bring near to men God's love. He had a perception of that.

G.C.B. Could I go back to the matter of serving God? In these two scriptures and in 2 Timothy 2 it is quite clear that we are not to be left completely alone in our serving God, there are others, "those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" (v.22). That is an encouragement even in a broken day that the collective side is not gone.

D.J.W. I think we need to lay hold of that. There are persons today who say that everything collective is gone, but that is really a slight on the Spirit because He is the One who is going to maintain what is collective in that way and although things have become very small and scripture has allowed for that, yet what is collective is maintained. I think that that in itself, as we experience the things we are speaking of, would increase our valuation of one another as to the greatness of the things that we can share together. I have been impressed lately that the greatest privilege we can share with one another here is in the taking of the Lord's Supper and what flows out from it.

G.C.B. It is clear from this chapter in Luke that these persons were not waiting for the Lord to come as an event, but waiting for Him.

D.J.W. Yes, the Person.

G.C.B. And the Supper would be a demonstration of our joy in waiting for Him.

D.J.W. I think so. We were speaking in the week at home of our valuation of the Lord's Supper week by week and also of the gospel because those two occasions bring before us the Person in a distinctive way so that our affections might be stirred and kept fresh towards Him.

E.O.P.M. It is interesting putting those two together, the Supper and the gospel, because the maintenance of what is collective in vitality depends very much on individuals being right with God. I think all these scriptures bring the two things together, there is that which is

for God's pleasure collectively, but it depends, in a sense, on my being maintained in the reality of things and in the practice of the truth if I am going to contribute to what is collective in what is positive and for God.

D.J.W. I am sure that is right. The collective in that sense is only as strong as the individuals who compose it. That is, that we are drawing from the same source, we have experience with the same Person, we have impressions of the same Person and we share it with one another.

E.O.P.M. I was just thinking of the earlier reference to formality seen here in Luke, what was generally going on. It is sobering to think that the last state of the church as we have it in Revelation 3 before the Lord comes is one of profession in Laodicea, and those are the days we are in. We often – I speak for myself – rest in the view that Christendom out there is Laodicean, but I am part of that and the danger is that I become formal in what is for God and in my paying lip service to things and do not see that I am blind, naked and poor. That is an individual matter in Laodicea. The Lord is knocking at the door, “if any *one* ...” (v.20).

D.J.W. I feel that for myself, how easy it is to slip into what is just formal and routine, but drawing upon the Holy Spirit in dependence would preserve us from that. That would involve our lives day by day, relating ourselves to the Spirit. It is not something you can just switch on when you are in the meeting, but there is something in the work of formation that has gone on which can be liberated for the help and edification of one another as together.

J.W. I was wondering whether those in Malachi were revived to God's thoughts as to Jerusalem, and Simeon and Anna were those who were maintained in relation to that, as to God's thoughts as to Jerusalem. We cannot serve God unless we are really committed to His interest here in the assembly.

D.J.W. I think that is right. The two are inseparable. As has been said, what is collective is maintained so that serving God and serving

the saints are very much bound up together. The thought of Jerusalem would cover that.

J.W. What is maintained in these persons in Luke is holy conditions. I think things proceed because of that.

D.J.W. I thought that – you get the feeling that this was apart from all that was proceeding outwardly in Jerusalem at that time. Earlier in the chapter you have the shepherds keeping watch over their flock. There was a circle of things that was insignificant in relation to what was proceeding in Jerusalem publicly, but as you say, holy conditions were known there and therefore divine communications could be made known to them.

R.H.B. These persons were at the end of one dispensation, and on the threshold of another. Is the fact that Simeon speaks of what is to come, even though it was beyond his own dispensation, a secret to be sustaining, that the view is forward to what is before us? We are called to lay aside the things that are behind.

D.J.W. I think that helps because you get to the carrying forward of the dispensations. There is always something carried forward from the previous dispensation into the new. That brings out that God's thoughts are cumulative, nothing is left behind, but all are carried forward, so that in the day in which we are all God's previous thoughts have been carried forward. We are in a very precious day in that light.

R.H.B. It is striking how active the Spirit of God is in these early chapters in Luke. The angel announces that the Spirit of God would come upon Mary and the Spirit of God was upon Simeon and it was divinely communicated to him by the Spirit. It was not the Spirit's day yet, but He was announcing to them what was coming which is one of His services. In John the Lord speaks of it, "he will announce to you what is coming", John 16:13. Is it that that keeps us bright in our affections in a dark day?

D.J.W. That really fits our own day – to take account of what the Spirit is doing in the hearts of the saints. Someone spoke to Mr. Coates in relation to outward things in the world in relation to the

coming of Christ and Mr. Coates said I would rather look to see what is being developed in the hearts of the saints.

