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# **SPIRITUAL EXCELLENCE**

**Kenneth Robinson**

**2 Peter 1: 16-18; 2 Corinthians 12: 1-4; Revelation 1: 9-11**

I have read of three men, Peter, Paul and John. I think the verses I have read from each of them describe the spiritual experience which they had. I would like to stir a little desire in each and every one of us, myself included particularly, to have a greater desire for a spiritual experience. May I ask you, Have you ever had one? Drawing on these scriptures I would add, if you have ever had one you will never forget it. Paul had a spiritual experience and he kept it for fourteen years.

I refer first of all to Peter. I have been thinking a little as to sonship. Peter is describing sonship in Christ in the most beautiful and descriptive language of a man who is drawing on the knowledge which came of reflection on a spiritual experience. Peter is writing of the transfiguration of Jesus. He is writing as being an eyewitness of the majesty of the sonship of Jesus, as one who had a unique experience of hearing such a voice, which was the Father's voice, uttered to Jesus. Does that not, for a moment, stir your heart and desires spiritually to have a right apprehension of the Father's thoughts of Christ? That is a spiritual experience. Do you have any impression of the Father's thoughts of His Son? I ask you that. I would like to stir a desire with my own heart and with every one of us to set ourselves for more spiritual experiences. There are many exercises proceeding in the hearts and souls of the saints, in our homes and in our localities, which the enemy would use to dampen down any desire to go in for what is spiritual, because what is of the first order, be it material, or of a family order or whatever can very quickly stifle any desires to go in for what is spiritual. May we all take on a greater desire to give ourselves and put ourselves in the way of spiritual experiences.

I would add, drawing on these scriptures again, that spiritual experience is personal; it is a personal matter. Again I would ask

have you ever had any? I think I have had a little, but I really ought to have had lot more considering the number of years I have been in the testimony. Many others here tonight would probably say the same. How are we occupying our time? What are we thinking about? What are we praying about? What is dominating our conversation and our thoughts? If we are waking in the night, what are we thinking about? All the worries? Or are we able to set ourselves in some way for a spiritual thought and impression? You will never forget it; it is part of the formation of the believer, going into your fabric. There are some younger ones here and you might say, what are you talking about? What are you talking about when you say a 'spiritual experience'? To put it simply for you, have you an impression of Christ that is your own, absolutely your own? Can you describe it to me in your own words, what you think of Jesus tonight? Have you thought of Him today at all? These things are very testing, but they are very simple, but I think they are intensely real. If we are going to make progress together as individuals or in the locality, brethren are going to have to have spiritual experiences, experiences which are not according to your material progress or how much progress you are making in business or personal life or your home size or standard or anything of that nature. That is all of the first order and has nothing whatever to do with what is spiritual. Spirituality, spiritual impressions, relate to Christ and the counsels of the Holy Spirit.

Peter is writing of the mount of transfiguration. You may remember that there were three men who went up the mount, Peter, James and John – the Lord took them up. You will get the account of it in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9: you can read it there and you will see that three men went up and they had a distinctive experience of the relation to the sonship of Jesus as He was here. Never let us forget that sonship in Christ has been demonstrated on this very earth and in that sonship in Christ He demonstrated the features which caused this voice from the Father to be uttered to Him from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight". That was never said to Moses, that was never said to

Abraham, that was never said to David, never said to any of the great men of the Old Testament because sonship in Christ is absolutely unique and distinctive. That is why I would ask you to be stirred in your hearts and affections in relation to a real impression of Jesus.

When you come to Paul, Paul is caught up to the third heaven. This is a most remarkable statement, a description by the beloved apostle, distinct servant of the Lord, given great truth regarding Christ and the assembly, the one who was given particular light regarding the heavenly and current condition of Jesus in glory.

He describes his experience. You would love to have heard what he did hear, you would love if you had been led of the Lord and the Spirit to put it out, but he heard unspeakable things, “which it is not allowed to man to utter”. I tell you he never forgot this experience.

