

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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AT A BURIAL MEETING

(i) A TROPHY OF GRACE

Robert McClean

Galatians 2: 20; Ephesians 2: 4-10; Revelation 3: 12

One thing that can be said about our brother is that he was a trophy of divine grace. He knew it. He was conscious – he would have said it himself – that he was a rebel – but then who of us is not a rebel? – yet he came to know this One. It says, “but in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith”. He knew the Son of God, “the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me”. Our brother knew the reality of that, “the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me”. Oh! What a wonderful thing!

What a wonderful triumph that we can gather here! It is a sober occasion; death is a sober thing. God would speak to us. In the presence of death God speaks. But then you may ask, What is He saying to me? He would say that this one had faith, “The faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me”.

In Ephesians, I was thinking of where it speaks of grace. It speaks of God’s great love – our brother knew the great love of God. What a change, a witness to us. There are those here who can witness to the change in our brother’s life when the Lord Jesus came into it. If you were to go into his house you would find, on the wall, in every room texts and there are other things that would be the mark of one whose faith was in God. This chapter speaks of grace. I said of him that he was a trophy of divine grace. Oh! I trust that each one here is a trophy of divine grace. It says, “ye are saved by grace”. Then it says, “that he might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus” – I thought of that in relation to Revelation, the word to the overcomer in Philadelphia. Where we have read it is the Lord Jesus Himself dictating a letter to the apostle John to be sent to these assemblies, and He has this word to the overcomer. We are not here to eulogise our brother, he had his faults as we all do, but all

that is past and in the coming ages, God is going to display, so he will be like a trophy. We might have our trophies and be very proud of them, but think of God's trophies. What a great thing it is to be one of those trophies!

In Revelation chapter 3 it moves on beyond being a trophy even. This was the scripture that came to mind when I heard of our brother's death – that he was an overcomer and that he would be a pillar, just as he was a trophy of divine grace, he would be “a pillar in the temple of my God”. This is the Lord speaking Himself. Our brother was often affected by the Lord's words when He said, “I ascend to My Father and your Father, and to my God and your God” (John 20: 17) – the fact that the Lord brought us in and included us.

Here the Lord speaks of “my God”, that is the portion that our brother will have. We see that he is in death now, but the Lord will raise him and then it says, “he shall go no more at all out” – to be in the presence of the Lord, as will everyone that trusts and loves Him. Then it goes on – think of the Lord, you may say, inscribing on that pillar, “the name of my God”. God is happy to have His Name inscribed on that pillar that will be our brother in that temple. “And the name of the city of my God”. Our brother liked that Psalm which speaks of Zion “This one and that one was born in her” (Ps 87: 5), that is the city of my God, “the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven, from my God, and my new name”. That would be the name of revelation of the Lord; it is what is new, not what is old, not what has gone before, it is what is new. Our brother had a link in his life with what is new. Even the fact that the Lord was pleased to take him on the Lord's Day would connect him with the start of a new week, the eighth day it speaks of in some places, but here the Lord is inscribing these things. It is like a trophy that has the name of the person that won it written on – think of these names – the Person that won our brother's soul for God. Think of God's Name being inscribed on that pillar.

May we be encouraged by that. No doubt the Lord would speak to us and speak to our souls and ask us where we are. Will we, will you, will I be a pillar in His temple? He would raise the

question with us, but there is no question in relation to our brother who is now with Him. May the Lord encourage us and bless His word.

(ii) ONE WHO RETURNED

Kenneth Turner

Isaiah 51: 11-12 (“... that comforteth you”)

Our beloved brother was one who returned. We should all, no doubt, take that place, that we have returned. I knew him, as probably some others here, when he was a young man, over fifty years ago, and then there was a gap, and then later our brother returned. He returned to his own father, literally he returned to his own father, but he also returned to God. I have no doubt that he heard the preaching many times in that little room in Barrow on Humber, but later he returned to his beloved father, and he returned to the Saviour, the Saviour God. He came into the joy of being ransomed, being redeemed. There is a way of return through the blood of Jesus: he came that way and returned. He was of the ransomed who returned, the ransomed of the Lord Jesus and came under the control and sway of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus. He came to know the One who had died for him who, “gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2: 6); he embraced that and returned, not only to his own father, but to God, His Father, and to the Lord Jesus, coming to know Him as His Saviour, and Lord.

