

A
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THE SERVICE OF SONG

Romans 15: 8-11; Hebrews 2: 11, 12; 2 Chronicles 29: 20-30

W.McK. I thought we might consider the service of song and the Lord's part in it. It is clear that the Lord Himself sang while here on earth, "And having sung a hymn, they went out to the mount of Olives", Matt 26: 30. No doubt the Lord sang with them and undoubtedly He would have enjoyed the singing more than any.

What we shall see in these scriptures would set before us that one objective that the Lord had in mind in His service in ministry on earth was not only to confirm the promises to the fathers, but also that service Godward should be extended among the nations. I think we could say rightly that this was part of the joy that was set before Him as is mentioned in Hebrews 12 (v.2). "That the nations should glorify God for mercy ... For this cause I will ... sing to thy name", Rom. 15: 9. We might think about that objective which the Lord had in His heart.

Hebrews 2 would help us to understand the spiritual, out-of-the world area in which He carries on the service of song Godward, "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises". We sometimes sing:

Yet wider praise in Zion waits for Thee (Hymn 75)

That has in view that there will be an earthly song. Revelation speaks about a number of songs, but the special matter of the present time is the service of song set on by Christ in the midst of the assembly.

2 Chronicles 29 was read to bring before us the moral conditions that are required for the song of Jehovah. We might come to that and see what was involved in the recovery and revival under Hezekiah, which led to the song of Jehovah.

P.L.J. What would you say as to the distinction between singing and speaking? Would singing involve more the affections?

W.McK. Probably so, certainly it is more musical and it brings out our feelings more.

P.L.J. That is what I was thinking, feelings of affection which is not just intelligence or knowledge, but the feelings are there. There are those in Christendom who have exaggerated that, but on the other hand there is place for feelings.

W.McK. And also for understanding, “I will sing with the spirit, but I will sing also with the understanding”, 1 Cor 14: 15. So that in the assembly we are not governed by mentality or sentimentality but spirituality.

P.L.J. So that is why there should be exercise. I think the brethren have been exercised. We have a hymn book; but there are many hymns elsewhere which are not according to spiritual or scriptural understanding.

W.McK. That is right. As Mr Darby noted long ago when he revised the hymn book, that there were hymns which did not bring out the believer’s true place with the Father or an understanding of the Father’s place in the economy and so he had to do a good deal of work in the revision that he undertook. It is interesting that in one comment he makes, which shows the point of 2 Chronicles, he says, ‘You often find the loudest singers is where the conscience is least reached’. Not that he meant that we should murmur – that is not the point – but holy affection and spiritual understanding. Of course we have hymns in the book which have been carried down for a long time. But I thought we should see that the Lord, who in His own ministry, although it was to confirm the promises to the fathers, and it was for the truth of God, he really was thinking about more. He was looking on to the present moment when the service of God is among the nations, “that the nations should glorify God for mercy”. As the nations, we were entitled to nothing and in mercy God has taken us up and given us everything.

D.M.W. It is stimulating to see that through mercy God had something in mind for He has met our need. That would be mercy, something in mind as for Himself. The Lord Jesus had that in mind.

W.McK. Yes. So, “for this cause I will confess to thee among the nations”. I referred to Hebrews 12, “in view of the joy lying before

him". It should touch our hearts that among many things which we might say are included in that joy, was this particular item that the service of song should be among the nations in the assembly.

G.R. Would you say that in the whole of the service of God the Lord is also, as in the midst, leading the praise? We also participate in the selection of what is suitable at any given time?

W.McK. I think that is where spiritual understanding comes into it.

We make spiritual use of the hymn book, and generally the brethren do. The hymns given out are good and helpful, they help forward the service of God, but perhaps we could get an impression that, as Man on the earth, although the Lord in His ministry did not go outside of Israel, in His mind He was looking on to something that now exists here in the power of the Spirit in the assembly.

J.A.P. Would you say that the Lord's general burden with the woman in Samaria was this that you are speaking about? First of all our affections through the gospel, then "for also the Father seeks such as his worshippers" (see John 4: 23). That was outside of Israel, outside of Jerusalem, the Lord unburdening Himself as to what is due to God, outside of Judaism.

W.McK. Yes, I would say that because there is no reference that the Lord spoke about those matters in Israel, but outside of Israel, and what He said to the woman would enter into this, "For this cause I will confess to thee among the nations". In a certain sense you can see that the germ of the thing was there in His dealings with the Samaritan woman because He is bringing God before her and even the Father. We will see how that was to widen out and in our time it has come to the uttermost parts of the earth. If we think of this continent and Australia, the service of song which the Lord envisaged has been carried on.

D.M.W. The Lord spoke of many widows, and then He spoke of one widow outside the confines of Israel; then He spoke of many lepers and then He spoke of one leper, Naaman, outside the confines of Israel. Do you think that what He had in mind was this great matter of bringing persons in?

