

A
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JACOB AND ESAU

Genesis 33: 1-11, 19, 20; 35: 1-15; Romans 5: 3-5

W.S.C. We have been studying the way in which God makes a worshipper, as seen in the life of Jacob, and it has been suggested that we study Jacob's life, dividing it into four periods; the first period ending at Beth-el when he first went there, the second ending at Peniel when he wrestled with the angel, and now this is the third period where he arrives at El-beth-el. The first period we linked with the scripture in Romans 5, "tribulation works" (v.3), as he went to Beth-el. He refers to that period when he says "The God that answered me in the day of my distress". It was the period of tribulation when he fled from the face of his brother. Then there is the period of endurance when God told him at Beth-el that He would be with him wherever he went, and that He would not leave him until He had finished His work with him, (see Gen. 38: 15). I think that gave him endurance which we find exhibited when he wrestled with the angel. The angel said that, "thou hast wrestled with God, and with men, and hast prevailed", Gen. 32: 28.

Today we come to the "experience" period; "endurance works experience". In what we have read we have come to the point of experience. Experience is not theoretical. Experience is never just an exercise of the mind. Today he must meet his brother. All these years, maybe over twenty years, he had not seen him. Jacob had borne this burden in his heart that he had offended his brother, all these twenty years, and now he comes to the point where he must face it. The burden will be lifted, he will be freed from this grudge, this bitterness, this unforgiving attitude, he will be freed from that, and the burden lifted off his shoulders. One thing I think we will notice is that neither Jacob nor Esau said anything about the issue; they just forgave each other. Perhaps we could begin by speaking about brotherliness. I am quite sure that that is going to be the biggest test at the end of this dispensation. There is certainly a great need of brotherliness and forgivingness among us. Esau said he would kill Jacob, (see Gen 27: 41), yet here we see something

worked out. How did it get worked out? In chapter 32 we read about Jacob speaking to God and he said, I am too small for all Thy loving-kindness (v.10). We need to come to that. We get the idea that I am right and there is nothing else, like Job said, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go", Job 27: 6. Isaiah says our righteousness is as filthy rags (see Isa 64: 6). That is not much to hold on to! Do you want to hold on to that? You can hold on to it, and it becomes a burden. Like Christian's burden in Pilgrim's Progress, you have this thing strapped on your back day after day, year after year, because you fell out with your brother. That was Jacob, all those years in Padan-Aram, never speaking to God, no thought of God for nearly twenty years. Could it have been because he had this burden on his back that he could not be right with God? He has been at Beth-el but now he is going to El-beth-el, that is in type the assembly. But Jacob could never get there until he had made this right. Now he is going to settle this with Esau so that he can be rightly at El-beth-el.

R.N.H. Do we need to be right with God first? In Romans I notice following your passage it says, "being enemies, we have been reconciled to God" (ch 5: 10).

W.S.C. Yes, very good. His whole pathway is involved in being reconciled to God, getting back to God. God says, I am the God that met you in Beth-el, do you remember? That is how God introduced Himself earlier, and then finally Jacob comes to this. It is brought about, no doubt, by the fact that Esau was coming with four hundred men. It did not sound like a friendly encounter, and yet he had come far enough in his own link with God that he said, 'Well, I am going to do it' and he sent gifts before him. Matthew 5 says, "leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go, be reconciled to thy brother" (v.24).

I think, in principle, by sending these droves to his brother it was like leaving his gift at the altar. He wanted to go and be reconciled with Esau. It was costing him, it was costing him a lot. If you read how many flocks he sent before him, it was no small gift. It was costing him, but he was prepared to do that, to leave his gift at the altar and be reconciled with his brother.

J.N.M. You said yesterday that he did not know whether it was friend or foe, these four hundred men; it would be a bit scary. But it says, he “bowed to the earth seven times”. Is there something in that?

W.S.C. It just seems that he is contrite in the way he feels. He wants this thing to be finished. It must have been a tremendous thrill to his heart to have it finished. He goes even to the point of saying I have “seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God”. And so it would be with us: if we have things here that need settling, settle them. If it needs be, talk to your brother, but do not talk to him like Job would have talked to him in chapter 27, ‘I am right and you need to get right’. Bow to the earth seven times. God says, “I dwell ... with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit”, Isa. 57: 15.

J.N.M. It is well worth it.

S.W.D. Seven times is like Naaman, complete, finished.

W.S.C. That is right.

S.W.D. In Ephesians Paul writes, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which ye have been sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and heat of passion, and wrath, and clamour, and injurious language, be removed from you, with all malice; and be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you”, Eph 4: 30-32.

W.S.C. Well, that is an excellent passage, and it tests us. I know that I am quite like Job, but it is a wonderful feeling when you get it off your back when you settle it. In one sense this all comes as a result of Joseph being born, that in type is Christ. He is the Model and He is the Answer, and He is the Strengtheners to hold our hand when we settle matters.

S.W.D. In the unerring accuracy of the Spirit of God in Scripture, I noted when it was being read that, when they all came near and bowed, Joseph takes precedence at that moment over Rachel.