And, as has been said, he was a preacher. At one time I went to Barrow and his father entertained me when I was preaching, and we have entertained him when he has come to Rotherham to preach, we have enjoyed having him and loved him. Now there is gladness and joy for him. He came into gladness and joy through the glad tidings and that will be his portion for ever. He is already with Christ, which is very much better, away from all the sorrow and sighing which belongs to this poor world. For he is in the presence of Jesus, he is in paradise with the One who died for him. That is a wonderful thing but what is to come is even more wonderful. Our brother has mentioned Zion, and sovereign mercy, and he will enjoy mercy forever in the bright realms above as a vessel of divine mercy, “before prepared for glory”, Rom. 9: 23.

May we just be encouraged and comforted as to our brother. It has been a great comfort to find someone who returned. We do hear of persons going away, but perhaps not so many returning. We would like to see some return, including some that are here today. Come back, return to God, your Maker, "Jehovah thy Maker", Isa 51: 13. He created us for His own glory and for His eternal praise. Why should we not have part in it now? Why should we not have part in the joy now, the joy that we are going to have? Our brother knew something of eternal life, here. He will have it in eternity, what a blessed portion is ours, and we shall be with him then and surrounding the One who made the way through for us, our blessed Saviour, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world", John 1: 29. Have we all trusted Him? Have we all bowed the knee to Him and come into this joy now, the joy and peace in believing? May the Lord bless the Word.

(iii) ENRICHING MANY

Keith Samways

2 Corinthians 6: 10 (from "... as poor, but enriching many")

This scripture is not about money, not about pounds, shillings and pence, but about the physical sufferings of one man, Paul the apostle. He, I suppose, as among many men, suffered physically for the sake of the testimony, the sake of his Master. What was in him as a Christian shone out. In another account it speaks about what happened to him, ship-wrecked, three days in the deep, night and day, he physically suffered. I want all here present to understand that this is not about money. He speaks about, "as poor, but enriching many", that enrichment would have been as a result of the goodness of God, to put Paul's ministry into the canon of the scripture. Outwardly the Corinthians said as to him that he was physically weak ... contemptible, they said all sorts of things about him. Outwardly what was visible in Paul, in man's eyes, was nothing; you could point at him from many ways. There is a complete difference, amongst Christians; certain persons carry in presence what they are. What they are can be seen in effect as they are amongst men. Paul was just that. Where did he get that? He got it from His Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have had the privilege of having our brother in my home, and what always marked him was that he left something with you. You felt enriched as a result of his company. You felt better having simply entertained him for a few days. He was no trouble, always ready to do his bit in the entertaining, to help. It was refreshment to my spirit; he always left some spiritual deposit with us all. There has been testimony rendered as to the way our brother preached, the way he was able to express the greatness of the glad tidings. God's glad tidings, how enriching that is. You say he has been taken out of the way, the Lord has taken him to be with Himself; there is a gap left, we shall miss him. Who is going to stand in that gap? Am I ready for it? "As poor, but enriching many". I love to think of what was in that physical vessel. What was in our brother. Paul speaks

about it elsewhere, “this treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4: 7), God’s investment in men, women, and children is so great that He sent His only begotten Son that there might be something for His own praise and His glory. Am I prepared to fill the gap that has been left? Our brother’s physical body is with us now, but there is a gap left, he is with Christ. Somebody has to step into that gap, let us be “as poor, but enriching many”.

