

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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COMMITTAL BY REFUSING

STANDARDS

"NOT... TO MAKE VOID, BUT TO FULFIL"

THE CHILDREN'S WEATHER

COMMITTAL BY REFUSING

W.Lamont

Psalm 132: 1-9; 1 Kings 21: 1-6; Exodus 21: 1-6; Ruth 1: 15-18

I suppose we are all very familiar with the working of human will; that is, you do what you think fit, what pleases you. There is evidence of its results all around in the confusion in the world and in Christendom. It is a testimony to the exercising of man's will, whereas God has in mind that each one of us, young and old, should be brought into the blessedness of proving what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (see Rom 12: 2). John tells us that there is a way to it - that there are persons "who are born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God"(John 1: 13); that is, you have to do with God and come to it that your will is entirely out of court, and the only way of blessing is to acknowledge God's will. We see it perfectly in the Lord Jesus, great example to us in everything, One who could say "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work", John 4: 34. There was a Man here in perfection according to the mind of God who in every detail filled out God's will, never more so than in that time of agony in Gethsemane when He was faced with those terrible sufferings involving that cup of wrath which He was about to drink. He said in the beauty of holy, dependent manhood: "But then, not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. It is food for the soul to contemplate the perfection and greatness of the manhood of Jesus.

It will be noted that the first three of these persons of whom we have read say, I will not. Oh, you say, That is the assertion of man's will. It is not. These are persons who are governed by God's will, who come to it to set themselves on a certain course in holy determination to be in accord with God's will. Paul gives us, in the Acts, God's comment about David: "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart, who shall do all my will", chap 13: 22. I think that, as coming into touch with the Lord Jesus, Paul would take a fresh look at David and see him as God saw him, also saying later

in that chapter: "David indeed, having in his own generation ministered to the will of God, fell asleep" (v 36). What a commendation! I would that that comment could be made of everyone here, both young and old, that in our generation we would minister to the will of God. Now there are several generations here; that is how the testimony goes on, generation after generation, old persons, younger persons and very young person, s all, I trust, having a vital part in the testimony. Paul had that in mind when he wrote to Timothy; he said "the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also", 2 Tim 2: 2. He does not say 'competent men who are faithful'; he puts faithfulness first in that context as the first qualification for being able to instruct others also.

I think Paul would look at this Psalm in a fresh light, and when he read it he would see that the One of whom David was really speaking was the One who appeared to him on the Damascus road. What I want to bring out here is the holy determination of David which is to mark each one of us. I will not, he says: "I will not come into the tent of my house, I will not go up to the couch of my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, slumber to my eyelids, until I find out a place for Jehovah, habitations for the mighty one of Jacob". That is another important lesson to learn, that your priorities are right. What are you going to put first? David was determined to put God's interests first, and I would counsel young persons especially to be determined to put the things of God first and you will find that you prosper in your soul. You might find things a bit rigorous, I mean as to material matters; or again you might find that the Lord will prosper you. To apply it further, it would mean that we are determined to give Christ a greater place in our localities. Then he says "we heard of it at Ephratah, we found it in the fields of the wood"; that was not a proper place for the ark, and David was concerned that the ark should be in a place where it would be properly looked after. He had to learn, too, that no human methods would do in looking after the ark. He had to learn the lesson that the ark was quite capable of looking after itself. It is like the Lord in John 18 when they came to

apprehend Him; He said "Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus the Nazaorean. Jesus says to them, I am he ... When therefore he said to them, I am he, they went away backward and fell to the ground" (vv 5,6). It is like the ark in the house of Dagon when there was nothing left but the fish stump (see 1 Sam 5: 4). Oh, the greatness of Christ! David in principle was concerned for his local meeting. Many places in the testimony have been left in spiritual dearth because there were persons who sought a place for themselves.

I turn to 1 Kings 21. Naboth is a very interesting study. It is significant that, in the general context of this scripture, it was a confrontation - a war between Syria and Israel; and those who know what is happening in current affairs will know that it is still going on - war between Israel and Syria - the same old quarrels. The enemy has certain tactics and you find that the same quarrels go on, generation after generation, year after year. Alas! in the history of the testimony it has been so, and in the history of certain places it has been so, generation after generation the same old quarrels, the same features of the flesh coming to light. But you find that there is a more intimate quarrel going on and that the enemy is at the inheritance. He uses this king to go after Naboth's inheritance and what I want to bring out here is that there is another man who is able to say, I will not: "I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers". I think Naboth here is a true Philadelphian. The Lord says "hold fast what thou hast, that no one takes thy crown", Rev 3: 11. Beloved brethren, it is a day for holding fast because the enemy is at us to give up. Give up one feature of the truth and soon you find you are giving up another, and then you find you give up the whole lot. Naboth is a man who is able to say, I will not.