What a wonderful matter! Another thing it shows you is that if you have a personal spiritual impression it keeps. May be it is good to do that. We have been reminded of a remark of Mr Lyon’s – these things have been used in ministry by a beloved man in his day – that he had a view of the crown above and laboured with the saints to attract them into that. That is what ministry is about. May I remind you of Mr Stoney’s simple comment, because we do need to be praying that gift will be raised up amongst the saints; what is gift but an impression of Christ? That is what gift is. Do you have an impression of Christ? Could the Lord use and develop your impressions of Christ to help the saints forward? These things are all going to be needed, spiritual impressions are going to be needed if quality of ministry and support for the saints is going to be maintained. It is absolutely essential that as individuals, brothers and sisters, we give ourselves to prayer and to exercise and to laying our souls open to the Spirit that there might be more and more evidence of brothers and sisters having had personal spiritual impressions. That is what it is about. Christianity is not material, it is not any sort of system of competition as to who can be the top or anything of that nature. Christianity and life amongst the saints ought to be on a different principle all together from what we see

publicly in the world around. Spirituality – think of a humble brother, he may not have much outwardly, but perhaps can give you a wonderful and present impression he has had of Jesus that moves your very inwards and your very motives and desires. These things are real.

Paul's experience would show that. It was a distinctive matter he was given, and caught up to the third heaven he most probably had an impression of the tree of life, although John is the one who uses that expression. But, he must have had some impression that this is a realm to which Christ is indigenous and the One that I know and have a link with and the most wonderful aspects of truth and in an environment up here, and He said to me at this point that he is not allowed to speak it, but Paul gives you some impression of a hint of what is yet to come. Beloved brethren some wonderful spiritual impressions are before the saints. One of them is, let us be simple about it, that at the rapture we will be made like Christ. That is going to be a spiritual experience and we will be retained in that forever. These things are wonderful.

Then John – he is in Patmos. It is certain that it was a personal experience for John, the one who had what it was to be in the bosom of Jesus, the one to be described of as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (see John 21: 20), and he is in Patmos, “in the tribulation and kingdom and patience, in Jesus”, and he becomes “in the Spirit on the Lord's day”. He is not caught up, that was his experience down here at that moment, he became “in the Spirit on the Lord's day”. Such a one, such a condition must be a very fruitful environment for spiritual impressions, because if we are truly under the power of the Spirit we must receive spiritual impressions.

Beloved brethren, how precious these are. It would give us another reason for the appreciation for the current service of the Holy Spirit to each one of us as individuals, brothers and sisters alike. What I am saying may be simple, I know it is very testing for me to say, but I would say it is open to every brother and sister, irrespective of age, every believer in the Lord Jesus, and I trust every young person is in that category, and also that everyone has

the present experience and knowledge of the service of the Holy Spirit. Set yourself for a spiritual experience. It may not be long, it may be momentary – you may get it in the meeting, in your private contemplation – remember it, maybe write it down, contemplate it. It is personal, it keeps and as you bring that out and express it among, perhaps your family, or in the local meeting, it adds and we grow together in the formation of what is of Christ in the souls and affections of the saints. May these things just stir us all a little, myself included. I realise that this comes straight back at me. May we have and may we be able to evidence in our conversation and contribution in every way that we have had a little more experience of spiritual expressions. For His Name's sake.

**GLASGOW**

**29 July 2003**

## **WORDS IN A MINISTRY MEETING**

**(i) Allan Brown**

**1 Timothy 1: 15; Ephesians 3: 8; Luke 22: 27**

I owe this impression to another, but I suppose in the commonwealth what belongs to one belongs to all. I feel free, therefore, to bring before the brethren this simple thought, yet there is a great deal in it that tests us. The apostle Paul when speaking of sinners puts himself at the top; when speaking of saints he puts himself at the bottom. I find that testing and anything I say now I would apply to myself as much as to anyone else. Whether Paul was the worst sinner that ever was, I cannot really say, but that was his own judgment as to his course in the past. It is said of John Newton, the writer of that beautiful hymn 'Amazing Grace', "there are two things that I shall never forget, one is that I have been a great sinner, and the other is that Christ is a great Saviour". I think we need to keep humble, dear brethren. It is not that there is any guilt or feeling of guilt attaching to us because that is all cleared in the death of Christ. His finished work has justified us; according to Romans 5, "we have peace towards God" (v 1). So guilt does not remain with us, but the sense of how great the deliverance has been and the greatness of the Deliverer is something that ought to remain with us and keep us lowly.

Remember that man in Luke 18 who appeared before God, ostensibly at least, and said, "God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men" (v 11). That was a very irreverent way to address God, "God", he says, as though he was talking to an equal. But the other man says, "O God, have compassion on me, the sinner" (v 13), and that man "went down to his house justified" (v 14), and if he was justified, he had peace. His guilt was gone, but he would never, ever, think of himself as being better than anyone else.