W.S.C. That is what I was thinking. It says, “And lastly Joseph drew near”. What Jacob wanted Esau to see was Joseph. He positioned the whole family here to show Esau that he had come to an

appreciation of what was weak and what was feminine. He put these all first and finally he comes to Joseph – he is the answer, Christ is the answer.

D.N.M. I was just thinking that when the Lord answered as to who His mother and His brethren were He said, “those who hear the word of God and do it”, Luke 8: 21. I was wondering if that is what we are seeing here? He is hearing the word of God now and doing it. I was thinking of the brotherly link you spoke of, and you have just said how it relates back to Christ, who His brethren are. That is where it takes its cue, does it not?

W.S.C. Yes, I am glad for that scripture because it emphasises the fact that experience is *not* in our heads. It is in our feet and in our mouths. It is what we do. He that hears the word – well that is important and we must not minimise that – but then he *does* it. Where we tend to lack is in the doing of it, do you think?

D.N.M. I think so. What our brother read in Ephesians is really the doing of it, is it not?

W.S.C. Yes, definitely.

H.J.G. Do we need to have a concern each week as we sit under the glad tidings to gain something, because it is “reconciled to God through the death of his Son”, Rom. 5: 10?

W.S.C. I am glad you bring that up because the glad tidings are important and have been preserved among us. I am thankful for those who have gone before us who have done that. It is not so around us. Christendom has in many respects lost the glad tidings.

I was talking with a young brother who had left us some few years ago. He was looking around for a church, and he wanted one where there was the gospel and he had trouble finding one. The tendency in the churches is to personal testimonies. The true gospel keeps bringing us back to the standard that, as God has forgiven us, so we are to forgive each other. In talking about forgiveness, it seems to me that to forgive someone does not necessarily mean that you say that what that person did or said was right. We were forgiven; when we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly (see Rom 5: 6).

D.R.H. I think that is very beautiful. It says, "as God also in Christ has forgiven you", Eph 4: 32. That is the level, is it not?

W.S.C. That is what I think. Can we lay down that thing we have been holding against someone? I do not think we will be able to do it unless we have come the way that Jacob has come.

H.J.G. It lies behind the operation of the local assembly which you have been seeking to get us through to, because we are members one of another and if there is a hindrance the membership does not work, does it?

W.S.C. That is right, and again to go back to that scripture, mentioned in an earlier reading, "By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine, if ye have love amongst yourselves", John 13: 35. If we are at odds with one another, is that love?

R.N.H. Job's friends gave him a gold ring (see Job 42:11). That would be fellowship, would it not, the right level of friendship?

W.S.C. That is good. Our brother called our attention to Job last night, and Job is a very interesting study. He finally let his righteousness go. He finally said to God, 'I cannot say any more, I am done' (see Job 40: 4,5).

R.N.H. Eliphaz and his friends were to take seven bullocks and seven rams and go to Job (see ch 42: 8). Our brother referred to the completeness of it, and it follows that our settlement is to be complete. Sometimes we say we will go so far, and there is something that we are going to hold for a while until they maybe get right.

W.S.C. Yes, until he does this, or until he says that. I can identify with that in my own experience. It is the nature of man after the flesh. It is the first thing that comes out. Let it go!

H.J.G. I think what is so encouraging in this scripture we have read is that, when Jacob is right with God, God goes before him.

W.S.C. That is indeed encouraging. As we get through these scriptures we find that God is still with him even going before him. It says of Ephraim that, "I gently caused them to eat", Hosea 11: 4.

That is the way God did with Jacob, He just gently moved him back to the path.

K.A.K. I was wondering about the subject that we are on, if it does not touch on the very nature of God Himself. The whole objective that God has taken in bringing in Christ is to reconcile persons to Himself. Reconciliation is therefore to be found with us. If we are going to touch worship, if we are going to approach God, we cannot approach apart from what God is Himself. That is what you get in the expression of praise in Chronicles, "of that which is from thy hand have we given thee", 1 Chron 29: 14. If you do not have love in your heart for others, if you do not have reconciliation before you, then you are not moving as God would. I was thinking of what we are approaching, the idea of a prince of God as an objective and how reconciliation is really necessary for this.

W.S.C. I think so, and you are thankful if your brother is minded as you are. I am reminded of Abigail and how she approached David. She was "coming down", and David "came down opposite to her", 1 Sam. 25: 20. They both came down and met on the ground of reconciliation. She saved the whole position. If only we could do that.

K.A.K. That is where God meets us to begin with. Your reference yesterday to Jacob's pathway, God beginning with him and then leading him and his being conscious of that, really is the way that we have to come.

W.S.C. I think that is good. Our brother referred to it, "as God also ... has forgiven you". You get that also in Deuteronomy 10, "For Jehovah your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty and the terrible, who regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward; who executeth the judgment of the fatherless and the widow, and loveth the stranger, to give him food and clothing", (vv. 17-19). And ye, "ye shall love the stranger". That is a beautiful scripture. The might and the power and glory of God are there, yet He loves the stranger. If only we could get these thoughts about God in our heart as they relate to our brother, whoever he may be

and whatever situation may come up! We want to be with God to get it solved.