The next statement Paul makes, “as having nothing, and possessing all things”, I want to take you into the court of Agrippa in Acts 26. Paul was standing there in chains, he had just been brought out of the Roman jail. To look at him you would say, that man literally has not a thing on earth; yet his heart was so full that he almost persuaded the persons that were listening to him. I would love to fill the gap, taking up the responsibility that is left to be able to express, “possessing all things”. It speaks about an inheritance amongst the sanctified. What a company that is! This is not a question of what is sectarian; this is an inheritance amongst the sanctified. Our brother had his part in that. How do we have our part in the inheritance amongst the sanctified? Outwardly you would say he had nothing, but in that human vessel, in that body, the spirit now with Christ, he had nothing yet he possessed all things. What our brother has spoken about, the trophy of divine grace – what a trophy it has been, so precious, just one individual taken to be with Christ. Relieved from suffering, pain, all these things, our brother went through it all – he is now with Christ which is very much better.

But what that brother possessed from that earthen vessel was of such a character, that it refreshed us in his love, and imparted something of the things that were actually within that human vessel.

He had nothing, you might say, and yet he possessed all things.

These things have been put within the grasp of men, women and children. The gap is now open, and there is one gone in whom these experiences were true as with the apostles, one man of like passions with ourselves (see Acts 14: 15); another man who we knew and knew well expressed these simple statements in scripture

“as poor but enriching many; as having nothing, and possessing all things” – it is open to us all.

Grimsby

18 February 2003

Burial of John Franklin

AT A MARRIAGE MEETING

(i) FAITHFUL, PRUDENT, GOOD

Eric Burr

Matthew 24: 45; 25: 21

We have just sung (hymn 163), in the anticipation which marks us all as believers, about the expected coming of the Lord. I trust that that remains fresh and powerful in the minds of everybody here, young or old. We go on from day to day and we live lives in this world and we are here, and I expect it is true, as many would admit, that we do not remember all the time that the Lord is coming soon. It is interesting that in Revelation the Lord says, “the Spirit and the bride say, Come” (22: 7) and Jesus says, “I come quickly” (v.7). The Lord would help us to be here in anticipation of that great day.

The marriage may provide opportunity for ministry in relation to the coming of the Lord and our being ready for Him, and such an occasion brings before us not only the personal expectation of the coming of the Lord, but that great sense of corporate expectation of it. The Lord would use every occasion to stimulate us in relation both as to the personal and individual, aspect of expectation, and what I might speak of as the corporate expectation of His coming.

Until the Lord comes we will be in a condition of responsibility and one inescapable fact about taking up marriage is that it sets you on a fresh path of responsibility. We know our sister and we know, to some degree – naturally speaking less – of our brother, save if I might make a comment, my impression of our brother is one who desires to be faithful.

I read these two scriptures because they both relate to a time when the one who is superior, and the one to whom the servants are responsible, is away. It bears, therefore, on the responsibility of the present time. There are three things said about the bondman in these scriptures – twice is said, “faithful”, once is said “prudent”, or as the Authorised Version says, “wise”, and the third is “good”. I am sure that our beloved brother and sister would accept the

exhortation, as we all would, that these three things are to mark us while we wait for the Lord, faithful, prudent and good. In each of these parables Jesus speaks, the bondmen were charged with responsibility. Some were found out.

I was thinking about these things because it is very easy to have doctrinal marriage meetings, but marriage is not all about doctrine – marriage is a practical day by day experience and the first thing that is called for is faithfulness. I need not remark, as our brother and sister have been married today, on faithfulness to one another. What prime importance that has in a world where it is discounted and people turn away from it, give it up and have no real sense of responsibility to be faithful in the bond that they have taken on. The Lord would use occasions like this to remind us, as a marriage ceremony used to say ‘marriage is the union of one man and one woman for life’. Let us keep that strongly before us, that our affections, married or not, do not stray where they should not stray.

“Faithful” is also in relation to responsibility here and as the teaching of these scriptures has it, faithfulness is in relation to the Lord.

Beloved, that enters into everything that we take up, everything that we do, we are governed by this that we are here on behalf of the Lord, responsible to Him and for Him and the Lord would underline that with us the more we anticipate His coming:

“Yet a little while,” Thou’rt coming! (Hymn 163)

The more we anticipate that the more faithfulness should be with us. The great thing is that he that endures to the end should be saved.

We seek ourselves, and the Lord would remind us of the need to be faithful to Him in every particular day by day – what we do, where we go, what we buy and sell, what we read – all these different things come in, but faithfulness is to be maintained by us all.