There is another interesting point I want to bring out. He says "I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers"; but when Ahab relates it to Jezebel he quotes Naboth as saying my vineyard: "I will not give thee my vineyard". Naboth did not say that at all. He said "I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers". The inference I want to bring out is that Ahab saw in Naboth a man who had made

the truth his own. Now that is very important, to be able to say, I will not give it up. The Lord said "others have laboured, and ye have entered into their labours", John 4: 38. That relates to the inheritance, something that other persons have worked very hard for. All the labours of those who have gone before us have brought things to us and we must make them our own, that is by godly exercise. Go in for these things! Let us support the local assembly in our manner of life, in our habits, in our outlook, so that our local assemblies come first and take precedence even over our business affairs. That would be normal Christianity. So learn, I say again, to get your priorities right and that is the line on which God will bless you. This stand cost Naboth his life, but he was prepared for it. I often think of these martyrs, men who were prepared to seal their testimony with their blood. That is a very searching matter.

In Exodus 21 there is another man who says, I will not. Do you want to go free? That is the challenge that this passage raises. You have the opportunity to go free. Will you take it? Or are you committed in love to the Lord Jesus so that you say in holy determination, I will not go free? It is set out in perfection in the Lord Jesus Himself. Someone has said, and I think rightly, that 'I love my master' is vertical love, 'I love my wife' is horizontal love, and 'I love my children' is descending love. Careers officers tell young people about the opportunities there are. If you want opportunities, *real* opportunities, you will find them in divine things; and there is plenty to go in for. "Then his master shall bring him before the judges, and shall bring him to the door, or to the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall be his bondman for ever". I appeal again to the young: there comes a time in your life when you say to yourself, This is a crossroads, what am I going to do? what am I going to give priority to? Are you going to commit yourself to the things of the Lord or are you going to pursue your own way? It says of this man: "he shall be his bondman for ever". Oh, blessed state in persons' souls when they come to it that they are committed in holy zeal to the things of Christ for as long as they

are left here! But it involves the determination to say, I will not go free.

The beginning of Ruth is often referred to as a picture of departure. Elimelech's name means 'whose God is king'. There was an outward recognition of God's rights and yet he is a man who had taken a path of departure. That has happened in this place and it has happened in others. Persons have headed for Moab; and as any of us who have had some experience of it have undoubtedly proved, when you arrive there - not by a physical journey of course but by a moral one - you will find there is a famine and nothing for your soul. Well, here is recovery, and it is recovery in sisters. In this movement there are only these three women. I have often wondered why in Luke 10 Lazarus is not mentioned. He is mentioned in John's gospel but Luke in his record does not mention him in chapter 10. That is an encouragement for the sisters. They show by example the way to recovery. Ruth says, *I will*: "whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: they people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried". That implies wholehearted committal to the people of God. Commit yourself to the Lord Jesus, that is the first essential; and then you commit yourself to God's people as those in Macedonia did (see 2 Cor 8: 5). Orpah was very nice about the whole thing; she kissed her mother-in-law. It does not even say that Ruth kissed her, but Orpah did and left her. You find in many cases of departure that certain persons have been very nice and polite about it: 'Thank you very much, we are off, pursuing our own way'. But Ruth clave to her with holy determination. May we all be committed persons for God's glory and our blessing, for His Name's sake.

GRANGEMOUTH

16 May 1981

STANDARDS

John 15: 9-17

W.L. We speak a lot about maintaining divine standards. I thought the Lord might help us to see how that is done. God's standard is Himself, and His own nature which is love. It has been fully expressed in Christ in manhood and it is expressed in God's attributes - righteousness, holiness and so on - which cannot conflict with His nature. John helps us right through his writings to see that God's standard is His nature.

Of course the commandments which we have in this section are important. It is not that God has devised a set of rules for us to keep, but He has made it very clear that the standard of things lies in Himself and in His love. So the Lord says "As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you", and "that ye love one another, as I have loved you". We see quite clearly that the standard is set out in John's gospel by the Father Himself. In chapter 3 we have "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand" (v 35). In chapter 5 it says, "For the Father loves the Son and shews him all things which he himself does" (v 20). So as brought into divine things we are brought into touch with God in His nature; that is the standard. Some bodies in Christendom have sought to arrive at a standard of things by debating problems and arriving at conclusions which very often have to be adjusted and re-adjusted.