R.B.H. Really, if Jacob had not had this experience with God, “I have seen God face to face, and my life has been preserved” (Gen. 32: 30), he would never have been able to go through the meeting of Esau, because he sees Esau’s face as though he had seen the face of God. He had the confidence in God that God would preserve him because God had said He would be with him, and that was what helped him to do what he had to do.

W.S.C. That is very good. If he had not gone through the experience of these previous chapters and come to something with God, this may have been a somewhat bloody meeting. He entreated God, (see ch 32: 11), and God went before him and he saw the face of Esau as though he had seen the face of God. It did not mean that Esau wanted Jacob to hustle along with him but Jacob said, ‘No, I have got flocks, I have got children, I want to just go at my own speed, I do not want to overdrive them’. Jacob had come to understand this softness. Esau had not. He had four hundred men, he did not have any wives, nor any children with him. He had come this way prepared for war. So this meeting does not change Esau, but Jacob is changed.

R.B.H. Jacob is becoming fatherly. The Corinthians had all these instructors but not many fathers (see 1 Cor 4: 15).

W.S.C. That is what we need, and a father should show us the way.

H.J.G. Do you think it would be right to say that Jacob was reaching in principle what we had in the address, sonship, the spirit of sonship. Esau never did reach it, but that does not negate that we are speaking about, the brotherly relation, does it?

W.S.C. No, it certainly does not. We still have to be right. He had to be right with Laban who was a worldly man, and we have to be right in all these cases.

J.R.B. I would like some help further as to what you have been speaking of here, that when he speaks about having “found favour in

thine eyes” he says, “then receive my gift from my hand; for therefore have I seen thy face”, but he likens it to “as though I had seen the face of God”. I do not know that I really understand what Jacob is saying there.

W.S.C. I do not know what I can say either, except that I thought that God had gone before and had even transformed Esau in some respect; not that Esau had been changed himself, but Jacob’s view of Esau was different. He had just seen God face to face in the last chapter in his wrestling, and he could identify what God was doing. I do not think Esau was changed himself. Esau was still Esau, he became the nation of Edom and they opposed Israel, they were always opposers of Israel. But what Jacob saw was how God had gone before and had softened Esau. Then Esau came and fell on Jacob’s neck and wept and kissed him. That was not Esau’s character; he was a sportsman.

J.R.B. I was just wondering if there was a link between that and what we have in John’s epistle. In chapter 4 he says, “If any one say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar; for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (v 20). Would there be a link there, do you think?

W.S.C. That does link with this, that he saw God in this whole transaction; it was as the face of God that was coming to him.

J.R.B. It almost seems that this brotherly link is the road to God. If he does not love his brother how can he love God?

W.S.C. I am sure that is right. He could not have got to this altar at the end of this chapter, El-Elohe-Israel, ‘God, the God of Israel’, until he had come to this matter about his brother. The need to be right with one another is so critical and we should not pass over it lightly.

It is certainly as important for sisters as brothers, because we all need to be right together. When Jacob gets to that altar, God, the God of Israel, he has really come to something about God, but when he gets to El-beth-el that is even better because, in type, he has come to the assembly. He has got to what God is doing not only with him but what He is doing in securing a worshipping company.

How could you have 'God of the house of God' and appreciate that if you are angry at someone or have a grudge against someone?

S.W.D. In Matthew 5, to which you have already alluded, the words of the Lord Jesus laying out the constitution of the kingdom are, "first go, be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (v 24). I thought it was explicit. "If therefore thou shouldest offer thy gift at the altar, and there ... remember that thy brother has something against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar" and *first go*, "and first go, be reconciled with thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift". It is not that the gift is not to be offered, but it is to be offered rightly.

W.S.C. That is right. It is something you know about and generally we do know about these things but they have to be met.

H.J.G. Our brother last night mentioned Satan's devices, and I consider there are two things that Satan uses to get an advantage against us. One is this matter of brotherly relations and the other one is the truth, and we need to be right about both. You cannot just say that this is the truth and I am going to stay by the truth. In order to make it work you have to have brotherly relations right.

W.S.C. That is true and even if a brother opposes you on the truth, and even if he is wrong, totally wrong, you still have to be right as you approach him. You cannot just offend him. You still need to be right with him. You do not have to be harsh and mean to somebody because he does not see the truth.

S.W.D. That is a real test, is it not, because it says, "in meekness setting right those who oppose", 2 Tim 2: 25.

J.R.B. David sets out a fine example for us in the way that he regarded the anointing in Saul, in spite of the fact that Saul was pursuing him. Where he cut off Saul's skirt, it says, "afterwards that David's heart smote him", 1 Sam 24: 5. He had respect for the anointing and we need to respect one another in the light of that, that we are vessels in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

W.S.C. Yes, that is definitely right. David said, "I will not put forth my hand against my lord, for he is the anointed of Jehovah", 1 Sam. 24: 10. As worldly, as mean, as dictatorial as Saul was, David still would not do it. I think that is a good example.