B.E.S. Simeon and Anna are in contrast with Eli in 1 Samuel. We find him sitting and then lying down in the temple, then sitting by the wayside. That is in contrast with what we have as to “one who did not depart from the temple, serving night and day”. It says in Psalm 134, “bless Jehovah, all ye servants of Jehovah, who by night stand in the house of Jehovah” (v.1).

D.J.W. On the one hand there were those who were very careless in relation to the things of God, but the contrast is seen in persons like Simeon and Anna.

B.E.S. Yes, and then there are other things that we can take a warning from in Eli – he did not discern a spiritual person and he did not keep his sons in order. All these things we get exhortations about as the background that is needed if we are to be serviceable to God.

D.J.W. I think it has already been quoted – spiritual things are conveyed by spiritual means. It requires these moral conditions in us to be sensitive as to divine communications.

M.W. It says of Simeon that he was “just and pious” and of Anna that she was serving with “fastings and prayers”. I wondered whether what we have said already is confirmed in that that the conditions require the denial of self, the making way for God and His resource and above all the recognition of His rights. Are they fundamentals to the enjoyment of what we have been speaking of?

D.J.W. I think they are. Piety involves bringing God into everything. It is very much absent in the world today, but I think it would encourage us that in whatever circumstance, we relate ourselves to God in a simple way. Such persons would be sensitive as to the leading of divine communications.

D.E.B. I was noting that the Lord’s natural parents came in according to the custom of the law and that may be something that marks us: it is virtuous so far. The customs of the law do need to be

maintained, but Simeon was looking for God's salvation, "mine eyes have seen thy salvation", and having seen that it was sufficient for Him. I wondered whether we need to have something of that Spirit while maintaining what is laid down in the good teaching, but we should have in view seeing something of God's salvation.

D.J.W. That would save us from mere routine. It is right that we come together, but it can become routine unless we are in the good of the features spoken of here in Luke 2 as seen in Simeon and Anna.

P.M. Did both these persons come in in the spirit of anticipation?

D.J.W. Yes, I think so. It says of Simeon "he came in Spirit into the temple". I think that would involve that he was anticipative of what might come in. We need to come together in the spirit of enquiry we may know a lot, but that is not necessarily what the Lord may want to bring forward in our times together. As being maintained anticipatively and in this spirit which was seen in Simeon we would be ready for divine communications. I think that even though we are just a few together we need to anticipate the possibilities of such an occasion. It involves the underlying moral state we are speaking of.

P.M. I thought it delivered us from the formality of 'another occasion'. It was divinely communicated to him that he should not see death until he should see the Lord's Christ. What a prospect, what an object for his affections as he came in the Spirit in the temple! Do you think if we really had some living sense that we were going to have a fresh impression of the Lord and His glory it would change the way in which we assemble?

D.J.W. Think of Simeon coming in every time, and he would think, is it going to be this time? You can almost feel that his heart would be full of anticipation.

J.W. The presentation of Christ is in a small way, a babe, but Simeon embraced it and the presentation becomes enlarged. Is that the way things can work sometimes?

D.J.W. I think so. It fits into the very concept of a day of small things, and yet what can come out from such a day! There are limitations on our side, but no limitations on the part of Christ or on the Holy Spirit. I think we need to be encouraged to see that.

D.N.S. I wondered whether this might help the young people. They may feel it is a time of small things and a time of reproach, but at the end of this section, the Lord was in Nazareth. That was a place of reproach and smallness, but it says, "And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit". It is not to hinder the growth of what is becoming serviceable to the Lord.

D.J.W. I think this is the way that growth takes place in our souls as simply seeking to take this up. Where there is simplicity of exercise and uprightness on our part, I think God would be pleased to answer that and lead us to a greater knowledge of Himself and being formed in the features that were like Christ.

P.J.M. If we are exercised as to the condition that prevails in Christendom – mention was made of Eli and his sons – it is interesting to see the way in which God does actually communicate His mind. He communicates it to a boy who came into that environment, a boy who grew up, first under the nurture and admonition of His mother, and then God speaks to Him and uses Him powerfully. Should that be an encouragement? I wondered if we should encourage our young people that, like Simeon here, God has promised something, His Son is coming, He has come and He is coming again and we are in anticipation daily and hourly of His coming.

D.J.W. What you are saying in relation to the younger ones is good because they can have a very real part in this. Quite often a reading is opened up by questions from young men and boys, questions which perhaps some of us who are older would not ask, but there is much that comes out of it. I think we should encourage them simply to have their part in these things. In 2 Timothy 4 it is obvious that there were not too many vessels available – that is like today – but I

think Samuel was one who was available to God, and that God values such persons as simply being available to the Lord.

We have been referring earlier to what has been carried forward in the dispensations and we have in Acts 1, in the one hundred and twenty, the carrying forward of a dispensation when the Lord was here in manhood, and they represent the fruit of His ministry. It was not a very great number – you might be surprised at that in view of the distinctive service of Christ – but these were persons who had had to do with Him in a formative way and in whom a spiritual personality had developed, a crowd of names. Each would have their own impression of Christ and when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost in the next chapter they are empowered to give expression to those impressions of Christ that they had, which had a very powerful effect on the testimony in Jerusalem.