Now, I ask myself this, as well as any other, do I really think that I am better than anybody else? Ask yourself that! Paul, imbued with the spirit of his Master, speaks of himself as, "less than the least

of all saints". If anyone had anything to be proud of, it would have been Paul, or Saul of Tarsus as he was. He gives us a list of all his accomplishments, his birth, his achievements, the full record, all of it. You might say, what a glittering list he had to be proud of! He says, "But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord", Phil 3: 8.

And that just bring me to these precious words of the Lord Jesus Himself, "But I am in the midst of you as the one that serves". What an example! One who, "subsisting in the form of God", taking upon Himself in manhood "a bondman's form ... humbled himself", Phil 2: 6-8. Think of Him there amongst these disciples! Think, dear brethren, of the Lord Jesus going round the disciples and washing their feet! What would it be if He were here tonight, if He were to go round every one of us, serving us in that way? Does it not humble you to think of One so great being in the midst of His own as "one that serves"? This is the example. The Lord said to His own after He washed their feet, "as I have done to you, ye should do also", John 13: 15. Let us therefore learn to serve one another and to esteem one another in this way. The apostle says in another scripture, "each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves", Phil 2: 3. If we do that, it will solve a great many problems. Things will work out in a mutual way as we regard the work of God in one another and esteem one another as "more excellent than ourselves. We will then be able to serve in the spirit of our Master. May it be so!

## **(ii) Jim Gray**

### **1 Corinthians 10: 16-18, 21**

What has turned me to this scripture is the thought of partaking of the Lord's table. I have had a thought for some days and was encouraged to say a word on this when our brother read the scripture in Luke, "For which is greater, he that is at table or he that serves? Is not he that is at table?" (chap 22: 27). It is a wonderful table to sit at, to partake of the Lord's table. We sit and eat and it is furnished well for us. It is a reference to fellowship, the Lord's table. I suppose it is something on the line of the fellowship of God's Son, which you get in verse 9 of 1 Corinthians 1. I suppose abstractly it includes every believer, but we are not in a day such as it once was in the Corinthian day when there was unity and oneness in the public church. However, I think we can enjoy the Lord's table as we are directed through 2 Timothy and its principles, to enjoy something of it amongst those with whom we can have fellowship. That is a wonderful privilege to gather together to the name of the Lord Jesus and celebrate the Supper together and feed on the food, "This is my body, which is for you", 1 Cor 11: 24.

But we have to protect that fellowship, respect and protect the Lord's table. So it involves certain responsibilities as this scripture brings in as to the persons who partake of that table, "Ye cannot partake of the Lord's table, and of the table of demons". I was thinking, when our brother was speaking, of how Paul would protect it. I have been looking a little bit in Leviticus and I think the Lord's table in some sense is like the peace-offering. It is more than just the celebration of the Supper. It is a fellowship, the fellowship of God's Son, and we treasure that fellowship and we have to protect and respect that fellowship. From our side certain matters have to be attended to. Our brother spoke about regard for one another and respect for one another and I think that is a very important matter. I think it is a very important matter always to have respect for an assembly in a place. No matter what difficulties come up, we should always have respect for the assembly in a place and protect the

assembly in a place, our local place particularly. In the law of the offerings in Leviticus before the law of the peace-offering you get the law of the sin-offering and the trespass-offering, so that as an individual I have to attend to these matters before I can enter into communion in the peace-offering, which I am linking in my mind with the table of the Lord. It is a wonderful fellowship. The sin-offering would have me judge myself. Paul says, I am the chief of sinners (see 1 Tim 1: 15). He was looking into his own heart and he knows what is there so that the sin-offering brings me to judge myself in relation to sin and what is in me: "Behold, in iniquity was I brought forth, and in sin did my mother conceive me", Ps 51: 5. That is something you have to come to and judge yourself. It has been remarked that it will preserve you from self-occupation, attending to the sin-offering and the law of the sin-offering.

Then the trespass-offering involves, not only what is within and my judgment of it in the light of the death of Christ, but God has been robbed of something. There has been an infringement in relation to the divine rights so that I have to judge myself in relation to that, firstly in relation to what God has been wronged of through what I have allowed and then too what my relations are with my brethren. That is the trespass-offering. Something has to be added and that is really a test, what I can add. Both these offerings would deal with bitterness of spirit, and that is something in nature that is very deep, and I speak with a sense of it. If I have been wronged at all, I have to be with God as to my own matters, my own history, and then the trespass-offering as to what I may have contributed to the infringement that has happened, and that would bring me into the divine presence, the divine presence not only in relation to God Himself, but in relation to the brethren so that in my spirit there has to be a deep-rooted judgment of bitterness. So, when I come to the peace-offering, it is a hallowed sphere, a sanctified sphere. I am in accord with the One who is sanctified: "For both he that sanctifies and those sanctified were all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren", Heb 2: 11. We come into that environment so that as approaching the saints we have an

appreciation of them; as our brother said, “each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves”, Phil 2: 3.