J.R.B. It is most affecting in the song of the bow; he speaks about their shields, "as not anointed with oil", 2 Sam 1: 21.

H.J.G. In the meantime David went on with what was pleasurable to God, and the people came to it and said, "even aforetime, when Saul was king ... thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel", 2 Sam 5: 2. David went on with the truth, went on with the right spirit.

W.S.C. It is beautiful when you get to the end of 1 Chronicles. David is an old man and he is transferring the kingdom to Solomon, "And David said to all the congregation, Bless now Jehovah your God. And all the congregation blessed Jehovah the God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and did homage to Jehovah and the king", 1 Chron 29: 20. The account in Kings shows David as an old man, he could not get warm, but when you come to Chronicles he is urging the people to worship Jehovah. I think what you have said is important, that he went on. We cannot go on with the things of God as long as we keep bitterness and grudges in our hearts. These things stand in the way.

R.N.H. The God of the house of God relates to the Holy Spirit, is that right? It speaks in John as to the Spirit, "when *he* is come ... he shall guide you into all the truth" (16: 13). I was wondering how that would enter into our experience. We need the gentle guidance of the Holy Spirit in relation to the opening up of the truth. It is known in the house of God, is it not?

W.S.C. Yes, it is. That is an interesting thought. I had not really thought of that, about the God of the house of God.

D.F.H. God's habitation, "habitation of God in the Spirit" (see Eph. 2: 22), that would support what our brother said and the importance of the Holy Spirit's place in the house.

W.S.C. Yes, that is helpful. Now Jacob is not afraid in this place, it is not a fearful place as before. God is here and he is not afraid now. He is at home at Beth-el because he has made everything right. The Spirit cannot work with us if we leave obstructions in the way. We stymie His efforts.

J.N.M. It seems to me Jacob has a great appreciation now that this is over with. He says to his brother, "God has been gracious to me". Is it important for us to have that kind of feeling in our own experiences? He comes to it, and we must come to it too, in a practical way as well. It is what you said, experience is not something in your head, it is a real thing.

W.S.C. That is right. I remember years ago in our city there were quite a lot of problems in a meeting near us. A well-known brother visited us and somebody asked him in the course of the reading – the only thing I can remember in the reading – what you would do about a nearby locality that is impoverished. He said, Ah, you feel like a spiritual millionaire in the haunts of the destitute. I think that is the way Jacob felt here. He said "I have everything", 'I do not need this stuff, you have it. I want to make this thing right, I want this all done with'.

D.F.H. Esau said, "I have enough, my brother". Jacob said, "I have everything". Spiritual wealth is wonderful, is it not?

W.S.C. Yes, it is. That is a fine subject, the trespass-offering, that was what Jacob was doing. He was prepared to pay for this experience. He was prepared to lose something. He was not going to be as wealthy in a material sense as he had been before, because he had to give something away. That is the way it is: you go down and you go down, seven times as our brother reminded us. So what? My righteousness is as filthy rags; why do I want to hang on to it?

S.W.D. Especially so in this case; he was the one that had done the wrong. Even if the gifts and calling of God (which are not subject to repentance) are involved (see Rom 11: 29). Jacob was wrong, he had done the wrong, he had wronged his brother.

W.S.C. That is so. We can look at this case and we can say, 'Well, Jacob was totally at fault', and that is true. Yet he was the one who wanted to make it right, he needed to make it right.

H.J.G. Jacob has come through with sufficient wealth to make it right.

W.S.C. Well, that is it. That is how God had empowered him; tribulation had worked endurance and endurance was now working experience.

R.B.H. Jacob was not thinking about the changes in wages in the years that he had worked. Those things were not important any more.

W.S.C. He did not even mention it here. He had spoken of it to his wives; at that point in his history he was still thinking of it. What an expression! "I have everything". In a spiritual sense we have everything, we have Christ. Jacob had all that was needed to pay to get this thing settled. We have all that is needed and, if there is any more needed "I will render to thee on my coming back", Luke 10: 35. If we can only get that spirit ingrained into us, which was also in Christ Jesus! (see Phil. 2: 5). There are plenty of resources.

A.S.H. After, they kissed and made up and embraced each other. Everything is all right now. It says, "he lifted up his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, Who are these with thee? And he said, The children that God has graciously given thy servant". Could you say something as to that, "The children that God has graciously given thy servant"?

W.S.C. Well, he paid for his wives, did he not, he bought them? He loved Rachel, but then because he was in a worldly environment he had to go by the customs and it was not the custom for the younger girl to get married before her older sisters. So, he had to have Leah and still had to work for Rachel; he had to pay for his wives. Now he has come a long way, now it is what 'God has graciously given thy servant'. He has a much different view of his wives and his children than he had before. I think it was when Joseph came on to view that he realised that this was not all his doing, this was God's doing.

J.Mcl. So they took account of the children, and that is what you would take account of, what is potential for God, to get right in view of the continuation of the testimony.

W.S.C. That is right. I do not think he was thinking about that a few weeks before, but as he came through these various exercises you can see the beautiful way that God was just gently urging him on, "Arise, go up to Bethel".