“Prudent” (or as the Authorised Version says, “wise”) – who that is married here would deny that wisdom is what is needed, “faithful and wise bondman”. That enters into daily life. Nobody here that is married will disagree with me if I say that the marriage condition is one that calls for wisdom, or alternatively prudence, day by day. Not

to go beyond your means, not to stretch yourselves beyond what you can afford, not to undertake things that you cannot really maintain – be maintained in prudence, always willing to maintain things rightly before the Lord, and be wise in it. The Spirit gives you that wisdom, helps you to decide even in the most practical details of the day, He helps you to decide what to do here or what to do there, and wisdom enters into the maintenance of the household. We tend, when we think about these things, to let our minds rest entirely in relation to headship in the man, but wisdom applies to the wife as well. It may be in practice – some of us have been married quite a few years now – in a happy marriage that it is the wisdom of the wife that maintains things, “the wisdom of women buildeth their house”, Prov 14:1.

There is a word in that for our sister, a sister we love here, but I say this to her. You have to be wise, you have to be prudent. I have often been struck by a scripture that is very much neglected among us that Paul says to the young women, “rule the house”, 1 Tim 5:14.

Someone may say, how does that tie up with headship? Headship determines the policy, and ruling of house determines the implementation. These two things fit together; if they jar with one another then things do not succeed. But headship and the wife ruling the house go together and the influence and power of the disposition and character of the husband is a bulwark to the wife as she, in wisdom, operates things in relation to the house day by day.

It is my experience that during the course of the day in the house, the wife has to take far more decisions than the husband. I think most wives here would agree with that, but that is where wisdom is needed and prudence, not to commit yourself to more than you can do, not to seek to have elaborate entertainments beyond your means. Prudence, wisdom, care goes with faithfulness.

The other thing is “good” – “good and faithful bondman” – think of the Lord saying that to you. Think of the Lord coming back and saying to you ‘good and faithful’. You may say, there is none good but God, but beloved, God is in you by the Spirit and that goodness that is in the Holy Spirit would form everything you take on, so that the Lord when He comes could say, “good and faithful bondman”.

The faithful and prudent bondman gets promotion, he is set over the house, but, beloved, the good and faithful bondman gets the joy of his lord – what a great thing that is! He gets the joy of his lord, “enter into the joy of thy lord”. Where was the joy of Jesus? It was in His bond with the Father and His living on account of the Father and He says to you, “that my joy may be in you, and your joy be full”, John 15: 11. These things are held before us and the full entrance into them will not be long, but the Lord would keep us and help us.

Sometimes the scriptures help you, two or three words in them focus one’s mind on what the Lord would have us do and be, and the Lord would have us to be faithful whatever condition we are in, prudent always, wise (both the same word), but good. The Lord would have us good. It says of the virtuous woman, “She doeth him good, and not evil, all the days of her life”, Prov 31: 12. These scriptures are about bondmen, but the word is generic and it includes women as well. The Lord might say, good and faithful bondwoman. He would say, good and faithful bondman to our beloved brother whom we appreciate in the Lord in what we have had to do with him here and seen him locally in Glasgow, but our sister too – we love our sister and we commend her and her husband to the Lord. But before us all, the gracious promise to us all is “the joy of thy lord”.

May we get a fresh touch of it today.