E.O.P.M. It is important that we do not undervalue what we have in one another. If it is a day of small things, we need to make the most of every bit of the work of God that is available. The company here, the crowd of names, was not much bigger than we are in this room now, but as I have often thought, if you take a company of about a hundred persons who love the Lord and say on average they have twenty five years experience with God, that is hundreds of years of experience with God that we can draw upon – and then we sit back and say we have not got anything!

D.J.W. I think what you say is right, we need a true valuation of the work of God in one another and to seek to nurture and encourage it.

M.W. The matter, practically, of our gatherings is important? We may feel the smallness, but as we gather to the Lord's Name and make way for the Spirit and prove something of the temple functioning, I think most of us have found that what comes out is greater than the sum of the parts.

D.J.W. I am sure that is right. I would say too that the sisters have a valuable part. They are not audible, but if godly sisters commit themselves to the occasion and follow it prayerfully, I think that adds power, and the Spirit can use one and another to bring into

expression something of their thoughts. It is a very real sense of the body working in that way and each one is needed, however young or insignificant they may feel, they are needed.

E.O.P.M. The smaller the number, the more the sense of responsibility needs to develop in each one of us because there are fewer to carry things. If you have a hundred people to carry something and one or two are absent, you might not notice, but if you are only a dozen and two are absent, that is a far larger percentage; therefore the exercise in me to take up the charge and bear responsibility and to seek to maintain, as Samuel did, what is necessary in a very dark day is all the more important.

D.J.W. I think it is. These things are practical. I speak to the younger men affectionately, I trust, but in this particular area there is a great need for those to be available to preach the gospel. You may not feel up to it, but be exercised to make yourself available in simplicity to take it up and I think God would take notice of that and be pleased with it.

J.W. You said earlier that these persons were the handiwork of the Lord.

D.J.W. In the gospels you get very many persons who, for example, receive their sight, the deaf are made to hear, and the crushed are sent forth delivered and so on, but with these one hundred and twenty it is more than that. These are persons who no doubt had been constantly in the presence of Christ and who had taken account of His teaching and the way He did things and therefore they were suitable vessels upon which the Holy Spirit could come.

J.W. I think what you are saying is important. They were in the company of Christ, they were those who followed Him. The one who was to take the place of Judas was one who assembled with them when the Lord came in and went out, from the baptism of John. It is important to be in the company of the Lord both personally and collectively. They would be persons, speaking reverently, who knew the Lord intimately. They knew how He did things, they knew how

He operated and had been empowered by the Holy Spirit: they would do it the same way.

J.T.B. Do you think the reference to the crowd of names implies overcoming? The overcomer in Philadelphia has written upon him "the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God", Rev.

3:12. I wondered whether that would be heaven's answer to thinking upon His Name and also the features seen in Simeon as a resident of Jerusalem? God honours that by endorsing His work through the Name.

D.J.W. I think it helps bringing in the thought of the overcomer. If you read the addresses in Revelation 2 and 3 the valuation of heaven for the overcomer is clear because there is some special blessing for the overcomer. That, you might say, is taking up exercises, which involves sacrifice, but then there is something stamped upon that person in the name that is a direct product of their exercises with God.

J.T.B. It is really the outward recognition of what is there internally, constitutionally.

D.J.W. It is what goes through. That would be a great culmination of the dispensation in which we are. All that has been wrought out in this time by the Spirit in persons will go through and be in the day of display.

J.T.B. The crowd of names would bear the evidence of being inhabitants of Jerusalem do you think?

D.J.W. I think so. There is something distinctive about each of them.

P.M. Distinctive, and yet formed in the features of the One whose company they had been keeping. Does the continual prayer bring out that they had learnt from the One whose company they had kept?

D.J.W. I am glad you reminded me of that reference to prayer because that is really the moral feature that is brought in here,

persons who are continually marked by prayer. Such persons are taken account of in heaven.

P.M. Can you help us as to continual prayer? We know a little about prayer, but I would like to know something about *continual* prayer. I could not say much from experience, but I think it would involve your attitude characteristically. You are looking to God all the time. We feel the need of help all the time; you cannot literally pray all the time, but it is that attitude. It was “with one accord”. The company was united. Although there was such wealth there which had come from the hand of the Lord Himself, the company was united in the spirit of dependence for the next move in the testimony. Is that something that bears on the present day?

D.J.W. I think it is. They would have learnt that from the Lord Himself, particularly from Luke’s gospel where He is seen constantly as a praying Man. They would see that if things are going to be accomplished for God, it is in the maintenance of that spirit of prayer.

G.N. I thought the scripture bore on an earlier question, that God is served distinctively in relationship. I wondered whether the side of relationship is vital in the present time, primarily the relationship with God into which we have been brought, but with one another too.