J.Mcl. I was thinking that practically speaking for us today, if you get right with a brother, go a little further and see what would be potential for God.

W.S.C. Yes, I see what you mean. That is exactly the point because that is really the right view of it, that you can gain your brother, if at all possible. It is possible that you cannot, but your attitude should be that you want to gain him. Go with God. I think that is the issue.

J.Mcl. "Love covers".

W.S.C. Yes, "love covers a multitude of sins", 1 Peter 4: 8. So you can say, forget it, let it go; it is over with, it is done.

K.A.K. Is that finally coming to the house of God?

W.S.C. It is. The house of God involves a wider sphere and I think it is good you bring that up because it links with what our brother said. You are now thinking for God.

K.A.K. I was noticing that Cain was made a wanderer (see Gen 4: 14). He got completely away from God – he had lost sight of the value of a brother. We do not come back to a settled place or habitation until we have come to God Himself and all that that involves.

W.S.C. It is interesting that that comes in so early in Scripture. The Spirit brings that in concerning the brother. First of all it was obedience, then it was the value of a brother. There is teaching for us in that, that obedience comes first. I cannot get right with my brother unless I am obedient to God, but if I am obedient to God, He says 'get right with your brother'.

Then Jacob comes to the house of God and he builds an altar. God does not tell him to go to El-beth-el. He tells him to go to Beth-el, and he goes there and what he finds is the God of the house of God.

S.W.D. You are linking this section of Jacob's life with experience. I think it is very choice when you consider Deborah, Rebecca's nurse. What a wealth of experience she had had! She would have been with Jacob's company. She must have left Padan-Aram with Rachel and Leah and she has gone all this journey until she come to Beth-el, and there she dies and is buried.

W.S.C. It is so interesting that that comes in here. I cannot say that I fully understand, but Jacob is now on his own, the last link in a sense with Rebecca is gone and it becomes the oak of weeping. Perhaps he will value his mother's influence now more than ever. We need to value the sisters more, especially our older sisters, our praying older sisters. There are many of them, and we are thankful to God for them.

Then he pours the drink-offering on the stone and then he pours oil on it. There is something extra added. He poured oil on it the first time he was in Beth-el (see Gen. 28: 18), but this time there is something for God there. I think it is a fine thing to see that, to the anointed marker he now adds a name. He again names it Beth-el; it is now a place, and we will find it throughout Scripture.

J.R.B. It really involves that he has come to an appreciation of what is for God, a drink-offering that would be refreshing to the heart of God.

W.S.C. Yes, that helps. It is a wonderful thing; it is settled feeling to come to this point in his life where all these things are behind him. He settled the thing with his brother. Although he could not change his brother, he settles it and what is before him now is God.

H.J.G. He is on the way to being a worshipper.

W.S.C. Maybe he was a worshipper at this point but scripture does not exactly say it. I would think in a sense that he was. But the

great thought with Jacob is when we get to that point where he worships “on the bed’s head”, Gen 47: 31. He is an old man, one hundred and thirty-seven years old, and there he worshipped. God has spread out his whole pathway in fine detail so we can see it all.

In our lives it may telescope together and be just a few weeks or a month, but this thing with Esau went on a long time. It is really sad to see these things go on a long time.

D.F.H. The other altar of which you read, El-Elohe-Israel, even though Israel is the spiritual name, there is no drink-offering there, is there?

W.S.C. No, there is not. You might say you are thankful to see Jacob come to that – God, the God of Israel, but he had settled down there, he built a house there. Abraham never built a house, and Isaac never built a house. Jacob was never taught to build a house in order to settle down. In principle he joined Shechem, and you see what terrible things happened in that next chapter. Chapter 34 is nothing but horrible trouble. He reaches this point about God in his own experience but there is still something lacking, there is still a way to go to El-beth-el.

S.W.D. It is good he gets that far. He built an altar – I am not sure if that is the first one – but it is to the God of Israel. He is linking God more with himself and his experience and his transactions, which is important as far as it goes, but he did not go the whole way, which is the God of the house of God.

W.S.C. It is a step in the right direction, as we say. We should put our name in there – El-Elohe-Israel. We have got to come to that, but it is so fine to see him get back to Beth-el, a big loop, all the way back to the same place where he was before. Last time it was scary, this time he is at home there.

R.N.H. Does Peter’s reference to living stones and being built in (see 1 Peter 2: 5), relate to how we each fit into the structure?

W.S.C. I think so. That goes on to a fineness about finding our place, the idea of living stones. The overcomer is given a white stone and a new name written on it that no one knows but he that

receives it (see Rev 2: 17). That is a secret we each have with God. That is spirituality.

A.S.H. It says, “perfect love casts out fear”, 1 John 4: 18. He does not fear any more.

W.S.C. Exactly. That is a good scripture, fear is cast out. Now Jacob comes there and he is not afraid because he does not have this burden on his back, and he is now free to go in to God unencumbered.

H.J.G. It is beautiful in the face of all the sorrow in chapter 34, that at the beginning of chapter 35, “God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there, and make there an altar”. We need to learn to appreciate the prophetic word in our gatherings. We need to appreciate that God is always speaking to us to get us through, is He not?