W.McK. I am sure it was. So He says, “But I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened until it shall have been accomplished!”, Luke 12: 50. The Lord, so to speak, in His love was driven in on Himself except in these isolated instances until His death. That opened up the floodgates of divine love and in resurrection He has a free hand and especially as gone into heaven and sending down the Spirit. You can see that things were not long confined to Jerusalem, they soon moved out, and brought out governmentally in order to spread things and not just the gospel. I am sure what was in view was that the service of song should be spread. There was to be expansion.

D.M.W. Our brother [yesterday] spoke of the expansion of the gospel and he included the truth of the assembly and the gift of the Holy Spirit. These matters are very necessary, especially at the end, and largely the gospel is preached in view of what is termed the great house, so that persons can get free for the service of God.

W.McK. So there would be a certain bearing in what is said to you. “And again, Praise the Lord, all ye nations” – if you look at the footnote the translation points out that praise is what is current. It is not another tense which has another meaning, but it is what is going on currently. So the Lord was looking on to what is going on in our localities at the present moment in the way of the service of song. That should touch our hearts and lead us to think as we reach it about maintaining conditions that are appropriate for this service of song.

S.D. Just a little further down where you did not read, Paul had his objective in ministry as “carrying on as a sacrificial service the message of the glad tidings of God, in order that the offering up of the nations might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (v.16).

W.McK. That shows that he was moving in the light in which the Lord moved here, and what was in his mind in this is a burnt-offering character of things, a sacrificial service and the offering up of the nations, “might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit”. So, the working out of what was in the Lord’s mind and heart involved not

only the service of the twelve but especially that of Paul that the great thought of the service of God was set out among the gentiles and greatly expanded through Paul's service.

S.D. The matter of acceptability involves God's pleasure in what is being offered. He uses the same wording as Romans 12, "acceptable".

W.McK. Yes, and the acceptance lies in the fact that it is through Christ and the sanctifying by the Holy Spirit.

L.B. I was just thinking that God is enriched through His Son, He is enriched through worship, of course, because worship rises to God, as in the hymn:

Now praise thy glorious Name in song.

W.McK. We had several hymns that referred to the service of song. It shows that this is working in the saints, the brethren as together and coming under the hand of Christ as He manifests Himself to us, leads to this great thought of spiritual song Godward.

G.R. You were speaking earlier as to the Lord's looking at us in relation to each local assembly, you referred in thanksgiving to the Lord being with us in the testimonial position. He has been with us in that testimonial position through the week. As we come up, He is looking for conditions suitable for Himself?

W.McK. Exactly, so that as we assemble, gathered to His Name to break bread on the first day of the week, the Lord finds great pleasure in that and as we assemble to break bread He is not far away. We know that personally He is in heaven, but then He is not far away because He is here by the Spirit testimonially and that should always lead us to look for a fresh manifestation and to understand that the Lord and the Spirit both have service Godward before them.

M.N. Did the Lord look forward to this when He spoke to the Samaritan woman at Sychar's well? I was thinking that He spoke of living waters flowing out. Would that have a link here?

W.McK. It is essential to the service of song being carried out spiritually. So she said, “and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where one must worship” (John 4: 20), and then she claims without any right to do so that Jacob was ‘our father’. It suggests the mixed up condition that exists in Christendom; persons are looking at things in a muddled way and certain things they connect with Jerusalem and other things they connect with Jacob, without ever seeing what God’s centre is or establishing their genealogy.

P.L.J. In Romans we have, I would say, the personnel of the assembly. Before you can have proper assembly function the personnel have to be established, do you think?

W.McK. Yes, so that Romans gathers the personnel through the glad tidings and by the gift of the Spirit and then through Paul’s teaching: before the epistle ends, he speaks about the mystery.

Well, God being before our souls as the subjects of the work of God, we can understand when the Lord says, “I will confess to thee among the nations”, it does not mean that that is something carried on anywhere. That was the point in reading Hebrews 2, that the area where the Lord carries on the service of song is in the midst of the assembly.

D.M.W. Perhaps for the understanding of some our younger ones here, the divine centre is the assembly. That is what we are speaking about. In Christendom the divine centre is all muddled up. We want to proceed on so that the service of song can be expressed rightly with the Lord Jesus as our leader in the area that has been established as the divine centre.

W.McK. So that being subjects of mercy as Romans says, “that the nations should glorify God for mercy”, means that there are all these feelings in us as being the subjects of mercy and then our minds, as taught by the Spirit, would be enquiring, if we had not already reached it, where is the service to be carried on? Hebrews tells us that it is in the midst of the assembly.

K.N.P. I was thinking about the completion of things in Nehemiah’s day. It was not until the city was rebuilt that the singers went around

and sang. I wondered whether there was a link with that, and that things had been reconstructed and there was then room made for the singing to come out. They were to be heard; the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off (see Neh 12:43). I wondered if that would be something that we could apply to what you are speaking about?