D.J.W. These persons were related to God, they were praying with one accord, they were united in their prayers, because they were related to the same source. There can be no disunity if we are related to the same source.

E.O.P.M. The way the scripture is put here is related to the eleven and these women, rather than to the crowd of names, so it was a responsible element that saw the need for continual dependence in waiting upon God if they were to be kept in the way. It is very much like Simeon, waiting for the next move from heaven. It struck me that Simeon was just and pious, but awaiting. A man who is with God can afford to wait for God to say where the next move is and where it is coming from and where He is leading the people of God.

D.J.W. It relates to anticipation. What is the next step? To know that involves dependence, which links with prayer. If we are to

determine what is the next step, it could be that the next step would be the rapture, but we need to be sensitive in relation to these things.

D.E.R. Should we note that Peter stood up “in the midst of the brethren”? There was mutuality working and Peter was not independent. There was the recognition of God’s sovereignty in Peter, but Peter recognised the company because the company is greater than any individual in it. It was in the midst of the company that he stood up.

D.J.W. I think that is worthy to be taken account of. In all our actions in what we do, they should be in one accord. Peter related himself to the company. Gift is not greater than what there is in the local assembly. God uses gift for leadership, but it is also related to the saints.

B.E.S. Peter here was interested in restoring things. I was thinking of the way administration continued as a result of his efforts and how soon he rallied to the Lord speaking to him on the line of recovery.

D.J.W. He spoke as being a recovered man himself. The Lord said to him, “when once thou hast been restored, confirm thy brethren” (Luke 22:32), and that is what we see him doing in the early Acts”.

E.O.P.M. Is that what we get in Mark, even in 2 Timothy days? You get someone who was able to confirm for himself, “serviceable to me for ministry”.

D.J.W. It is interesting that he says, “serviceable to me for ministry”. That is that he could take account of Mark as a recovered man who was in line with what Paul had taught, that is that he was not going out on an independent line again – he did so earlier – but he is now brought back and in relationship with Paul so that he can be serviceable to him when many had turned away from him.

P.J.M. There are two aspects to this – Mark is a recovered man and serviceable, but Paul is also adjusted in the way that he thinks of him, “serviceable to me”. There is that bond and affinity between the

two, but something that belonged to the past has not been allowed to sabotage the Lord's work at the present.

D.J.W. But rather strengthen it do you think?

P.J.M. Absolutely, one recovered man is a valuable thing.

D.J.W. Timothy had a special relationship with Paul, but you almost get an impression that Mark has been brought into that, "serviceable to me for ministry".

P.M. In chapter 2 you get vessels that are serviceable to the Master, Mark would be one of those would he?

D.J.W. That is what I thought and would perhaps exercise each one of us also to be vessels fit for the Master's use, particularly in a day of small things when there may not be too many vessels available.

Walton

15 June 2002

Key to Initials:

J.T. Brown, Edinburgh; J.A. Brown, Grangemouth; R.H. Brown, East Finchley; D.E. Burr, Colchester; G.C. Bywater, Buckhurst Hill; A. Martin, Buckhurst Hill; P. Martin, Colchester; E.O.P. Mutton, Walton; P. Mutton, Walton; G. Napthine, Colchester; D.E. Remmington, St. Albans; D.N. Smith, Chelmsford; B.E. Surtees, Felixstowe; P.J. Walkinshaw, Gillingham; M. Webster, Buckhurst Hill; D.J. Wright, Havering; J. Wright, Havering

SYMPATHY WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

David Wright

2 Kings 4: 1-7; Matthew 25: 1-13; Revelation 22: 16,17

I think it has been evident in ministry of late that there has been emphasis on the greatness and the scope of the Holy Spirit's service, particularly relating to the closing days as we are on the eve of translation. The Holy Spirit, speaking reverently, will not fail in His mission: that is assured. His mission relating to the securing of the assembly for Christ and maintaining it in vitality, freshness and response for His heart as we see in the last scripture read, the Holy Spirit will not fail in that mission.

I read these scriptures that we might be exercised to be related to the Spirit so that we are sympathetic with Him in what He is doing in these last days. To see the greatness of what there is in the Holy Spirit, wonderful divine Person, pleased to come here to dwell in us, and, beloved brethren, that we might practically come to the realisation that the Holy Spirit is indispensable to us.

Where we read in 2 Kings 4, we have a widow bereft of all support, and a creditor had come to take away her two children to be bondmen. It was a desperate situation and she turns to the man of God, Elisha, perhaps seeking to look to the man of God that he might have something, but he asks her what *she* has. As we have said in the reading, in a day of small things we often think of what we have not got, but I would seek to draw attention to the greatness of what we have in the Holy Spirit. As we know the oil is a type of the Holy Spirit. She discounts it, "Thy handmaid has not anything at all in the house, but a pot of oil", almost discounting altogether what was there. There are no limitations with the Holy Spirit. What this scripture brings out is that any limitations that there are are on our side; the limitations are in the vessels, but the oil stayed. The man of God says to her, "Go, borrow for thyself vessels abroad from all thy neighbours, empty vessels" – empty vessels, vessels that therefore would be ready to be filled in type with the Holy Spirit.