W.S.C. Well, we would certainly look for that. At the end of chapter 34, I think he was about at the lowest point he had been in his own feelings, despondent. He says there, ‘when anybody finds us they are going to kill us’. But right away in the next chapter, as he travels, it says, “the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them”. So that God was even there protecting him, after such a horrible sin as had come in in chapter 34 which Jacob had felt. He was developing in his feelings now, and that is a fine thing. It is not the hard Jacob that put on Esau’s clothes, but it is a man who is developing in feelings and becoming an affectionate old man instead of a hard old man.

K.A.K. Would you say that there is evidence of spiritual maturity seen in the way that Jacob says, “Put away the strange gods”. He knows how to be quickly reconciled and to make things right. It is a mark of manhood, is it not? A man is able, after being knocked down, to know how to get up and make things right.

W.S.C. Yes, I suppose it was not easy for Joshua, but he said, “as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah”, (24: 15). They were the words of a man of God. The people were going in different

directions, but he says, 'You choose whatever you want to do, but as for me, we are going to follow Jehovah'.

S.W.D. So, is it not very beautiful to see the influence of Jacob, after having said to his household to put away the strange gods? It says, "And Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Bethel, he and all the people that were with him".

W.S.C. You mean he was able as Abraham, to command his household after him. God says, "I know him that he will command ... his household after him", Gen. 18: 19. That is something we would desire. Some of us have difficulties in our houses, with our children and so forth. We need never to lose the desire to be here for God.

TORONTO

27 September 2003

Key to initials

J.R. Bellamy, Vancouver; W.S. Chellberg, Wheaton; S.W. Drever, Calgary; H.J. Glass, Toronto; D.R. Hugill, Vancouver; A.S. Hinkson, New York; R.B. Hill, Toronto; R.N. Hesterman, Woodstock; K.A. Knauss, Indianapolis; J. McIntyre, London, Ontario; D.N. Morrow, Toronto; J.N. Mooney, Toronto

PROVIDENCE

Jim Gray

Exodus 2: 5-11 (to ... burdens); Esther 4: 9-17

I have a thought about providence in the life of a believer, God's providence and how the believer responds to that. God's providence is God's ordering in your life, things that He orders about which He does not consult you. He does it for your good, does it for your blessing. What struck me in these two scriptures was that Moses was brought up in the house of a king and he had to leave it; and Esther was brought into the house of a king and she was required to stay there and intercede there – almost, on the face of it, two opposite actions to similar circumstances.

For the young people here, this boy Moses was born at a time of difficulty and trial for the children of Israel while they were living in Goshen in Egypt. The Egyptians had oppressed them and made them build their cities and treated them as slaves, and Pharaoh wanted to destroy all the boys that were born to the Jews and put them into the river Nile. However, Moses' mother and father put him in an ark of pitch, a little box pitched so that it would float on the river. But they put it in the sedge of the river, and they left it there and his sister looked to see what would happen to him. Pharaoh's daughter came along and she saw this box and she saw there was a baby boy in it, and she took compassion on him because he was crying. Moses' sister was nearby and she came and enquired if she could find someone to nurse the child for her and she brought the mother of the child who nursed him for some years – the scripture does not say how many – and then he was brought into the house of Pharaoh and brought up as Pharaoh's daughter's son.

I was struck by the thought of divine providence while reading an article in which the writer said Moses knew that the children of Israel, his relatives, were being oppressed by Pharaoh as slaves; and Moses could have gone into Pharaoh and pleaded their cause.

God had placed him in the house of Pharaoh; that was divine

providence; Moses had no hand in it. He was a man of influence in the house of Pharaoh, the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He could have gone into Pharaoh and pleaded the cause of the children of Israel and sought to alleviate their sufferings. If that had happened, the children of Israel would never have left Egypt. They would have been subject to the king of Egypt for ever. They would never have been in the land that God had in mind for them, the land of beauty, the land of Palestine. It says a chapter or so later, "a good and spacious land, unto a land flowing with milk and honey", (ch. 3: 8), but they would never have come in there. They would have had a comfortable life in Egypt.

But Moses had some instruction from his parents before he was put into the house of Pharaoh's daughter. He must have had some understanding that he was related to these persons who were oppressed. No doubt divine ordering had put him in Pharaoh's house and he had been given the education of an Egyptian, taught perhaps to rule Egypt. However, it came into his heart to look upon his brethren and he was prepared "to suffer affliction along with the people of God ... for he had respect to the recompense", Heb. 11: 25,26. He had respect to the testimony, that was that they should be taken out of Egypt and brought into the land of Canaan. It might mean suffering and affliction as it did for Moses but he was prepared to put aside what providence seemed to put in his way, to stand for the testimony of the Lord Jesus. Now, that can enter into our lives.