W.McK. It would. So in Ezra they set the altar on its base and then in Nehemiah's day the wall was built. That is, the altar would allude to how the saints were relating themselves to the death of Christ, but also to how it is that we approach God now. It would link with Hebrews – through the veil, that is to say His flesh. The next thing is that there must be a protective area and the wall therefore was to exclude certain things, but to include what was precious to God-like the principles of the fellowship. The principles of the fellowship are not only intended to protect what is of God within, but to exclude all that is not of God without. That being established as it was in the recovery of the truth, there is a sanctified area where the Lord can operate. So in the revival under Hezekiah, the first thing he did was open the doors of the house of Jehovah and the next thing was that the priests and the Levites cleanse the whole system. That has been going on in the recovery to the truth.

L.B. Where we read in Hebrews, it speaks of sanctification, “he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one” and then he goes on to the singing, so it is set apart.

W.McK. Yes. So that these persons have that character, “he that sanctifies” would be the Lord Jesus and the means that He uses is the Holy Spirit Who operates through the word of God. These persons are suitable because it is not a question, as the footnote says, of doing, it is rather their character, “all of one”, who are of the same order of humanity as Christ. So, the Lord has spoken. He calls them His brethren, He reveals the Father's Name, and then He has the joy of his heart singing in the midst of the assembly. It is a very touching and precious matter.

J.A.P. I am very glad you mentioned it to us all. The hymn book is written by one Spirit, but the index would show us that there are brethren in many countries that have contributed and in the same theme. I think it is a wonderful thing, the hymn book. We come to the meetings with two books – one is the scriptures, which are by themselves, but we bring the hymn book and that is a contribution.

W.McK. As Mr. Darby says in his introduction, “praise be ever His, who giveth songs in the night”. Things are working in the saints during this dark period, the night in which our Lord was delivered up, but think of the quality and think how pleasurable to the heart of God is this service of song in the midst of the assembly. That is an above-the-earth condition, but it is in persons.

J.B. I was just thinking of the place this had in the affections of the Lord as coming out of death. In Psalm 22 it is immediately following the verse, “Yea, from the horns of the buffaloes hast thou answered me. I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee” (vv.21,22), as though that had the first priority as out of death, that is what He had in mind.

W.McK. It was. These persons, His brethren, were immediately in view that the Father’s Name should be fully declared to them, and that meant that they were in the same relation of sonship as He was, keeping in mind that there is always a uniqueness about the Lord as the Son of God. But thinking firstly about those persons and making sure that He could convey to them the Father’s Name and what that meant.

D.M.W. The midst was mentioned in the previous reading, but it refers, not just to persons in the rooms, it is an out of the world area.

W.McK. There was a conflict about whether the Lord is always “in the midst”, and that I think the Lord clarified it, because it is a position the Lord takes up on the first day of the week, “Behold, I am with you all the days” (Matt 28: 20), is not the Lord in the midst; the Lord is with us testimonially all the days, but He takes up this peculiar place on the first day of the week, “in the midst of the

assembly”, and as I remarked, it is an out-of-the-world, above-the-earth, spiritual condition that is referred to.

D.M.W. It is not really time and sense; it is intelligence. Is that right?

W.McK. Yes, it is not a question of time with geography. A few years ago in three days’ meetings elsewhere, a brother had a good deal of difficulty when we were speaking about this because he wanted to relate it somehow to the position of the saints geographically, and how could the Lord be in the midst when we break bread at different times and in different time zones. But this has nothing to do with time or with geography, it is a spiritual and heavenly order of things and it is outside of time and geography. So, whether they have broken bread hours before in Australia, does not affect what this passage says. It tests our spirituality to take these things in and look at them as they are presented in scripture because we are so accustomed to relating things to ourselves.

P.L.J. People take them up humanly.

W.McK. Yes.

D.M.W. Not to be critical here because certainly one’s own experience ought to underlie what we are saying, but even referring as we proceed to “this morning” is not exactly intelligent, is it?

W.McK. It is not really because if we are outside of time and geography and are consciously having part in this order of service in the heavenlies, it is not ‘this morning’, ‘this place’, or anything like that.

S.D. It involves experiencing something of leaving the wilderness. Sometimes we are tested as to that.

W.McK. Yes we are. We say, quite rightly, that we break bread in the wilderness, but then for some reason often we like to stay there and the Lord is waiting to get us up out of the wilderness – “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved?”, Song of Songs 8: 5. The Lord is carrying us up in spiritual power as we make way for Him.

S.D. It is interesting that the Lord in the midst of his discourse in John following the Supper, says, "Rise up, let us go hence", John 14: 31.

W.McK. The Lord would impress us with that early in the meeting when He has shown Himself to us, saying, "I am thinking about the Father". As we touch what is due to the Spirit worshipfully, He would remind us that He is thinking about the Father.

T.v.d.H. So is that why He starts with, "I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises"? So we are introduced to the Father, we are brought into this inner circle outside of any influences?

W.McK. Yes, and the Lord loves to be free and move quickly into this realm. So, as I referred to, "And having sung a hymn, they went out to the mount of Olives", Matt. 26: 30. That is, the hymn after the Supper should help us to get into the Spirit's realm and then the Lord can proceed with us, having His own time with the assembly and giving us to recognise the Spirit of God on the way, but both these divine Persons are thinking about what there is for God.

L.B. It is an elevated sphere you want to take us to.