There are several persons in scripture who are said to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I find that I am tested as to that, but I can see the potential of it, empty vessels in order that they might be filled with the Holy Spirit. So, in a day of small things, not very many vessels are available, but think of the potential if the vessels that are available are full of the Holy Spirit. We need to be maintained in a spirit of dependence in order to experience this. We have had much teaching, and we have much teaching on our bookshelves and we are thankful for it, and I would encourage all of us, particularly the younger ones, to seek to find time to read more of it. But, in coming together we need this fresh touch of the Spirit, that He would have something in mind. He is the dispenser of heaven's store, and He has something specifically in mind for us, as we seek to make way for it.

She went from him and shut the door upon him and upon her sons, they brought the vessels to her and she poured out, "And it came to pass when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said to her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed". That brings out the limitless character of supply in the Holy Spirit, the oil stayed. The Holy Spirit is One that would help us here to fulfil our responsibilities. It says, "She came and told the man of God; and he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy sons on the rest". The Holy Spirit would bring us into a very blessed inheritance. We have been "blessed ... with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Eph 1: 3), and the Holy Spirit would be the power whereby we are able to be in the enjoyment of those blessings. You sometimes see up and down the country grand old houses of the past, castles may be, and they are descending into ruin because there is not the money necessary to upkeep them. In the Holy Spirit we have One who is able to maintain us in the enjoyment of our spiritual inheritance, that which is not going to fade away, but which is eternal. We have our responsibilities in the service of God and in the testimony and we fulfil that in the power of the Spirit. How can we maintain our part freshly and effectively in the service of God other than in the power

of the Holy Spirit? We go out into testimony from the sphere of privilege and it can be seen that there is some difference, that we can carry the testimony to men in the way in which we have been formed by the Spirit Himself in features like Christ, the way we are to fulfil that responsibility. This woman was now able to pay her debt and live with her sons on the rest. You might say, it was like an income for life, that glorious Person, ever available to us to draw on in a spirit of dependence. May we be encouraged from this scripture to see the limitless character of what is available in the Holy Spirit.

I read in Matthew – there we have oil again as a type of the Spirit. We have ten virgins, five of them are foolish and five are prudent. The difference between them was that the prudent had oil with them, and the foolish did not – the wise had oil in their vessels, they had the Spirit with them. It says, “Now the bridegroom tarrying, they all grew heavy and slept”. They *all* grew heavy and slept, that would include the five prudent. It brings out what we are capable of and that the waiting time is the testing time. Thus, the present time is a testing time. “They all grew heavy and slept”, but then “in the middle of the night there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him”, a most unexpected time. This has been likened to the call at the beginning of the recovery to the truth in the early 1800s when there was the call of the bridegroom in relation to the assembly, and those that were in tune with the Spirit were the ones who responded to that call. Mr. Darby and others had light as to the living Head in heaven and the Holy Spirit here, the body here, and that would involve moving out from what was in the established church in order to enter into and enjoy assembly truth, “Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him”. This found out the five foolish virgins. It says that they did not have oil with them and their torches were going out. First of all it says, “Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their torches”, I take it that unless you trim the torches the light shining out from them would be impaired. It would exercise us to remove anything of the flesh that would hinder the outshining of the light. It is interesting to note that of Enoch it says that before his translation he has the testimony that he had pleased God (see Heb.

11:5). I think typically he was one like a prudent virgin and had oil in his vessel, because he had that testimony that others could take account of that he pleased God. I am sure we would like that testimony ourselves, that before our translation we had the testimony that we pleased God. Light was shining out from him in a dark day, he walked with God.

Then the five foolish asked the five prudent to give them of their oil. The oil can only be obtained in that way by a transaction; what I have I cannot pass on to you and you cannot pass on to me. We have to have the transaction for ourselves; thus the difference between reality and profession. We spoke a little about profession in the day in which we are and we can easily drift into it, the five foolish were like that. They were those who professed, but the oil was not there, the Spirit was not there, and they were not ready when the Bridegroom came. They say, "Go rather to those that sell, and buy for yourselves. But as they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and the ones that were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut. Afterwards come also the rest of the virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us", they use the Lord's Name but He says, "I do not know you" – how solemn that is. It brings out the importance of the reality that we spoke of, that we are vessels in which the Holy Spirit is free and maintaining us in affection for Christ, maintaining in us bridal affection for Christ, for the Bridegroom when He comes. He says, "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour". That is a word for us in the waiting time. We do not know the day nor the hour, but we have the provision in the Holy Spirit to be kept alert and sensitive as to what divine movements are in the last days in which we are. May we know something of it.