(ii) SALVATION IN THE HOUSE

Kenneth Robinson

Acts 11: 13-15; Luke 19: 9, 10

I desire to add a word because each of these scriptures refer to salvation. I would commend to our young brother and sister today that they get a real personal sense of an impression from Jesus. It is a wonderful truth to get a hold of, the truth of salvation. Salvation from our sins, from the world, from place, are all great aspects of this truth that have come out and have come within the scope and understanding, and also enjoyment of the believer. I trust that everyone here knows salvation from his or her sins. I trust every young person here has an impression of the value of the saving power of Jesus, the saving power of the work of Jesus, and especially the saving power of the blood of Jesus. How important that is! As you think of two souls getting married, two believers, to me that is a great victory that a young brother and sister, as having individually come to know the current love of Jesus, so that each of them individually can say, that He is my Saviour, that He died for me and shed His precious blood and I know salvation from my sins. But then, more than that, that He is my Lord. What a wonderful matter it is, as believers, to have a living link with a living Lord, with a glorious Man who becomes the object of your affections and the object of your life. I think that is all part of the words, "who shall speak words to thee whereby *thou* shalt be saved, thou and all thy house". I am sure our prayers would be that the house that is being set up today under the Lord will prove God's salvation, prove God's blessing. I would link the words of salvation with the understanding and use of the scriptures. May the Bible be a ready open book in this new house. May the scriptures be a ready reference as their experience together in life develops, because there is no comparison with the value of a verse of Scripture at any given point in time in your life. We all prove that and desire to prove it more and more as we go on. How important is the currency of the word of God! I trust that every one of us here, every young believer, is more than ever convinced of

the inspiration of the scriptures – every Scripture being divinely inspired and suitable for conviction for correction, for all the various features that are brought out in 1 Timothy 3. But think of how Peter, at the threshold in Acts 11, of the opening up of a heavenly testimony and a heavenly vessel in the sheet which comes down out of heaven (see Acts 10: 11), and Peter's being exhorted and being taught and instructed in it, that this word comes in, "who shall speak words to thee whereby *thou* shalt be saved, thou and all thy house".

I would commend these words on household salvation to us all. For our brother and sister, we would desire (as our brother has already referred to the affection that our sister has been held in here in London and the regard that we have for our brother locally in Glasgow) that the Lord may add His blessing to it and that they will be a distinct asset to the locality by way of the features already described in the previous word. We want this household to be an environment of happiness, joy, dependence, dedicated to divine interests and proving therefore the experience of God's blessing.

There may be no house in the street where they will reside that will be like that. I wonder sometimes how much I appreciate it and consider when we look along our local avenues or streets where we may stay, as to the different atmospheres that will be in different homes. What a wonderful consideration to have a Christian home where there is light – light from God regarding Christ, light from God regarding the assembly, because that is what is coming out here, it is assembly light as we know of a heavenly vessel and the truth of the assembly that is being introduced as the sheet is taken up three times. I say to our brother and sister, hold on to every impression you have as to the truth of the assembly. Hold on to every impression and every desire that you have to desire to walk in the light of the assembly in a broken day, seek the Lord's gracious help to be maintained in that in order that your household enjoys present salvation. How important and how necessary it is that we all continue to prove this in all our households.

Then just a touch in Luke 19 – "salvation is come to this house", think of this remarkable matter that Zacchaeus has this

distinct word from the Lord Jesus and He says it very distinctly to him, “salvation is come to this house, inasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost”. I was thinking of that a little this week, what a Giver God has been. God has given His Son for us, God has given His Spirit to us. Think of such truth being brought into a home. The giving of God, a God who has operated in His own purposes, has operated from His own side and demonstrated His own great thoughts in majesty and moral glory being brought out. Such truths give character and build stability into all our homes. A wonderful glorious object to have in our affections is Christ, and more than that He has given His Spirit to us. These are all included in the truth of salvation. So it comes into the house and both our brother and sister should take this on and seek to understand it. Many practical matters have already been referred to; the test will come, should the Lord leave us here, but they can stand so that their house is clearly built on the rock. It is a big change for our young sister to move north, we realise that, and we desire that she may quickly find a place in the affections of the saints locally in Glasgow. But initially the responsibility to work matters out is theirs – individually with the Lord and before the Lord, but now as they take up marriage. There is glory in a marriage in the Lord. It is a bulwark in relation to what is morally corrupt all around. I commend to them both that they desire to have a personal confirmation from the Lord Jesus and that “salvation is come to this house”.

Salvation is a truth provided of God in view of the protection and preservation of the saints until that day which we have already sung of when He will soon come. How wonderful, beloved brethren! May we all be encouraged! May every one of us here embrace the truth of salvation afresh today and take it back into all our homes.