W.McK. Yes, exactly.

J.A.P. Mr. Darby said in the full preface to the hymn book that there was a shortage of hymns to the Father, so that he himself undertook from his own side to add to that. What has marked so much ministry in the revival, is that the Father might be supreme in the worship, the service to the Father was the great thought in the assembly.

W.McK. We should have in mind that, as in the midst, the Lord is thinking about the Father because He says, "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises". Think of the Lord's feelings as Man in sonship singing to the Father. The song is His, but it includes us because the Lord's singing is through the members of His body. We have a hymn which says:

The voice of Christ is heard o'er all (Hymn 237)

But I do think the voice of Christ is heard *through* all. The Lord is singing through persons. That is the import of the body being His as head.

D.M.W. So, the manifestation that we look for as we give thanks for the bread and the cup comes out and it is going to come out through the persons, it is not some thing they were dreaming about, it is a real matter.

W.McK. It is a real spiritual matter. It is not mystical and it is not something that we have to work up in our minds, it is experience by the Spirit as we are with Christ.

D.M.W. Would you say just from a practical perspective that the preparation for the Supper might help us as we have something of the song in our heart, either in the house or on the way to the meeting, and the Lord takes account of that, I think. The breaking bread is our matter, but as we proceed it becomes His matter. Is that right to say?

W.McK. Yes, because the breaking of bread makes way for the Lord to come in and manifest Himself, and having freshly attracted our affections, He would proceed with the great matter He has before Him, which is “in the midst of the assembly I will sing thy praises”.

The passage in 2 Chronicles bears on what you remarked as to conditions in our own souls individually and in our households and what is working in our minds and hearts as we come to the breaking of bread. We spoke about Hezekiah, “Hezekiah the king arose early, and gathered the princes of the city, and went up to the house of Jehovah” – the princes of the city would refer to the local brethren, they are marked by princeliness, spiritual royalty and wealth and they are under the authority of Christ. Then we have this very extensive matter of the burnt-offering and the sin-offering and we notice that it is seven in each case so that we are dealing with what, in the eye of God, involves perfection. So, “he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them upon the altar of Jehovah”; that is, what is before him is what is for God. On the “altar of Jehovah”, they slaughtered these things and sprinkled the blood; the

creatures brought are instructive, seven bullocks which would be a large spiritual apprehension of Christ; seven rams, maturity and what is progenitive, and seven lambs what is intrinsically perfect, and then seven he-goats for a sin-offering. Notice it is for the kingdom and then for the sanctuary and for Judah. The whole position is to be held on the basis of the value of the sin-offering. So he says to them later, "to make an atonement for all Israel; because for all Israel, said the king, is the burnt-offering and the sin-offering". As we proceed in the service of God we are thinking about the whole assembly. We sometimes refer to the bread as including all who have the Spirit and that is true, but in this priestly activity what is being said typically by Christ is that it is for all Israel, so we are keeping that view of the assembly in our minds even though we are in the midst of break-down.

G.R. The ground is really held for God, the ground being maintained in that way.

W.McK. Yes, and in an affectionate sympathetic sense we are holding it for those who are not walking with us, we are thinking about all Israel even though only Judah is represented here. So as we are in this feeling attitude, even as we take up the service of God, it may please God to bring persons in, saying those conditions should be added to by others.

D.M.W. Would you say the sin-offering here secures the ground for all? But there is the matter of the fellowship of His death. What would you say about it?

W.McK. That is right, the sin-offering, "the priests slaughtered them, and they made purification for sin with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel", but then all Israel was not here and the clearing the rubbish out of the house of Jehovah would mean that there is a certain divine standard being maintained practically. The priests, the Levites are taking things out that do not belong there and the ground is being cleared morally. That is really what was referred to in the building of the wall, that there is a

sanctified area that is protected by maintaining the principles of the fellowship.

K.N.P. The importance of the burnt-offering, signifying what is wholly for God is seen here do you think? That is our objective is it not? We were speaking about the service of song, but the service of God has in mind that God receives His due. Is that the idea in the burnt-offering?

W.McK. It is. It is interesting that the burnt-offering and the song of Jehovah begin at the same time. The service of song continues until the burnt-offering was finished. That is, what is proceeding Godward in the way of song is in relation to the infinite acceptance of Christ by God. The burnt-offering is His infinite perfection offered to God, "who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God", Heb 9: 14. That is the import of the burnt-offering for us and shows how the Spirit would help us, "By the eternal Spirit" refers to the character of the offering, its value lasts eternally, never needs to be repeated, unlike the Jewish offerings. These things are in our minds and hearts as the Lord takes His place in the midst of the assembly.

G.R. We would be preserved from undue occupation with our blessings, which often comes in, but then if we are occupied with Christ in this character of things which you have spoken of, we would be occupied with Him in offering to God.