These things are men's ideas of Christianity. But when you come to the vitals of Christianity the standard is in God Himself and never needs to be adjusted or altered in any way. The Spirit of God is with us to bring us in life into the enjoyment of these things. That is real Christianity, the enjoyment of God known in love.

Jas.M. That has been expressed in the hymn we sang, has it not? 'Thine unbounded favour, Thine everlasting love' (No 67). The everlasting love takes character from the everlasting God.

W.L. The hymn expressed what one has been thinking of since our experience this morning. It has been said that in John's gospel the believer is put in touch with the Father's world. In Matthew the Father is known by us in our circumstances: "your Father knows of

what things ye have need", chap 6: 8. The Father is able to enter into our circumstances day by day in all our needs and He knows all about them in every intimate detail and He is able to look after us better than we can ourselves. But when you come to John's gospel you are put in touch with the Father's own world. You are brought into His realm of things and the enjoyment of these heavenly relationships.

A.McB. In chapter 1 the declaration of God is by "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father" (v 18). The Father's world is one of love.

W.L. That is helpful. We know well how that featured prominently at the time when the Lord's sonship was brought out in its distinctive glory. The Greek preposition '*eis*' suggests a position entered into and therefore reached in manhood. John in his ministry gives us Christianity set out in relationships, primarily in the relationship of the Father and the Son. How simple God has made things for us - a relationship that everyone understands! It is there to be enjoyed.

A.McB. When He says "As the Father has loved me" would that mean that they would have observed that?

W.L. Yes. John does not give us formally the mount of transfiguration. In the synoptic gospels we have the account of the Lord taking the disciples up the mountain and the Father's voice being heard. Why John does not record that formally would be something to think about, but in chapter 1 he says "(and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only begotten with a father), full of grace and truth" (v 14). I think that is John's way of giving us the record of that incident on the mount of transfiguration. As the hymn says: 'And to know the blessed secret, Of His preciousness to Thee' (No 277).

A.A.B-n. The One who is in the bosom of the Father has declared Him; the declaration comes from that area of love.

W.L. It is important to see that. As we have been rightly taught, only One who is God could declare God, but that divine Person is in manhood. Help came in as to that too. Some sought to restrict the

declaration to the Father but Mr Taylor said it involved the declaration of the Godhead primarily in John's gospel known in the Father and the Son but involving the Spirit of course.

A.A.B-n. It is God who has come into revelation and He has come into revelation in a man. As you said, Christianity is God known in His nature - love. His attributes would pertain to His declaration in the glory of His ways, but the secret is really in the heart of God, which is love.

W.L. It is fine to see that that is the standard. "As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you". We are mere creatures, but even in our love for one another this standard is to be seen: "As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you... This is my commandment that ye love one another, as I have loved you". The standard of our love for one another is to be no less than the standard of the Father's love for the Son. There is mystery in that and yet we have proved it to be blessedly true. As we begin to think along these lines we need to call on the Spirit for help (especially the young ones, in this day in which there is so much confusion of thought and conflicting opinions about everything) as to how to think and as to the level at which to think. John, writing for the last days, helps us to think on this very exalted level.

Jas.M. Peter speaks of becoming partakers of the divine nature (see 2 Pet 1: 4). Does that give us capacity to maintain this standard?

W.L. While Peter was like ourselves and failed like ourselves, we can see in his writings that he had caught on to what the Lord was at, and in the statement you quote he had got the point of what the Lord was telling the disciples in these very intimate chapters in John's gospel. It is not of course, as we know, that we partake of deity (we would guard that very carefully): we shall ever remain creatures. But partaking of the divine nature means that we enter into the blessed enjoyment of all that can be known of God as revealed.

Jas.M. The same idea comes in in Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians: "ye yourselves are taught of God to love one

another"(1 Thess 4: 9), does it not?

W.L. That is very helpful.

Jas.B. So love is described as "the bond of perfectness", Col 3: 14.

W.L. Some would say, Do not forget righteousness. Of course that is true, no one is suggesting otherwise, but the level at which God operates is the level of His own nature. That is what comes out in John's gospel: "As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you".

We were saying that His attributes are consistent with that, but the source of it all is in God Himself and His own nature.