What a test! When things are going normally, it is not such a test, but when there are problems and difficulties in a locality, it becomes a test; it would be a test to me. But I think, as coming into the divine presence, as remembering the Lord Jesus and having regard to His name, then my spirit would be such as to regard the saints in the local place with dignity whatever difficulties may have arisen. I come then to the peace-offering, spirits free, my spirit free and the spirits of the brethren, too. I would regard them as being “more excellent” than myself.

What an approach can be made to one another at such a level! That is the table of the Lord, to me anyway. It is a richly furnished table and the great expression of it is in the bread and the cup, what He has given to secure us. As our brother said, great sinners maybe, but there is a great Saviour and the great Saviour has provided a suitable food for us in the bread and the cup and to be in accord with my brethren and enjoy the peace-offering, then I can enter into the joy of my Lord. How attractive, but these are deep exercises. I do not minimise them, but I think we should regard partaking of the Lord’s table as a wonderful privilege and respect and esteem the persons who eat at the table. You get it all through the Old Testament, persons who eat at the king’s table. He must direct things at that table and bring us into conformity to His own spirit and His own thinking. What a spirit the Saviour showed! May we be brought into these things, and be blessed by the Lord as we are exercised about them. For His Name’s sake.

**EDINBURGH**

**25 November, 2003**

## APPELLATIONS OF THE GOSPEL

(At meetings at Belfast in 1938 Mr J.Taylor asked Mr H.P.Wells how many appellations of the gospel there were in the scriptures [J.T. vol 45, p. 39])

H.P.W. 'There are 18 or 19'

Douglas Hugill (Vancouver) has supplied me with the following list:

1. The glad tidings of the kingdom Matthew 4: 23
2. glad tidings Matthew 11: 5
3. the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God Mark 1: 1
4. the glad tidings of the word Acts 8: 4
5. the glad tidings of Jesus Acts 8: 35
6. the glad tidings of the grace of God Acts 20: 24
7. God's glad tidings concerning His Son Jesus Romans 1: 1-4  
Christ our Lord
8. the glad tidings of His Son Romans 1: 9
9. my glad tidings Paul in Romans 2: 16
10. glad tidings of peace Romans 10: 15
11. glad tidings of good things Romans 10: 15
12. the glad tidings of the Christ Romans 15: 19
- 13 the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ 2 Corinthians 4: 4
14. the glad tidings of the faith Galatians 1: 23
15. the glad tidings of your salvation Ephesians 1: 13
16. our glad tidings (Paul, Silvanus, Timotheus) 1 Thessalonians

17. the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ 2  
Thessalonians

1: 8

18. the glad tidings of the glory of the blessed God 1 Timothy  
1: 11

19. the everlasting glad tidings Revelation 14: 6

(No. 19 might be discounted as being future)

**Other Refs:**

1. the glad tidings concerning the kingdom of God Acts 8: 12  
and the name of Jesus Christ

2. the glad tidings of God (included in 7 above) Romans 15: 16

3. my glad tidings and the preaching of Jesus Christ Romans  
16: 25

(included in 9 above)

4. the glad tidings of the (un)circumcision Galatians 2: 7  
[or to the (un)circumcision]

5. the glad tidings of the kingdom of God Luke 4: 43  
(included in 1 or replace 14 or 16)

If there are more, I will add them another time – Ed.

# THE THRONE OF GRACE

## Hebrews 4: 14-16

Father, in Thy presence bending,  
Now we prove Thy grace transcending;  
All our needs to Thee are known,  
Boldly we approach Thy throne.

To our supplications hearken!  
Though the clouds around us darken,  
All our care on Thee we cast –  
Thou wilt guide from first to last.

Calm the restless billows' raging,  
By Thy power their wrath assuaging!  
Though the mighty breakers roll,  
Thou art ever in control.

Thus we pray, our strength renewing:  
Grant us peace, our wills subduing!  
May our souls in Christ abide,  
Trusting Him as Friend and Guide.

Thus serene and daily fresher,  
Undisturbed by strife or pressure,  
On Thy power and wisdom stayed,  
We will journey unafraid!

**G.H.Brown**

**MELBOURNE 1977**