W.McK. That is what the Lord indicates in Hebrews 2, "I will declare thy name to my brethren" (v.12). That is, we should be persons who are formed in the knowledge of the Father and of God as having come under the hand of Christ and then He says, "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises". I sometimes feel that the Lord would like to say to us, "I know you value your blessings, but do you understand that I am singing the Father's praises?" We ought to keep in mind what has been said, that God is the supreme object to both Christ and the Spirit in assembly service. Our blessings in that sense are incidental, precious as they are to us, but far greater is what Christ is setting on through us of the praises of God. Mr Darby has a piece about the saints' praise as led and perfected by Christ.

It might be helpful to read that, because what has run through the great ministries of the recovery is the place that God is to have in the affections of His people.

E.F.C. I was impressed with this extensive account of Hezekiah's recovery as though it was the greatest recovery among the many that took place.

W.McK. It says, that there had been nothing like it since the days of Solomon. The revivals under Josiah and Nehemiah went further back. Josiah went back to the days of Samuel, and Nehemiah to the days of Joshua, but think of the quality that is in view here, that this goes back to the days of Solomon. And so, as matters proceed and the song goes on until the burnt-offering is finished, it leads to additional worship, "And when they had ended offering the burnt-offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped. And king Hezekiah and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise to Jehovah". That is, the song is taken up now and in a certain sense the very best comes forward, "with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer". David, as we know is the greatest thought of refinement in the service of God in the Old Testament.

M.N. Can you say something about the instruments? The instruments would operate in harmony – there are several mentioned here – the cymbals, the lutes, the harps and the trumpets.

W.McK. It refers to persons and that they come under the hand of Christ for formation. You will remember that in 1 Chronicles David says, "and four thousand praised Jehovah with the instruments which I made" (23: 5). We look at the brethren on Lord's Day after the Supper as we are continuing in the meeting and you say, These are the instruments David has made. It is Christ viewed in that sense as bringing in the highest and most refined features of the service of song. Here are the instruments and he is acting through them by the Holy Spirit. So there are different kinds – cymbals, lutes and harps. It is "according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for the

commandment was of Jehovah through his prophets". It shows the value of prophetic service in amplifying and refining the service of song among us.

P.L.J. Could we say that these instruments should be in tune? If we are not in tune with the Lord we cannot provide the praise.

W.McK. Exactly. So, how these are used is according to the commandment of these three persons, David, Gad and Nathan, but the commandment was of Jehovah through his prophets. Then the Levites stood with the instruments of David and the priests with the trumpets. There would be no false notes.

P.L.J. Do you think that would be an exercise as to our manner of life and walk and ways that we would be instruments in tune that we can render to the Lord that which He desires?

W.McK. Quite so. That would be the value of the prophetic word that it keeps us in tune, keeps us right as to what is current on the part of divine Persons.

D.M.W. Going along with that, keeping in tune is that we are considering all the beloved brethren. I was thinking how the Lord went out of the temple, He overturned the money changers, but He did resort to Bethany where there seemed to be family conditions and love amongst those that were there so that He could continue in His desires for His people.

W.McK. It would mean that family conditions are maintained in our local experience and that would have in view that we can move quickly under the hand of the Lord on the next Lord's Day. So they moved quickly here, the trumpets are sounded and the song of Jehovah is begun and they are accompanied by the instruments of David, and worship is going on, singers singing, trumpeters sounding, all related to the wondrous efficacy of Christ as the burnt-offering. It is all characterised by that.

G.R. Mr. Darby must have had some impression as to the magnitude of what will proceed in heaven:

Hark! ten thousand voices crying

“Lamb of God!” (Hymn 14)

What is your impression as to the singing in the eternal state?

W.McK. Probably it will be much better than it is now! Revelation is interesting, there are a number of songs there sung by heavenly and earthly families, but I think the thing is for us to see what we can enjoy now. We hardly know what things will be like in eternity. We know that certain things will not change, we will still have the Lord as mediator and head of the assembly, we will still have the Spirit as the Spirit of adoption, and of course, the Father will still be His Father and our Father, and God will be His God and our God, but what form the service Godward will take scripture does not say. There is something that we have to look forward to, but one thing we can be sure of is that it will always be in Spirit and truth.

D.M.W. In that regard the millennium may be more important to us than we realise. Today is important for the millennium and opening up everything eternally, but the millennium may be important for us as well.

W.McK. Mr Raven emphasised that scripture as it comes before us, and truth, currently bears on the world to come and Mr Taylor thought that our experience after the rapture in the world to come is really preparation for eternal conditions. We are quite clear that we enter as to our bodies into eternal conditions at the rapture, but I think there may be things that enter into our experience in the world to come that will enrich what we shall be Godward eternally. There is not much we can say about that, but what we can enjoy currently is what we know and understand and have part with Christ in His service Godward in the midst of the assembly.

P.H. Many of the hymns, and in fact many of the songs in scripture too, are based on experience. I was wondering about the service of God eternally, as to whether experience would be involved in that?

W.McK. I think our experience enters into our preparation for that, and so current experience spiritually will enrich the service of song. If we think of ourselves individually, James says, “Is any happy? Let

him sing psalms” (5: 13). That is there is an outlet for your affections.

P.H. I was thinking about Moses. The source of his song there was the victory that Jehovah had achieved over the Egyptians.