You might find yourself in circumstances in life providentially – God's ordering it might be puts you there – then the time comes when a choice has to be made. How are you going to use your influence to help the testimony? Here Moses chose to depart from the court of Pharaoh. He slew an Egyptian because he was oppressing one of his brethren, then he fled from the face of Pharaoh and he had to learn to be a shepherd before he learned to lead God's people. I just want to make the point that in the providential ways of God he was in the house of Pharaoh. He could have used his influence to ameliorate and better the conditions of God's people but instead of that he had in type respect to the

testimony of the Lord Jesus. He gave up his privileges as the son of Pharaoh's daughter to become a shepherd for forty years. He stayed away until the king of Egypt died. He lived a long time this king of Egypt; you read it in the history books. And then Moses came back, tutored of God. His time away was of God, to learn how to lead the people out of Egypt into the land of Canaan. That is the lesson in Moses.

In Esther it is a little different. Esther was a young Jewish woman born and brought up in the captivity. The Jews had been taken out of their own land and taken away in the captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, probably about one hundred years or more before this. At this time there was an evil man Haman who influenced king Ahasuerus and caused him to sign a writing to say that all the Jews in his lands had to be killed. It was a genocide. All the Jews in the countries that he ruled over had to be killed, and he ruled over many countries. I think the scripture says a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. It took the horses a long time to go with the message to destroy all the Jews. About twelve months were given before they were to be destroyed because of the journeys that had to be made.

Mordecai was a Jew and he was concerned about the destruction of God's people. Esther had become queen of the country having been married to the king, and as she was a Jewess Mordecai appeals to her to use her influence with the king. God's ordering had placed her in the position. She was a captive in the land and she had been taken to the king to see whether he would choose her as his bride; and he chose her as his bride from amongst other women. So divine providence had placed her in that position.

She was in a position of privilege and Mordecai asked her to go into the king and plead the cause of God's people. She says, I have not been called for thirty days. If I go in without being called and the king does not extend the golden sceptre to me, I will die. He will put me to death: "there is *one* law". That is verse 11; it is in italics. It was a certainty: if she stood in the inner court and he did not extend the golden sceptre, she would be put to death. What was she going

to do? She put the testimony of the Lord Jesus first. That is what she did. In this instance it was not a case of fleeing as Moses had to flee. Esther had to stay and go and present herself to the king and he did extend the gold sceptre to her and listened to her. He received her, but she was prepared to die for the testimony.

Mordecai says, "And who knows whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (v.14). He is really saying to her God has ordered this. You are in a position of influence. Use that influence for the testimony of the our Lord!

Now there are times in your life when you may have such an experience. Through God's ordering you may be in a position where you can influence authority, authority in a general sense, for the good of the testimony, speak for the Lord Jesus, speak on behalf of the Lord Jesus, bring His Name into the matter. It says, "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe", Prov. 18: 10. Bring in that Name and God will come into the matter and provide a way through. That happens in the life of believers. God orders things and the power of evil is overthrown: "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world", 1 John 4: 4

Esther went and fasted and her maidens fasted; Mordecai fasted. We would say she brings the brethren into the matter in hand. There is a fasting before Jehovah that He will come in. She used her privileged position although fraught with danger, but God came into the matter and the testimony was saved.

There was another order by the king to say that the Jews had to stand for their lives and defend themselves and take the spoil of those who sought to destroy them and Haman who had ordered the first execution of the Jews found himself hanged on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. That is how God overthrew the power of evil.

I only present this in a simple way, to show us that in life here there are opportunities where you may have to give up privileges for the testimony and others where you can use privileges for intercession with an authority for the good of the testimony and God

comes into the matter. May the Lord help us in these things and encourage us for His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

8 July 2003

PRESERVATION OF THE TESTIMONY

Robert Trotter

1 Samuel 19: 1-17

Since our reading on Lord's Day, beloved brethren, I have been thinking a little about what was in the scripture as to rendering to God what is God's. Our brother has mentioned the testimony and it is wonderful that we, through God's ordering and God's mercy and grace, can have a part in that testimony. We also sang in our hymn that we should fulfil what He has given us to do. No doubt, that relates to service, but I think it relates also to our part in the testimony. What we find in this chapter is that that is what David represents, and that there are elements, as our brother has been speaking of through which he is protected. It is a wonderful matter to protect what is of the testimony and to continue it. It would be the wish, I would say, or the desire, of every true believer to see the testimony continued in a place.

What I have in mind is how David shines in this chapter and what a spirit marks him. Saul, who is always against him, as we see also in this chapter, would have slain David. He would have finished David, that line of things, but through one and another David was preserved. There is Jonathan especially, who vowed love for David – how he could speak of it, his love for David, and what he gave up for David too. The testimony involves, I think, that we have to surrender what is our own, and what we would cling to as our own, for the interests of Christ. It says, "Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David". David, as we know, is very often a type of Christ and how right it would be to delight in Christ, God's Man, the One who has come into manhood, who has trodden this scene and who left it by way of the cross and death but who was raised from the dead. We had a touch of that again on Lord's Day as to the great matter of resurrection. These are wonderful truths, dear young ones, truths that we have to embrace and protect and see that they are preserved amongst us. So it says, "Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David. And Jonathan told David saying, Saul my father

seeks to kill thee". He was warning David although David would know, I suppose, like our Lord Himself, what was in man. Then, in a sense, Jonathan intercedes for David. He takes that place. He speaks to Saul and then it says, "Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as previously". I cannot say much more as to that but I suppose in one sense Jonathan took his life in his hands. There was a time when Saul would have slain Jonathan, his son. That is the kind of man he was. He would have slain Jonathan, but there again there was protection.