Every head of house here, take it on board and desire to bring salvation into the home by conversation, by relating matters to Jesus, by holding on to the truth of salvation, the truth of the assembly, by desiring by conduct and piety to have a house that is different from what characterises the world all around. But my desire

for this particular marriage is that the Lord may be pleased to bless it. We commend them to the Lord. May they prove divine blessing and may they have words from Jesus that will bring in comfort, stimulation and encouragement and may we all prove that salvation will come to this house and to all our homes.

(iii) LOVE'S STORY

Andrew Burr

Ephesians 5: 25-27

I seek to add a simple word about the hymn we began with, that we are closer than we have ever been to the climax of love's story. Our brother and sister, as we have remarked, embark today upon a new story, but we have before us as we pursue our responsibilities here the climax of love's story. When did the story begin? It has its origin in the purpose of God, in His counsels: that the One we know as the Lord Jesus should come into manhood is connected in divine purpose with the thought of a counterpart. He was not to be alone but have one who was with Him and not only with Him but like Him so that that counterpart could be with Him where He is. He has given everything in order to secure that for Himself. One of the things that enters into marriage is a readiness to make sacrifices.

The Lord Jesus has given everything and it is part of love's story, the giving of everything. He did it in love, He loved the assembly "and has delivered himself up for it". In a sense the assembly's story begins there, it begins with an act of love, an act of wonderful and unqualified self-sacrifice on the part of the One who loves her.

I read this passage to look at the interval in which we are between that sacrifice and the day of presentation. That interval too is part of love's story. As we have remarked, the Lord Jesus is absent. He is about to return, but for the time being He is absent, and there is a vessel here that represents Him in the time of His absence. Whatever might be said about the public history, it represents Him faithfully. She loves Him and holds herself for His return; and He loves her. The Lord Jesus looks at that vessel here, maintaining His interests and representing Him in the time of His absence and in rejection. I believe the Lord Jesus looks at the assembly with nothing but admiration, and it makes Him long for the day when she will be His in the place into which He has entered.

Think of that! The Lord does not just say to the bondman of whom we have heard, you will be happy, but "enter into the joy of thy lord".

I wonder if we have some sense of this now, the joy of our Lord. What is it that makes Him rejoice, what will it be that makes Him rejoice? Beloved, the thing that stirs the affections of the Lord Jesus and stirs His joy is that He is about to have that with Him where He is which has represented Him and been faithful to Him in the time of His absence. Of course He makes His presence and nearness felt to the assembly, although, actually and publicly absent, He nourishes it and cherishes it (see Eph 5: 29). He sanctifies it by “the washing of water by the word”. In other words the effect of the Lord’s service to the assembly is to draw it away from the world and from other things that it might be more and more wholly for Himself.

Alongside that is an expression of His jealousy which is a manifestation of love: it says, “that *he* might present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things”.

Put another way and very simply, He wants to present the assembly to Himself as like Himself. Spots and wrinkles are not things we can remove, so it is not exactly that the Lord serves the assembly to eliminate imperfections. No, what He seeks is perfection, and what He loves is perfection and what He is going to receive to Himself is perfection. We get our view so clouded by what we are occupied with in the public history of things, and the circumstances in which we are, that perhaps we forget that the Lord Jesus looks at something for which He gave Himself that all the history in the time of His patience has never tainted or corrupted or spoilt. It has always been ready to be received and presented to Himself. The time has gone on, and the Lord’s and the Father’s ways have entered into that, but there has always been something here which could be presented to the Lord Jesus “all glorious”. Now, beloved, we are in the presence of a representation of it, an expression of it.

A company like this is simple, but is an expression of something so wonderful for the heart of Christ that it stirs His affections and prompts Him to say, as we have already remarked, “And behold, I come quickly”, Rev 22: 7.

This is love’s story, it is a story that is worked out when those who love each other are apart from each other, even though the

assembly feels not only His absence, but also His presence.