W.McK. Yes, and the song brought in light that they were not then equal to in their souls because it went right on to the abode of His holiness, which was the tabernacle in the wilderness; but then “Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance”, Exod 15: 17. That refers to the land and the land is a present thought, but what the land is substantially will be there eternally.

T.v.d.H Since all these songs have been mentioned, may I ask a question as to Colossians? It refers there to psalms and psalms and spiritual songs (see Col. 3: 16). Would you differentiate those please as to what you have had primarily in mind as to the service of praise.

W.McK. Mr. Taylor says, psalms are experience, spiritual songs would be to the Lord and hymns would be to the Father. You might ask, Why did he say that? I thought about that for a long time and I concluded that it was based on Matthew 26 and Hebrews 2 that the Lord says to the Father, literally “I will *hymn* thee with singing”. I do not think that our brother intended what he said should be taken up in any rigid sense, but he was differentiating as not only a gifted man, but as a spiritual man could. Psalms are our experience, songs are to the Lord, but hymns are to the Father.

T.v.d.H. So what we have had before us in these three portions as to the service of praise we would be privileged to take up in the service of God, in that in assembly conditions time has no meaning and place has no meaning as has been pointed out. There are appropriate times for these other hymns that would bring in experience, and as we think of occasions as to the preaching of the gospel, the character of that type of hymn would be different from the character that we would have in the service of praise.

W.McK. Yes, because in the hymns at the gospel we are seeking to affect the feelings and consciences of those who are present who may be singing without being in the gain of what they are singing, but we want them to come into it. The singing of a hymn at the gospel is like the mist going up from the earth and moistening the whole surface of the ground. Persons are being softened as to their consciences and their hearts and then the word of God is coming and the result of that is to be blessing.

T.V.D.H. The hymn book as been referred to as a treasure – how great it is that we have all of the variety there available to us, that we would be able to use those properly in the service of praise. It would be an exercise to us to take that up.

W.McK. It would. David took parts of certain songs and you find that that comes into his service of song. That would help us to see whether we would want to sing an entire hymn or whether we want to leave out a verse, because it alters what is before us. All these things are to bring out spirituality in the saints.

DENTON

20 April 2003

Key to initials

J.R.Bellamy, Vancouver; L.Bernard, Ormond Beach/Bunnell;
E.F.Cary, Los Angeles; S.Drever, Calgary; P.Howie, Edmonton;
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J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; K.N.Pye, New York; G.Rosenberry, San
Francisco; T.v.d.Hoek, Denton; D.M.Welch, Denton

‘ONE WHO IS MIGHTY’

James Hutson

Psalm 89: 19; Genesis 22: 6-8; 1 Samuel 17: 17, 18, 28, 29, 32-37, 55-58;

Ruth 2: 1-3, 8-12

It is in mind to spend a little time as we are together this evening to speak about One who is mighty. Not only One who is mighty in just, perhaps, one or another aspect – there have been mighty men in this world, but the One we wish to be occupied with is One who is mighty in every aspect in which we view Him, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not only my estimation or the estimation of other fellow believers that He is One who is mighty, but it is God’s estimation. God could say prophetically in this Psalm, “I have laid help”, God Himself laid help “upon a mighty one”. Think of the feelings of the great God as He would have contemplated what that meant to Him, think of Him not sparing His own Son. You say, that sounds more like a gospel preaching, well I do not think that we very get far away from the gospel. But it is the starting point and I thought it would be good to see the way we can view the Lord in various aspects in the types as the One who is mighty.

If we look first at Isaac, the picture so well known to us and Abraham going on this journey, think of the Lord Jesus coming here under the eye of His God and Father, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten son”, John 3: 16. Think of Him moving here in perfection; that perfect sacrificial walk here under the eye of His God and Father. It says twice in the section we read “and they went both of them together”. Never a step in His perfect life and pathway did the Lord Jesus move out of the line of the perfect will of His God and Father, “I do always the things that are pleasing to him”, John 8: 29. There is what was laid upon Isaac here, the wood being laid upon him – what would that speak of? It would speak of the perfect humanity of Jesus going on to bear judgment. Did He have to bear it for Himself? No, He who did not need to face judgment, He who knew no sin (see 2 Cor. 5: 21), was going to bear the

judgment that was due to guilty sinners. He was going to bear the judgment so that there could be those that could be sanctified and set apart for His God and Father. Is everyone of us here this evening among those who have been set apart by this mighty sacrificial work of our Lord Jesus! Think of all that it meant for Him to be going on this journey, facing the horror of death, the Lord Jesus going on to Calvary. There was what was laid upon Him. It says in Isaiah 53, "and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (v.6). What was laid on Jesus! You and I could not lay it on Him, God did that. It was Abraham who laid the wood on Isaac in view typically of that intrinsically holy offering. Yet, for Isaac there was a substitute. Abraham says in faith, "God will provide himself with the sheep for a burnt-offering". It took many years, right down until the Lord Jesus Himself came as the Lamb of God when that sheep was provided, for whom there was no substitute. He was my substitute and I trust, dear fellow believer, you can with sincerity He was yours. But for Him there was no substitute. The Lord Jesus went that way. Why did He go that way? Why was it that He could go that way? – because of His mighty moral power, One who is mighty.