J.M-1. Would you say something as to verse 14: "Ye are my friends if ye practise whatever I command you".

W.L. That is how it comes out in a very practical way. There is the evidence that things are functioning. There is an answer to divine love in persons. John in his epistle becomes very practical. He says of a person who hates his brother that he is a murderer (see 1 John 3: 15). John does not use extreme language but if you hate your brother, morally that is what you are in the sight of God.

Jas.M-1. The Lord says "If ye loved me ye would rejoice that I go to the Father", John 14: 28.

W.L. This gospel stresses that He came out from God and goes back to God. John traces all to the source in the economy - the Father.

J.M-I. If we practise something we become efficient in it.

W.L. There is a saying, 'Practice makes perfect'. The more you practise something the better you become at it. The more you put love into practice the more it increases.

W.W. In his first epistle John says "Every one that believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God: and every one that loves him that has begotten loves also him that is begotten of him", chap 5: 1.

It comes from God Himself, the word of God. It causes us to love each other, does it not?

W.L. It does. You have to learn to identify God's work in yourself; and you learn to identify in yourself what is not of God and reject it.

Then you see in others what you have discovered of God in yourself and you find immediately you can link on with it and you love it. You love to see the expression of it in others. That is how things function.

T.M. There is something very real and deep about love that has come down from the Father through the Lord. Should we be exercised to be deeper in our affections for one another?

W.L. There is always room for improvement in the expression of love for one another.

Jas.M-I. In Genesis we read that Joseph gave Benjamin five times more than the others. He loved him as having the same mother.

W.L. Joseph experienced the hatred and rejection of his brethren, as the Lord does that of the Jews in this gospel; but then He experienced too the comfort that came in. These persons that came in in John's gospel as the result of the Lord's own touch were, I think, a great comfort to Him.

A.McB. In the word to Abraham as to Isaac: "thine only son, whom thou lovest" (Gen 22: 2), there is the idea of commandment. The Lord speaks here of His Father's commandments. It has been said that it was not only what came into expression in His life up to the point of saying this, but He was anticipating going on to death.

W.L. In Genesis 22, they two going on together (see v 6) has been likened to John's gospel, the movements of the Father and the Son, anticipating the time of His death. That is another very important matter in John's gospel where I think that while we could not exclude the moral issue the death of Christ is looked at more from the standpoint of God's purpose.

Jas.M. The reference to love in Genesis 22 is the first in the Scriptures. The first reference to anything is important.

W.L. Yes indeed. It brings out the glory of this relationship of the Father and the Son.

A.McB. Even where the Lord says that no one takes His life from Him (see John 10: 18), He says "I have received this commandment of my Father". It is a blessed thought.

W.L. Mr Taylor says, in connection with John 5: 18, 'That is to say, it is Christ in subjection; there is the most remarkable evidence of it, but yet in equality in the holy mutuality into which divine Persons had come' (see Vol.57, p.296). Now that takes a lot of thinking about.

We are touching on holy matters that go far beyond the scope of the finite mind, yet God has come into this understandable relationship of the Father and the Son.

A.A.B-n. The way the Lord refers to His death in verse 13 is a proof of the supremacy of His love.

W.L. "No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends". What sacrifice is in that! What a proof of love! It was not just abstract. The Lord proved fully that He meant what He said.

A.A.B-n. Is the Lord looking onward as He develops the thought that the things which He has heard of His Father would be made known to those He no longer calls bondmen but friends? We would experience this at the Supper and what flows from it.

W.L. Hence how stimulating is the time of the Lord's supper and the service of God, as we speak of it, although the service of God covers the whole scope of our lives. But we use the expression 'the service of God' primarily when we think of that hour on Lord's day morning, when we are specially privileged, as John indicates, to penetrate in our spirits beyond the realm of death. In John we are being constantly attracted into the Father's realm. The Lord keeps indicating that the way we are brought into it could not be apart from His death.

I am sure it is constantly a source of wonder to us all that John, who gives us the glory of the Lord's deity, brings before us the thought of the Lord as a Lamb, both in this gospel and in Revelation. At the same time as he is occupying the saints with the Lord's greatness and deity, he also refers to Him as "the Lamb of God".

H.F. In John's gospel love finds its expression in joy, in life and in words, but its acme is in its dwellingplace.

W.L. The Lord says "that my joy may be in you, and your joy be full". Again it is the divine standard, "my joy".

A.A.B-n. What would the Lord be referring to in "my joy"?