In Revelation we see the great culmination of triumph in this dispensation in which we are. It is very encouraging. It says, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies". Our brother spoke of what was collective in the reading, and this verse shows that the Spirit would maintain that right until the finish. To suggest anything otherwise is a slight on the blessed service of the Holy Spirit Himself. "I Jesus have sent mine

angel to testify these things to you *in the assemblies*", and as the Holy Spirit is free certain things are maintained; they will be maintained right until the finish. "*I* Jesus", that is you might say the personality of Christ stamped upon everything and that would be so as the Holy Spirit has His sway. The divine stamp of Christ is seen in everything that finds its source in the Holy Spirit. It says, "*I* am the root and offspring of David", Rev. 22:16. That is another thing that the Holy Spirit will maintain, the greatness of the Person of Christ.

He will maintain it in our affection, He will maintain it as truth. The root of David involves His deity and the aspect that John speaks of in his gospel, but I say for the help of our young that we live in a day when there are sects around who deny the deity of Christ. That is they deny that the Lord Jesus is God, but the Lord Jesus in coming into manhood never ceased to be what He was by reason of what He became, but He was perfect in what He became. The Holy Spirit would maintain that in our affections, that the Lord Jesus stands out distinct as a glorious Man. The 'offspring' side in Matthew's gospel brings out the reality of His manhood and yet He never ceased to be God. How great the Person of the Lord Jesus is and the Holy Spirit would maintain that in our affections right until the end.

Then He says, "the bright and morning star", the harbinger of a new day. What a day that will be when Christ will be supreme, when He will be publicly vindicated. The light of that should shine in our hearts. We sang at the outset as to the darkness there is all around us and yet the radiancy of the light that shines can be seen in the bright and morning star, a day soon to come in when there will be no sighing or crying which is so related to the scene in which we are, but He will give us some sense of the greatness of the One who is the harbinger of a new day, who will bring in a day when every tear will be taken away and Christ will have His place of supremacy.

Then he says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come" – what a wonderful triumph that is! It is not unity, it is more than that, it is unison which brings out what the Holy Spirit has wrought in the bride. The Lord Jesus has lost much through the breakdown of man in the dispensation in which we are, in the public breakdown and ruin

in which we have had our part. He has lost much, but here we see that it is all recovered, because of the power, the presence and the service of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit and the bride say "Come". He will have recovered to Himself the assembly in all its beauty, in all its glory, without spot, without wrinkle or any of such things. What a wonderful climax of the dispensation in which we are! How great it is! May we be encouraged to take account of this. May we be exercised to be related to the Spirit so that we are ready for the call that is so soon to come, the summons to heaven.

Then it goes on to say, "And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; he that will, let him take the water of life freely". Another thing I believe that the Holy Spirit would maintain is the evangelical spirit right until the Lord comes. There is that available in the gospel to all men, "whosoever will" – it is available to all, there is none turned away, but the greatness of what the Holy Spirit holds is available to all. The Lord Jesus as the living water, the Spirit in its living character is available, "he that will, let him take the water of life freely". It is just a simple impression I had. On the one hand it is a great encouragement that the Spirit will not fail in His mission. These scriptures plainly bring that out and there will be that maintained in a way of assembly response right until the end of the dispensation, but let us be exercised to be related to the Spirit so that the reality of Christianity might be known and enjoyed and that we are ready and sensitive as to the leadings of the Spirit in the present day. May it be so, for His Name's sake.

Walton

15 June 2002

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

John Spinks

Genesis 22: 1-14; John 8: 1-11; Romans 12: 1, 2

In reading these scriptures I wish to touch on the thought of sacrifice. The gospel goes out on the basis of the sacrificial work of the Lord Jesus. This section in Genesis 22 is typically the Father and the Son. It can be viewed as a believer being tested, but I wish to look upon it from the aspect of God Himself and what He has provided for man's blessing and the cost that it has been, the cost to the Father and the cost to the Son. This is the first place in which love is spoken of in scripture, the love of the father for the son, "thine only son". Think of the Father's feelings when He sent the Son as Saviour of the world. Think of His delight in that blessed Man, going through this scene, every movement, every step, every action in keeping with the will of God. For the first time in the history of mankind there was a Man who fully honoured God. The hymn says:

Where man God's rights withheld,
Thine offering excelled,
What odours choice He smelled,
So rich in thee.

How wonderful it is to think of that! One Man, a real Man, but no mere Man, a Man who came from glory's heights to take on a human condition to glorify God and to offer Himself as a spotless victim so that you and I could be set free from the bonds of sin and come into a knowledge of God as a Saviour God and into a relationship with Him. That is the great end in the glad tidings, God would have man come into a relationship with Himself, freed from the terrible effects of sin. I do not suppose any of us here would deny that sin has caused havoc in the world. The whole scene is marked by sorrow and sadness. Everywhere you look, especially what we see in the papers, the testimony universally to the terrible conditions that sin has wrought in the world, persons who are suffering grievously from the effects of sin. Men sometimes say, why

does God not do something about it? Well, God has done something about it. That is the truth of the glad tidings, He has intervened in the person of our Lord Jesus, the Person of His only Son.