We might look at David to see the display of moral power. We see in David one who is a very beautiful type of the Lord Jesus, one who is morally mighty. It is interesting to read the connection in this setting as to David who had been sent here, sent by his father.

Think of the Lord Jesus being sent by His Father. It was a sad matter though, as we know of the Lord Jesus, that it says, "He came to his own, and his own received him not", John 1: 11. That is what we see here in the reaction from his own brethren, sadly they tried to slight David on every hand. They question his shepherd spirit – how David would have felt that, as his shepherd spirit was questioned.

Surely he could not have thought of anything worse than to leave that flock of his father's in any kind of danger, and so it is with the Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the flock. He could not think of anything worse than to turn His back on the flock. Yet persons slighted David on every hand. We see how he was mighty, even before we get to his meeting Goliath and the facing of that awful

mighty foe – we see how he was mighty in his secret life as caring for the flock. He could speak of the lion and the bear when before Saul just as the Lord Jesus when he was here was attacked on every side by men, by the Sadducees and the Pharisees and others, but what do we see the Lord Jesus in His mighty moral power bringing them all down, one by one, until in the end it says, “And no one dared question him any more”, Mark 12: 34. His moral power stood. The moral power still stands in Jesus. Oh to get a view of His greatness! But then, we see David going. How could he possibly go against one so mighty as this great awful giant? Where was Saul at this point? Saul was filled with fear and was hopeless.

In men’s eyes he had been a mighty man, but there was mighty moral power displayed in David that was never displayed in Saul. It was never going to be displayed in Saul and eventually we see how God rejects him and brings into view this glorious man David. What a type of Jesus! “a youth, and ruddy and besides of a beautiful countenance”, 1 Sam. 17: 42. He had a lovely appearance. We sang of it:

Thy beauties, Lord, Thy holy precious worth,
Surpassing far the deepest joys of earth. (Hymn 293)

Is it true of you and me or are there joys here that would take a place ahead of this glorious mighty One. Let us get things into perspective and have Jesus, the mighty Victor, the One who has overcome this great enemy because of His moral power able to overcome. It says, “annul him who has the might of death” (Heb. 2: 14), that is the devil. It has taken place, the Lord Jesus annulled death and, annulled the devil and he was set aside completely. We see a picture in that type with David; it says that he went up “and killed him completely” (v.51); completely annulled him, and he returns triumphant with the head of the giant. Never again could that giant raise his ugly head against the armies of Jehovah. Why was it that David felt so indignant? It was because they had defied the living God. He had defied the living God, that is what he was feeling, he had righteous indignation. These other persons were afraid for their own skins, you might say, but he was concerned for the rights

of God. The Lord Jesus when He came here was concerned for the rights of His God and Father and that is why He went that way in view of securing persons who could have part with Him on the other side of death who would be for the glory of His Father eternally.

We see too the display of His mighty love and, just to touch on that for a moment, think of David as the shepherd of the sheep. He loved those sheep, and the Lord Jesus, as has already been said, loved and still loves His sheep. He could say, No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friend", John 15: 13. That is what the Lord Jesus did, He displayed love in the greatest possible way. What mighty love! Have you ever known a more mighty love than the love of Jesus? Dear friend, do not think you will ever find one and if you try to you will spend a life in disappointment and misery. It is so much easier to come to Jesus and enjoy the moral power and embrace of His love. We sometimes sing that hymn:

What love from this Shepherd did flow,
When in care for the sheep He was led
To stand between them and the foe,
And lay down His life in their stead! (Hymn 103)

Here was David going out in front of the army of Israel. They now had become his flock and he their shepherd and he went out ahead and stood between them and the foe. For David it did not involve his actual death; for our Saviour it did, 'And lay down His life in their stead!' – supreme mighty offering, what love! That same love is displayed towards His assembly. It says, "Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it", Eph. 5: 25. What a price He paid in view of having that vessel which would be for His glory and for His pleasure both in time and in eternity. It is a wonderful thing to know the love of the Christ that surpasses knowledge (see Eph. 3: 19). Just drink it in, it will set you on your pathway rejoicing. Sorrows come into our pathways and we may just touch on that little, but think of the love of this One, the love of the Christ that surpasses knowledge.

We can just touch on Boaz, a mighty man of wealth. What a beautiful type again of our Lord Jesus, what a Man of wealth He is.

Everything has been established in the Person of the Son, “established heir of all things”, Heb. 1: 2. What wealth! Could you think of any greater wealth than that, “established heir of all things”? Nothing is left out of it. Men have their wealth in this world, they build up their empires and they crumble down, but I can tell you about One who will never crumble, “established heir of all things”.