W.L. I wondered if there is a great secret on Lord's day morning.

Sometimes I may be so occupied with my own thoughts that I miss the whole point of Christ's headship. But as regards "that my joy may be in you", my impression is that you catch on to the Lord's feelings, how He feels about things, about His brethren, about His assembly, about His bride, and in that you have caught on to something of His joy.

A.A.B-n. So you are entering into what is really in His affections, and that is joy, what is out of His death; and too what may be for the affections of the Father. His joy would be in the satisfaction of the Father's affections, would it not?

W.L. Yes. In another setting it says "enter into the joy of thy lord", Matt 25: 21. Being creatures we are so very much occupied with ourselves, either negatively or even, rightly, positively - our own blessings and so on. But would to God we would catch on to divine feelings! That is what John's gospel presents.

Jas.M-l. The Lord poured in oil and wine. The priest and the Levite passed by but the Lord did not.

W.L. It brings out their inability to help, but the Samaritan had the resources with him; he did not need to send for them or go somewhere to find them. In the parable of the virgins the five wise virgins had oil in their lamps; the five foolish had lamps but they had no oil in them. As John in his writings presents to us, it is a question of inward spiritual resource and life, what you have in the way of substance.

H.F. On the other side the prophet speaks of wounds not "mollified with oil" (Isa 1: 6), as if that is to be regretted.

W.L. We have to bear in mind the other side: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend", Prov 27: 6. We are speaking of friends here. If someone says something very straight to you it might wound you, but if it is a friend who does it you will find it is for your good.

A.McB. There are frequent references to commandment, the Father's commandments and the Lord's commandments. "Ye are my friends if ye practise whatever I command you". Then later He says "These things I command you, that ye love one another". In one way it is peculiar to have commandment in such an area of love.

W.L. We must never forget that divine love always brings us into the area where divine commandments are heeded and practised. It would not be God otherwise, because then God could be accused of not being consistent in His attributes with His nature. That is never so. If you speak of love to some persons they interpret it as an excuse just to do what they like. Divine love is never like that. The Lord says in this very gospel: "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me", John 4: 34. He Himself was always as in manhood under divine regulation. Even the laying down of His life He did by commandment of His Father: "I have received this commandment of my Father", John 10: 18.

A.A.B-n. In verse 12 of this chapter the Lord says "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you". This is not the law. He had shown it to them, and He is asking them to show it to one another. Love is greater than the law, is it not? Grace is greater than the law. The commandment to love one another is greater than the whole of the law because it can be fulfilled. Reference has been made to the Spirit.

W.L. In his first epistle John says "And ye have the unction from the holy one... and yourselves, the unction which ye have received from him abides in you, and ye have not need that any one should teach you", chap 2: 20,27. We need teaching, but the believer has in himself, as the assembly has in the corporate body, everything that is required to act rightly and say what is right in any given circumstance. John says, for example, "We know that every one

begotten of God does not sin" (1 John 5: 18); then again he says (and he is not contradicting himself; as instructed believers we know what he means): "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us", 1 John 1: 8. These are important things which we need to enquire into and ponder.

A.A.B-n. We should not set one against the other, as you have indicated, but have regard to the context and see that both are true.

Mr Taylor said that what is abstract is nevertheless real.

W.L. There was a time when some brethren stressed what was subjective and others what was objective. Both are essential. Mr Stoney said something like this: 'If I am only occupied with what is subjective I have lost Christ; if I am only occupied with what is objective I have lost the Spirit'. Both must go side by side in the practical experience of a believer's soul. I think as we are on this level of divine love, the divine nature; it is such persons who hold everything in perfect balance.

A.G. There is nothing that would hinder us from loving.

W.L. We are brought into a realm where we are free to express ourselves. There was a time in Joseph's history when love was in his heart but he could not express himself because of the state of his brethren. He said "Put every man out from me! ... I am Joseph, Gen 45: 1,3. As has been pointed out, they responded to it but they never really got to know Joseph's heart. But as you say, there is nothing that hinders the free expression of love, and that should be so in our gatherings, and it is so in great measure.

Jas.M. After Judas goes out in chapter 13 of this gospel (v 31) the Lord keeps nothing back. I was thinking of verse 15 of this chapter: "I have called you friends, for all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known to you".

W.L. It is good to see that. We are brought into a realm where God is lavishing His love upon us without restraint. We need to get an increased understanding of the fulness of God's heart and His desire to bring us into the fulness of His love.