It says in verse 4, "On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar". God had anticipated the scene. He was never taken aback by it, He saw it from afar. The death of Christ was not just something that God had to resort to, He had it in His mind from before the foundation of the world. It speaks about the blood of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world (see 1 Peter 2:20), so God had the remedy before the need arose, He had His own Son. Think of the glory of it, think of God as trying man in every circumstance, man in innocence, then under law; every situation that God put man into only brought out the terrible condition of man's heart away from God, unable to do anything but sin and move further away from a Saviour God. It says, "Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and the knife". What does that mean?

These are instruments of judgment. Man went away from God, and the only way that that could be met was by judgment. But who could bear the judgment? Would it be you or me? We would be eternally banished from the presence of God, but there was One glorious Man who could bear the judgment and that is the One on whom God placed everything. It says, "Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it on Isaac his son", I think the wood of the burnt-offering would be the precious humanity of Christ, who carried everything through to completion. Then he piled the wood, bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar upon the wood. All this reminds us of the death of Christ, the great transaction that took place in Calvary, the altar was there. Who could be a sacrifice, who could meet the righteous requirements of a holy God? Only the holy Person of the Lord Jesus. So he "piled the wood; and he bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slaughter his son". Then there was an intervention from heaven. Just at the point

where Isaac would have been killed it says, "And the Angel of Jehovah called to him from the heavens, and said, Abraham, Abraham!" At the cross of Christ there was no intervention from heaven. The voice that was heard was the cry from the lips of the Saviour, "My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me?", Matt 27: 46. Think of that, think of the One who had gone through this scene in holy communion with God, every moment of His life, every step had been pleasing to the Father. He could say, "I knew that thou always hearest me" (John 11: 42), but God did not answer Him at that time. "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?", and there was no answer to that cry. The answer came in resurrection but the sword of judgment fell on the holy head of Jesus with no mitigation. God placed everything on Him, He met the whole sin question, everything that came in through man, sin and death. "By one man sin entered into the world and by sin death" (Rom 5: 12), these two things. They were met by Christ and He met them to God's glory. How wonderful it is. Nothing remains now but blessing as we sang in the hymn:

The river of His grace ...
Is flowing o'er the barren place
Where Jesus died.

I love to think of this hour of the glad tidings when the river of God's grace is still flowing towards men in this terrible evil scene, bringing grace. The grace of a Saviour God has appeared; it appeared in Christ and is continued now and the Spirit is appealing.

Those who preach the glad tidings are making an appeal on God's behalf. The apostle Paul says, "We are ambassadors therefore for Christ, God as it were beseeching by us ..., Be reconciled to God", 2 Sam. 5:20. It is not that we can effect reconciliation, that work has been done, but we can be reconciled to God. We can take the benefits and the blessing that has been effected through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and God's righteousness is available, that what God finds in Christ can be put to our account.

Think of being clothed in the righteousness of God. What God finds in that Man who is on His right hand is placed upon a believer so that

God views him as being in Christ; never to stand before Him to bear the consequences of His wayward path. How wonderful it is, the glad tidings of a Saviour God is appealing in Christ.

So it says here, "I know that thou fearest God, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind was a ram caught in the thicket by its horns" – another type of the Lord Jesus who was held by the will of God. He came to do His will, "Lo, I come, in the roll of the book that is written of me to do, O God, thy will", Heb 10: 9. That will involved that He had to go the whole way, He was obedient unto death and that the death of the cross. God's will involved what had to be secured in a sacrificial basis because things had come in and the only way that God could righteously meet them was in the death of His Son. So we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

Think of the feelings of God, He who spared not His own Son. That little word "His own", speaks volumes. Think of One who had come here into manhood and God claimed Him, "thine only son whom thou lovest" – think of the feelings of the holy God. He was prepared to go to such lengths to provide a righteous basis for you to come into blessing.