Established there in His own right and there because God has seen to it that He is the One who has done everything for Him. There are other wealthy aspects in which we can view Christ – think of the surpassing riches of His grace (see Eph. 2: 7). Dear fellow believer, are you proving it in your pathway here? Are you proving the surpassing riches of His grace? Every day we should prove something of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who was rich and for our sakes became poor, “that ye by *his* poverty might be enriched”, 2 Cor. 8: 9. So as we come in touch with this mighty Man of wealth we find that we become enriched, and that is exactly what Ruth found. She set herself. Dear young persons, are you setting yourself to glean something of Jesus? Treasure it! Ruth sought to go and to glean and what blessings she came in to! Boaz could speak to her and he would say and say to each one of us, “Let thine eyes be on the field which is being reaped”. There is a field which is being reaped. It is to be found in the Christian circle; keep your eye on it and you will gain riches that can never be measured. You will gain treasure that will stand the test of time and eternity. Build treasure in heaven, do not build treasure here, do not go after the treasure that fails, that will spoil and spoil you too. Dear young person, lay all ambitions in life aside and get them in perspective with Christ as the main object of your life. We think of the greatness of this One and the wealth that He has. Think of the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, “The Father loves the Son and has given all things to be in his hand”, John 3: 35. What wealth! Everything is in the hand of Christ and, dear believer that includes you and me, each of us are in His mighty hand, so we can know Him, not only as One who is wealthy, but the One who is a mighty sustainer, a sustainer in

a pathway which is difficult – yes it is a difficult pathway in a dark world where all is set outwardly against those that love the Lord Jesus and those that desire to follow Him. The greater desire you have in your heart to follow Him, the greater the attacks of the enemy will be; but know this that He is the mighty sustainer and He is ever living to intercede for us. He is on the throne, that wonderful One, that mighty King, that mighty sustainer of life, is there on the throne ever living to intercede for us. Are you proving it? Problems come, how many come, how many tears are wept, but He, the One who is upholding all things, is able to uphold you and me. It says in Deuteronomy, “there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, Who rideth upon the heavens to thy help, And in his majesty, upon the clouds. Thy refuge is the God of old, and underneath are the eternal arms”, Deut. 33: 26,27. The everlasting arms of Jesus are available and they will support you right through the journey here. I remember hearing of one dear soul whom someone went to see on her deathbed, and they bent over her and said, “underneath are the eternal arms”. He did not know whether that soul was a believer or not, but suddenly her eyes opened and her face was radiant, he was left with no question as she answered him and said, Yes and they are still holding me up. What a response from an elderly believer about to go to be with her Saviour! Will that be your response? Will those eternal arms be holding you up?

The Lord Jesus could say at the end of Matthew, “All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth” (28: 18). Think of that, “all power” – there is nothing that can interfere. How easy it is, I speak for myself first, to make excuses and say that all that is around is too much, but in the light of what the Lord says at the end of Matthew’s gospel, can we continue to make excuses or can we lean on Him and prove the everlasting arms, and prove His words as He says again, “All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth ... behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age”. That is the mighty One whom we have been occupied with. How mighty He is!

We can just close with reading one last section in Revelation 5 to get a final glimpse of the greatness of this One, “And I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and their number was ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that has been slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in the heaven and upon the earth and under the earth, and those that are upon the sea, and all things in them, heard I saying, To him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb, blessing, and honour, and glory, and might, to the ages of ages. And the four living creatures said, Amen; and the elders fell down and did homage” (vv. 11-14). This is the mighty One we have been occupied with this evening, this One who is the Lamb, this One who is going to have glory and blessing and honour and might which goes beyond even what we read of in Matthew where the Lord says, “I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age”. This goes right into eternity. Do you know of anyone else whose greatness and glory and might is going to stand and go right through into eternity? I know of no one but Jesus. May we be drawn ever closer to Him and prove the sustaining power of His everlasting arms. For His Name’s sake.

MELBOURNE

16 August, 2003

FROM THE BOOKSHELF

MUSINGS ON THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

The moment you get the living God expanded in this epistle, you find that everything He touches, He communicates life for eternity to it.

His *Throne* is for ever and ever – chapter i. tells you that. His *House* is for ever and ever – chapter iii. tells you that. His *Salvation* is eternal – chapter v. tells you that. His Priesthood is unchangeable – chapter vii. tells you that. His Covenant is everlasting – chapter ix. tells you that. His Kingdom cannot be moved – chapter xii. tells you that. There is nothing He touches that He does not impart eternity to.

And, at the close, we read the beautiful utterance, which might be the text of the Epistle, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” He, being brought in, is “*the same for ever*.” What a magnificent thought it is, to think of God bringing in the blessed Jesus to the displacing of everything! That is perfection, because God rests in Him. This is exactly the Sabbath of old, when God rested in Creation. Now God rests in Christ, and that is perfection; and if you and I understand where we are, we are breathing the atmosphere of perfection, – an accomplished work, – a Sabbath.

There is nothing more fruitful in glorious luminaries, than the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is an Epistle of untold glories, and of inestimable value to the conscience of the awakened sinner. It is the title of my soul to breathe the atmosphere of heaven itself; and if I do not do so, shall I put a cloud on my *title* because my *experience* is so poor?

The above is from notes taken at reading-meetings.

The Present Testimony 1865