Then there was war again, "and David went forth and fought with the Philistines, and smote them with a great slaughter; and they fled before him" (v.8). How successful David was, how he succeeded! One line was becoming continually stronger; the other line, the line of Saul, was going on to weakness, it was going to be terminated. God had decreed that. But it goes on to say that an evil spirit returned upon Saul and "he sat in his house with his spear in his hand; and David played with his hand". How fine that is! What a spirit we see marking David! He "played with his hand". Saul having in his hand what he would use to slaughter David, but it says, that "David played with his hand". He is spoken of elsewhere, as we know, as "the sweet psalmist of Israel", 2 Sam. 23: 1. What a spirit marks him! It says, "Saul sought to smite David and the wall with the spear; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the spear into the wall". I am reminded – I think another has said somewhere – how like Christ he was. It says of the Lord in the gospels that He just slipped away. Think of the opposition there was, what men would have done to Him! And it goes on to say, "And David fled, and escaped that night".

Then Michal comes on the scene and how positive her way is too! We often bring out the end of Michal having no seed or no continuance, but I did not have that in mind. She is useful, she is used, in the preserving of the testimony. How I would encourage each one, younger ones, too, to seek the Lord's help to have part in protecting what is of testimony to Him down here. Think of the world in which we live, a terrible, terrible world, and what it is going on to,

going on to judgment. Think of the way that things are going! You can see it. It is a downward way. Oh to be preserved from the world! Scripture says, not just of the world, but the things that are in it, “the things in the world”, that which the enemy, dear young friend, would have you occupied with, the things of the world. It speaks elsewhere of your own things: “all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ”, Phil. 2: 21. That is a challenge to each one of us. I think most of us would have to say what a small part we have had in the testimony, but still there is the time that is left. So it says of Michal here that she “let David down through a window; and he went, and fled and escaped”.

There is a certain source of Jonathan’s and Michal’s attitude and the way that they helped David – I think that is love. What affection! David could speak of Jonathan’s love “passing women’s love”, 2 Sam. 1: 26. How he appreciated it! How favourable too things were for Jonathan! It says of David in a later chapter in relation to the arrows – it is all very interesting to read and to think over – that he “arose from the side of the south”, 1 Sam. 20: 41. Oh how favourable things are and I would say that, dear young one, God is favourable. How favourable things are, all for our benefit and help and our fulfilling our part in the testimony!

It goes on to say, “And Saul sent messengers to take David”, and again Michal comes in. I would like to speak of it positively. I know there is the other side and it has its use, but I am not speaking of that at the moment, just the fact that these two persons are used in this chapter to preserve David. David goes on – a wonderful matter, of course, that is, God’s hand too, how His hand was in this, and then it says, “Then Saul said to Michal, Why has thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy ...?” Saul treated David as an enemy. How we are tested in that! Do we treat someone as an enemy? David never treated Saul as an enemy. Apart from anything else he had respect for the anointing.

Well, I did not read the end of the chapter but what comes in is the prophetic word, and I think that is something else that is used in the preserving of the testimony, what is prophetic. We have this

meeting each week and we trust something of a prophetic line comes into it and that is preservative, preservative of the testimony in a place.

Maybe I have said enough, but I would just like to bring out the privilege that is ours to have part in this. Not everyone is privileged.

I think it all relates to God's sovereignty, persons who have been redeemed, persons who have been bought at great cost, but what a privilege it is to have part in these things. Well, may we go in for it!

Surely if we have the desire God will help us. We will be helped in it. As I have said, things are favourable, especially in relation to younger persons. That is brought out in relation to the children of Israel as our brother was saying, the way that God took them that they might not see war and be discouraged. May each one of us be encouraged as to these things! We want, beloved brethren, things to continue in life in a place and I believe that is God's thought for us.

Well, may He bless what has been said for His Name's sake!

EDINBURGH

8 July 2003

“OUR SAVIOUR GOD”

1 Timothy 2: 3-6

Hark to glad tidings of mercy unbounded!
God now invites thee to come and be blest,
Seeks thee in love that no mortal has sounded –
Love that in Jesus is fully expressed.

Hark! for the Father is tenderly speaking,
Graciously waiting to succour thy woe,
Gently the lost and the wanderers seeking –
Peace and forgiveness He longs to bestow.

Hark! for the Saviour, the bountiful Giver,
Pleads from the glory in mercy supreme;
Risen, ascended and strong to deliver,
He from destruction thy life can redeem.

Hark! for the Spirit is patiently striving –
Life-giving Spring of deliverance and joy,
Source of refreshment and power and reviving,
Earnest of blessings that nought can destroy.

Hark! for the Father, the Son and the Spirit –
God in His saving compassion made known –
Urge and entreat thee these joys to inherit:
Come, and salvation may now be thine own!

G.H.Brown

At Harrow