A.D.M. When Paul says in Ephesians: "be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you (chap 4: 32), is that the same line of teaching?

W.L. It is. The apostles do not contradict each other. They say different things but as you ponder them you find the same thing expressed in different ways, leading to the same object. What you quote is helpful: it is our attitude towards one another. We learn how God has dealt with us and we express ourselves towards the saints in that very way.

J.A.B. Do you think that the expression in the emblems which we see every Lord's day morning should revitalise our affections towards Him and towards one another?

W.L. Yes. In verse 13 the Lord says "No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends". We should ponder what that really means, the love that lay behind the Lord's death. It is true that His death involved the will of God, but also it involved that He was laying down His life for His friends. What was expressed of God in Christ is for the contemplation of the soul. It is strong food.

E.H. Could you say something as to the term 'friends' used here? "Ye are my friends if ye practise whatever I command you".

W.L. You find usually that there is an ease of relationship between friends. You can communicate in a spirit of liberty and it is mutual. I think that is the idea of 'friends'. Then of course we know the scripture, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov 18: 24), that is Christ. What a friend He is!

E.H. That comes out in verse 15, does it not? "I have called you friends, for all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known to you".

W.L. That places the thought of friends on a very exalted level. Christ's friends are the recipients of all the secrets which He Himself as Man knows concerning the Father's word. We remember of course the Lord's feelings as to Judas. That was one of the things

the Lord felt most keenly in His sufferings: "mine own familiar friend, in whom I confided, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me", Ps 41: 9. It shows that friendship is a very intimate and sensitive thing. Something which we learn from John's gospel is sensitivity. A certain skill is needed to maintain friendship. You do not say or do anything that would disrupt these sensitive relationships.

Jas.M. Is the Lord giving the disciples credit for taking on His ministry?

W.L. That is very good. In verse 13 the Lord states the fact that no one has greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. In verse 14 there is the practical expression of friendship; then in verse 15 He says "I have called you friends", and He gives the reason for it. Then they are the divine choice: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you".

T.M. What do you say as to that?

W.L. It prevents us from making anything of ourselves. If we are in divine things at all it is by divine choice.

T.M. It is divine work too. We could not enter into anything of which you are speaking apart from the work of God.

W.L. Yes, it is a very practical thing, and comes right down to the present day. Some have turned aside who may have greater knowledge of the truth and greater power of expression, but I do not think in all these divisions and troubles the quality of the work of God is lost.

A.A.B-n. It is what God is doing Himself. We should think of what it means to the Lord to have those to whom He can communicate things in all the nearness and confidence of friendship. They are the subjects of His sovereign choice. That does not elevate them; it elevates the One who has come in in this selective way. It should keep us humble.

W.L. The Lord says "I have chosen you". The Lord has joy and satisfaction in what He has chosen.

A.McB. "I have chosen you, and have set you that ye should go and that ye should bear fruit". In what way has He set us?

W.L. It might be a reference to what we have in John 10, the fold. As we know, John's 'flock' is Paul's 'body'.

A.McB. That is helpful. It is in line with the divine standard. He has set us really for the source of divine love. Joseph went out from the vale of Hebron, that area.

W.L. We should see that what we are brought into is of God's choosing and God's making. If we are going on with anything that has its origin only in the human mind it must be rejected. What we are brought to is something which has its origin in God. Right from the beginning of his gospel John teaches that we must get back to what is of God. The Corinthian aspect of it is "God has set certain in the assembly", 1 Cor 12: 28. That is the vessel, not of man's making, but of divine choice.

A.McB. Your reference to John 10 is very affecting. It involves the Lord's laying down His life (see v 15). He puts the sheep forth (v 4) because of His death.

W.L. These things are practical. We should see in Psalm 133 how things flow down like the oil "that ran down to the hem of his garments" (v 2). I think we are in the days of the 'hem of the garment'. The hem of the garment is where the finishing touches are put. God is completing His work.

Jas.M. Does this connect with what you said as to horizontal love?

W.L. We know that in eternity past (we have to use these finite expressions to convey what is infinite) love existed. What relationships divine Persons had with One Another we do not know.

We know They were equal. To put the Lord's sonship into a past eternity, even if you do not mean to do so, brings in inequality, because sonship involves subjection. There is what has come down in expression in love, expressed so fully in the Son, and then, as you say, expressed in the saints, and that is what the enemy is against. He knows that he cannot affect the divine relationship of the Father

and the Son, nor can he affect the way God has been made known, but what he is at, and I think he will increase his efforts, is to bring in small things, "the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards", Song of Solomon 2: 15. It is very often small things that disrupt friendship.