I just add a word to make what I have said a little more practical. As we noticed where we began to read, Paul spreads out this wonderful picture as something that is to be held before us as we work out household and married life together. It is not that our marriages are a model of what we see in the assembly, but as we work out the faithfulness, responsibility and salvation of which we have spoken, they are to bring before us and bring into our minds this greater joy, this greater story, in which through grace we have a part; and it is to have a sanctifying effect on our relationships too so that they become some expression of that for which He gave Himself. May He bless the word.

London

3 May 2003

Marriage of Stanley Falconer and Melanie Clark

AT A MINISTRY MEETING

(i) SPRINGS OF WATER

Philip Eagle

Matthew 6: 28 (from “Observe with attention”)-29; Psalm 104: 10-15

These two scriptures came to me as we were sitting here – one of them is very well known to the brethren and perhaps the other less so, but it speaks of what is in God’s creation that is perfect, but it also speaks of God’s glory. We have been reading recently about Solomon and the house he built for Jehovah and which was, perhaps, a house of great glory. It was constructed with the best possible materials, the wood was overlaid with gold and there is much detail in the scriptures as to how it was constructed and the materials used. We also touched on Solomon’s glory, himself, what he had, his wisdom and what he had in the way of material wealth. It says as to the lilies of the field – we have all seen a lily, a bit of a simple plant, most of them are white – that they are clothed in a glory that even Solomon could not be clothed in at the height of his glory.

That would speak to us as to what is great about God. We live in a world which God has created, the creation is around us and man still does not understand it. He tries to understand it in a completely different way from what God desires. This scripture came to me because it speaks of simplicity, that which God has created is simple but glorious. It goes on to say, “But if God so clothe the herbage of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, will he not much rather you, O ye of little faith?” (v.30). That is perhaps a word to us. There is the scripture as to the two sparrows (see Matt.

10: 29), and yet God will look after us in a way that perhaps we do not expect, and sometimes our faith is weak, but God is with us. It says here, “the lilies of the field ... they toil not, neither do they spin”, God makes them to grow and yet they are clothed with a glory that Solomon did not have – how it speaks to us that we need faith, perhaps our faith is low and weak at times, yet we can be dependent on God who is the provider of these things.

I turn to the scripture in the Psalms where it speaks of springs and provision, “He sendeth the springs into the valleys: they run among the mountains”. Those of us who have seen springs in valleys and mountains know that there is a certain freshness and life among them. Look at a stream that is bubbling or a river that is running fast, and it looks fresh and clear. It does not stand still. The pattern on it will change as the water comes down at speed. That would speak of life-giving. The things of God give life and there is life in God’s things, the spring runs into the valleys and among the mountains and it says, “They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild asses quench their thirst. The birds of the heaven dwell by them; they give forth their voice from among the branches. He watereth the mountains from his upper-chambers”. The last part of verse 13 is what interested me, “the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works” – think of that, the satisfaction that can be got out of God’s things – “the earth is satisfied”. Think of the woman in John 4 who was enjoined to take of the water which the Lord would give her and she would never thirst again. There is satisfaction from God’s springs. We sing that hymn:

Spring up, O Well, in Thy glory! (Hymn 391)

This passage of scripture would speak about what is exhaustless.

Everything here is satisfied – “wild asses quench their thirst”, all these different parts of creation are satisfied and yet we can be satisfied too on God’s things with the fruit of God’s work. Think of what God has, think of the many fruits that He has. We can produce fruit too (sometimes perhaps we do not do it too readily) but we can produce fruit to God’s glory, but yet it says, “the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works”. In God’s matters there is much satisfaction and you would find that in the Psalms. There is much that speaks of God’s greatness through His creation, it speaks much of streams and rivers. Streams and rivers are often sources of life to man in the natural state, without water nothing can survive, and yet God provides springs of refreshment in such occasions as these, and other meetings, the readings, there is refreshment to be had.

Sometimes, perhaps, we do not always get the refreshment we

need because our minds are distracted, but the Spirit would help us to gain something, no matter how small it is, it can refresh us and satisfy us. May it be so, for His Name's sake.