In John 8 we have the Lord Himself, moving through this scene. He comes into the temple and this woman is brought to Him and they say to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been taken in the very act, committing adultery". These men had no moral power to bring an accusation against the woman because they were in the same position as she was. They were sinners judging sinners and the answer is very beautiful, "But Jesus, having stooped down, wrote with his finger on the ground". We touched that this morning, the precious stoop of the Saviour. He came into manhood, that was the first stoop. "He thought it not an object of rapine to be on equality with God, he emptied himself taking a bondman's form". Then He stooped into death. But let us think for a moment as to the manhood of Christ, that first stoop. When the Lord Jesus came into manhood the eye of God was upon Him. These men going out was the result of the first stoop of Christ, because when Christ appeared on the

scene, every other man was put out of court, and there was only one Man without sin before God. These men went out one by one – that was the first stoop, that put them out; the second stoop retained the woman – the second stoop involved His death. How wonderful that is! The Lord Himself could have gone straight to glory as having glorified God on the earth, every other man is put out of court, but He had more in mind, He had you and me in mind. The woman represents humanity and God determined that you and I should come into blessing. We are retained in His presence. So they “went out one by one ... Jesus was left alone and the woman standing there. And Jesus, lifting himself up and seeing no one but the woman, said to her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Has no one condemned thee? And she said, No one, sir. And Jesus said to her, Neither do I condemn thee: Go, and sin no more”. We touched on that a little this afternoon, God was in Christ, not imputing trespasses, but reconciling the world to Himself. That had in view and anticipated His death. Everything the Lord did in His life anticipated His death because He had another world in view, a world where He is the Sun and Centre, and the woman represents humanity that becomes a beneficiary of the grace of God. “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more”. That is the present position. The Lord is not looking upon you to condemn you. He has done sufficient to bring you into His presence eternally, to have a living vital link with Him. That work is the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus. He did not shrink from it, He went the whole way, even to the death of the cross. We have spoken about the sacrifice that the Father made, the sacrifice that the Lord made.

I want to touch here in Romans – what is the answer to be? Romans brings out the glory of the present dispensation. One man has been set aside and another Man has been introduced, a new Head for man, that is Christ; that is Romans 5, there is a new Head for man. “By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death” (Rom 5: 12), that is Adam, that is our first parent as after the flesh. What did he bring in, nothing but a progeny marked by sin, a fallen race. But here Christ is introduced as a new Head for man and God

would put you in touch with Him, the Lord Himself would appeal to you to come into touch with Him, the precious Saviour. A new head means that we can come into all the benefits and blessings that are brought to us in that Man who so delighted His heart. He is not now in earth, He is not now walking this scene. He is in glory, but the benefits of His death are available and the benefits of His risen life are available. Not only can we be saved by His death, but we may be saved in the power of His life. That is a wonderful thing, a risen glorious Man and He can impart His own life. He could not have done that when on earth; that was unique, that stood by itself. In the days of His flesh the humanity of Christ was unique. It says, "who shall declare his generation?", Acts. 8: 22. No one could do it. He stood alone in the annals of history, unique, sinless humanity, but now living in heaven He can impart the Holy Spirit, He can impart His risen life and you can walk and be saved in the power of His life. So it says, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice". The compassions of God were seen in the death of Christ, God having regard for the condition of His creature, but He is now looking for an answer, "to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service". What is in man in the flesh is not acceptable to God. That is the way that Cain took. Cain took a way of his own devising and ignored the sin-offering that was lying at the door. Abel came by way of the sin-offering and presented a sacrifice that was acceptable to God (see Genesis 4). That is the way that we can come into God's presence, "to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service". God is looking for an answer. Paul says, "What shall we say then?", Rom 9: 14. The gospel has been presented very feebly, but what is going to be the answer? If our bodies are going to be acceptable to God they must be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has come as a result of the death of Christ and is a very great blessing. The death of Christ was necessary for the gift of the Spirit and that is available in the glad tidings. The love of God is seen in all its fulness and the Holy Spirit would shed it abroad in our hearts. How full the gospel is! God would supply you with everything that makes

you suitable for His presence. Eternally He will have men in His presence made suitable, and God will have delight in it, He will fill His house with persons who have been secured by the precious blood of Christ, persons who can praise and answer to Him and respond to Him in a suitable way, but that is available to you now, “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service”. Then it goes on to say, “be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God”. This brings us into alignment with the precious humanity of Christ. He did it in a unique way and He knew what lay before Him, the will of God involved and He had to go by way of sacrifice and death – we do not know what the will of God involves for us. It sometimes can be difficult, but nevertheless God will help us in it – “be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God”.

What a wonderful thing it is to come to, that whatever the will of God is it is acceptable to us, because we are vessels of mercy prepared for glory. That is the hope of the believer. In the short time that is left we can prove these things, God will lead us and bring us into an area of blessing. The assembly of God is comprised of those who love Christ and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It is a circle of affection, a circle of those who have been secured by the death of Christ. The will of God would bring us into that and we can be here for His pleasure. Let us accept that if God has come to us in a sacrificial way, we must answer in a sacrificial way. Our bodies are not our own. It says, “ye are not your own? For ye have been bought with a price: glorify now then God in your body”, 1 Cor 6: 19,20. It is a most wonderful thing that a person who has been under the domination of sin can be secured for God’s pleasure and glorify God in their body. May it be so, may everyone of us make committals tonight as coming under the reign of grace to answer to God’s overtures in the glad tidings. May the Lord bless the word, For His Name’s sake.

Birmingham

15 September 2002