We should evaluate things and discard them if they would bring in friction or cause wounds. Would that we were constantly on the line of pouring in oil and wine.

A.A.B-n. The Lord brings in asking "the Father in my name". This is the Father's world.

W.L. Yes: "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name". What leverage that is when you mention Christ's name to the Father! What power it carries! Then it goes on: "these things I command you, that ye love one another". It is not optional, dear brethren. You may say, I do not like that brother or sister. The Lord says "I command you, that ye love one another". So we are under obligation. It is not a question of choice, whom you like or with whom you have natural affinities. The Lord has taken us up in His grace, in our localities and universally, and we are under obligation to make sure that our relationships are right and on a right level before God.

GRANGEMOUTH

17 May 1981

Key to initials

(all Grangemouth unless otherwise stated)

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"NOT... TO MAKE VOID, BUT TO FULFIL"

S.McCallum

Matthew 5: 17

I want to refer to this passage because of its importance in relation to our part and place in the testimony as taking our example, our pattern, from Christ. It is very easy to make things void; the Jews, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were very good at making things void, especially the words of Jesus. But the Lord says that He came not to make the law or the prophets void; and when He says 'the law' He is not referring exactly to the ten commandments (it may of course in a wider sense include them). He had not come to make the law or the prophets void; He says "I am not come to make void, but to fulfil". The Lord came to give the fulness of things. One of the finest notes that we have by Mr Darby in the New Testament is in relation to this, as it says: 'Give the fulness of. It is not to fulfil a command in the way of obedience, nor to complete another thing by adding to it; but to fill up some system sketched out, or that which is expressed in the thing fulfilled, as a whole. Thus the doctrine of the Church completed the word of God, made full what was expressed by it'.

Reference was made this morning to the expression 'fulness of Christianity'. It is a great matter that the ministry we are having should help us, each one of us as exercised, to follow the example of Christ in giving the fulness of Christianity, in giving the fulness of the Church, because we are in a day when there has been the tearing down of things and the making void of things; but it is important that every one of us should be concerned not to make void what is of God and has come from God, whether the law or the prophets. It is important in every locality that we represent that we should be set to give the fulness of Christianity, to be the expression of it.

Anyone who has read Luke's gospel may have noticed how much he uses the word 'fulfil'. Quite a number of times in the opening of his gospel he uses the word 'fulfil' or 'fulfilling'. Luke's

ministry is to support the local assembly; the great burden and bearing of his ministry is how the local assembly is to be sustained and preserved. Therefore so much is made of priesthood in Luke's gospel. The first man of whom the word 'fulfilling' is used is Zacharias, and it says of him that he was fulfilling "the order of his course" (chap 1: 8) in priestly service. That is a wonderful thing as we apply it to ourselves, that every one of us should be fulfilling our service in a priestly way in the order of our course. We have what we call 'the morning meeting', we have the reading that follows, we have the preaching of the gospel, we have the prayer meeting on Monday night, we have a reading during the week, we have the ministry meeting and we have the care meeting. It is very important that we should correspond with the Lord in fulfilling what it is our part and lot to do in the way of our responsibilities in Christianity. It is a great thing to know that the fulness of Christianity should be set out, that we should make nothing void. You would not like to make void the prayer meeting; you would not like to make void the reading meeting, the meeting for ministry or the care meeting. The Lord came to give the fulness of things, and this is a great matter in a day of brokenness such as we are in, that we are not here to make things void. He gives us an example for youth, when He was twelve years old. His mother and His father - Joseph as supposed - spoke to Him about neglecting them, doing what He was doing in the temple, but He said "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?" (chap 2: 49), or, as the note reads, 'to be in the things of my Father'. Think of that! twelve years old, and the Lord was giving the fulness of what He had come to do in that relation. Even when He was younger, the time of circumcision was being fulfilled, and the time of purification was being fulfilled. All these things are referred to in Luke's gospel as to the Lord's part and place in the testimony.

And Luke, too, treats of the personnel of the assembly - as we would apply it typically - men, women and young people. In the latter half of chapter 8 he shows how the Lord met the moral issues besetting each of these classes, and that is how the assembly is

formed in localities. Therefore in all our localities, small as they may be, we need every one; we need the young, we need the old, we need the middle-aged. Thank God I can say about my own locality that we have 100 per cent attendance. You may say, Well, of course, you are only seven. It does not matter, seven is seven.