(ii) 'THIS GOOD LAND'

Henry Hutson

Deuteronomy 8: 7-9 (to "nothing"); 26: 1-11

These passages came to mind as our beloved brother finished speaking, especially the reference to the springs and satisfaction, 'this good land'. There are two accounts of it in chapter 8 and in chapter 11 where it is particularly in contrast to the land of Egypt, but chapter 8 is full of the goodness of Jehovah who brought them there. He brought them through the wilderness to humble them and to know the words which the Lord Jesus Himself quoted, "man doth not live by bread alone, but by everything that goeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live" (v.3). As our brother has said, at times like this we look for what comes from the mouth of Jehovah, something that would refresh. There are these thoughts, "waterbrooks ... springs", as the Lord Jesus has said of the living water – "shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life" (John 4: 14), and then "deep waters". We believe the beloved brethren would have touched something of the deep waters in the occasion at Sunbury and doubtless in the other occasions held over the past weekend, some sense of what springs up in freshness and vitality through the Spirit's grace and power; and then, as our brother has said, there are the wonderful fruits so that there is complete satisfaction, "thou shalt lack nothing". What a wonderful thing! Our land is not a material one, our land is a heavenly land and we can, through grace, touch it. The land, of which the Lord Jesus said, "I go to prepare you a place ... I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be", John 14: 3.

Our brother referred to bearing fruit and I thought that we have in chapter 8 the fulness of the supply from God's side and in chapter 26 we have some sense of the return that is looked for. It was so in the remarkable way the conversation with the woman at Sychar's well turned in relation to the great matter of the worship of God, "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth", John 4: 23. We would have some sense of that in what comes in here, that

this beloved man, as bringing his basket and the fruits of the land, comes in some sense into what is really in truth, his heart is moved, there is reality and his spirit is moved too. We do not get that side so much in the Old Testament, but no doubt it was there in holy men of old. So, this man comes and presents it to the priest. How precious that is as we think of what is under the hand of the Lord Jesus and what we can bring that He, so to say, would lead us into, "him who is God and Father" (1 Cor. 15: 24), in some sense of the blessedness of the portion that is ours as "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ", Eph. 1: 3. I just submit these few thoughts as trusting that they may further what was in the mind and heart of our beloved brother and what the Lord might say to us tonight. In His precious Name.

(iii) SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

John Burnett

Ephesians 1: 3-11

I was impressed with the greatness of the spiritual blessings that we come into. They are centred in Christ. What an impression Paul had of the greatness of Christ! I suppose it never left him right from the beginning in Acts, “Who art thou, Lord?” (ch 9: 5). It never left him. How much is gained by us as we have an impression of Christ and His glory, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ”. “In the heavenlies” – how wonderful that we can reach out, the Spirit helping us to reach out for these divine things that are found “in the heavenlies in Christ”. He is there, God has “highly exalted him” (Phil 2: 9), anointed him with the oil of gladness above his companions (see Hebrews 1: 9). Think of the greatness and glory of Christ, “chosen us in him before the world’s foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love”. What a challenge that is to our hearts that we should be maintained in all that Christ has maintained and strengthened – “chosen us in him before the world’s foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; having marked out beforehand” – think of that being “marked out beforehand”, God’s thoughts for us before the world was, you and I brought into the blessings that are so full, “according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood”. Think of the cost of redemption through His blood, the greatness and glory of all that is for God, secured in Christ eternally, but we are brought into it. How wonderful these things are!

“According to the riches of his grace; which he has caused to *abound* towards us in all wisdom and intelligence, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself” – these are great things and how we may be encouraged in them and blessed and brought into the

greatness of God's thoughts for us and find in a fresh way what it is to be "blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ". Oh that we may be sustained in what is heavenly. There is so much here that would detain us, but God's thoughts for us are for heaven. Paul reached and was brought into the wonders of the greatness and glory of what was heavenly and his desire is that we should also come into what is heavenly, in the enjoyment of these things for ourselves and to be found that we should be "holy and blameless before him in love". That is the bond that we have together in love, "having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself". How wonderful God's thoughts are that He would have us brought to Himself in the wonderful way through Christ and the glory of redemption and everything that is there centred in Him so that we are maintained in life and sustained here until He comes. May we be in the enjoyment of these things. For His Name's sake.

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