There may be a night when the burden of homework has to be attended to - I am not referring to that - but it is a great thing that we should give the fulness of things in regard to our part and place in the assembly. This note of Mr Darby's refers to the doctrine of the Church and the completing of the word of God, making full what was expressed by it. We all want to be on this line. You sisters may think it is the brothers that take part, that it is not your responsibility, but sisters have a tremendous place in giving the fulness of things in the testimony in our localities. The brothers too, what a place they have in giving the fulness of things!

Well, dear brethren, let us be encouraged by this word in the assembly gospel; it is not in Mark, it is not in Luke, it is in the assembly gospel, where the Lord is with the testimony "until the completion of the age" (chap 28: 20), and He says he came not to make void the law. Oh, it is so easy to make things void; it is easy to reduce the effectiveness of things by what we do and what we say.

In this section of the beatitudes, where the Lord goes over on the mount of legislation all that is proper, we might say, to Christianity, He draws attention to the difference between "Ye have heard that it has been said to the ancients" and "But I say unto you"; and in what the Lord says to us He is giving effect to the fulness of Christianity in the way we act towards God, in the way we act towards one another, and the way we fulfil our responsibility in what belongs to us in the testimony. As He says: "Think not that I am come to make void the law or the prophets; I am not come to make void, but to fulfil", or as it means, 'to give the fulness of'.

Well, it is a wonderful thing, as we have had in these meetings, that we should get the fulness of things. The Lord has that in mind, and as we follow His example, that we may be affected by it, that we are not detracting from things, we are not negating things. The Lord

did not come to negate the law or to negate the prophets; He knew the value of the revealed mind of God in whatever epoch it was, and He came to give the fulness of things. How much more when we come to the Acts, as we see the twelve, and Paul, how they gave the fulness of things, the fulness of Christianity in the opening out of the truth and of the practical care that there was for one another. Let us be encouraged by this word that the Lord uses in Matthew, in an area where He is giving out what is proper to principles according to God, what is proper to Christianity as we might say, and as we carry it through, let us not be on the line of making void things but giving the fulness of things, the fulness of our relations with one another, the fulness of what the ministry means, the fulness of the practice that is suited to the ministry, as becomes Christianity, for His Name's sake.

TORONTO

12 October 1974

THE CHILDREN'S WEATHER

It seems strange that, after the Lord Jesus had by a miracle fed four thousand men besides many women and children, He should be asked by the religious Jews for a sign from heaven. He knew that they did not want to believe in Him so He merely drew their attention to the weather which they could foretell by the signs in the sky.

Evidently our own little weather-rhymes about the red sky at night and in the morning apply also to the weather in Palestine. This is not surprising since from various passages in the Bible we learn that the different winds have effects there similar to those they have here.

The south wind bringing warmth was a token of God's favour in the circumstances of His chosen people. For ourselves, the mercies for which we are so thankful are no substitute for divine, spiritual guidance. You will remember that during a southerly breeze in Paul's last and eventful sea voyage, the warnings of the apostle should have been heeded rather than the vain hopes of the shipmaster and thus save the disaster that overtook them all.

By way of contrast to the south wind, that from the north brought cold from the snow-capped heights such as mount Ararat. It led to the night-frosts such as Jacob endured and to the ice which Elihu described as coming "by the breath of God". This wind is like the trials, disappointments and even persecutions allowed by a wise God and which make the witness of those who suffer ever brighter.

"Exaltation", or prosperity of soul, must come this way since it does not come "from the east nor from the west, nor yet from the south"!

The Lord spoke of a cloud rising out of the west foretelling showery weather. Such would be especially welcomed by the many tillers of the ground. Scripture distinguishes between the former rain which came in the autumn at seed-time, and the latter rain which came a few months later when the crops swelled up for harvest. The fruitfulness of God's work in souls however is not bound by this time-scale. Evidently around Sychar the seed had only just been sown,

yet the Lord spoke of the harvest not being four months away but already come!

The east wind from the wilderness caused vegetation to become parched. Pharaoh dreamed about this and the years of famine in Egypt and Palestine were no doubt caused by prolonged blowings from the eastern deserts. This wind is generally a symbol of the withering power of God's judgments. These will always make way for Christ to be exalted as Joseph was throughout the dominion. Have you subjected yourself to the Lord Jesus?

J.C.Evershed