

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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MANHOOD

Numbers 33: 49; Numbers 12: 1-16; 1 Kings 19: 1-8

G.A.B. It was not in mind to dwell too long on this verse in Numbers 33 but just to notice that this encampment at the very end of the wilderness journey was in Abel-Shittim, which the footnote translates as 'plain of acacias'. It might suggest that this feature would occupy the saints at the end of the journey. When we think of acacia wood we think of the manhood of the Lord Jesus in all its perfection and of its imperishable character. The ark of the covenant, as we know, was made of acacia wood, but the boards of the tabernacle, and indeed other parts of the tabernacle system, were also made of acacia wood. While the distinctiveness of the Lord Jesus must always be maintained, it is the divine thought that this kind of manhood should be in evidence in the whole divine system. So I selected these two sample men from the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah, for our consideration. It says Moses was "very meek". Elijah was marked by power in his ministry. They both appear with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration but a point comes when they are overshadowed and the Lord Jesus is seen alone. I think it is important that we should hold to that, that however finely developed the features of manhood may become in anyone, the Lord must always be unique. "This is my beloved Son", Luke 9: 25. Perhaps we might look at these two men and see some of the features of manhood that come out in them; Moses shines in the face of adversity; Elijah overcomes the temptation to turn aside and finishes his service in power.

J.M. The verse you read in Numbers 33 is interesting. It reminds us of what is said in 1 Corinthians: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus" (chap 1: 30); that is, we are to take character from the Lord Jesus himself.

G.A.B. Yes; it is the same character. The wood is the same, but there is this difference that the boards of the tabernacle stand up in bases of silver. The ark of the covenant needs nothing like that.

J.M. In 1 Corinthians 1 every other man is set aside to make way for features of Christ to come out.

G.A.B. God has only one Man before Him.

A.T. He is the foundation of all that is for God.

G.A.B. "For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ", 1 Cor 3: 11. The development of any other man has invariably led to disaster. We have known that in our own experience. Now, at the very end of the journey, this feature is more necessary than ever it was.

A.T. At the end of 2 Corinthians it says: "prove your own selves... that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed ye be reprobates", chap 13: 5.

G.A.B. Nothing extraneous has any place in the testimony of God. If we have failures it must be because some other kind of man has been allowed.

R.S.R. The emphasis seems to be on the man Moses. It might have said 'But Moses was very meek', but it is "the man Moses".

G.A.B. That was in mind - "the man". It is neither his mediatorship nor his leadership which is mentioned here, but manhood, as though that is what is going to meet the crisis.

R.S.R. He says nothing. It is Jehovah who takes up the challenge.

G.A.B. We can count on that.

J.R. The commendation of the Spirit of God regarding Moses is that he was very meek. The commendation of Jehovah Himself is that he was faithful. Would these two features go together?

G.A.B. Yes, that is very interesting. Some very fine qualities come out in Moses - his meekness, his faithfulness, as you say, and he also shines in intercession.

W.W. Would the Spirit's service be necessary in view of the formation of manhood after Christ? In chapter 21 of Numbers the Spirit is recognised and responded to.

G.A.B. But the exercise of the brazen serpent precedes that. Every other element is finished in the death of Christ so that by the Spirit there can be the development of this kind of manhood which is pleasing to God 'in service and in testimony.

D.R. In 1 John 2 we have "he that does the will of God abides for eternity" (v 17). While it is a testimonial feature, it goes right through. Does that link with the verse in Numbers 33?

G.A.B. Very much so. Peter says "all flesh is as grass, and all its glory as the flower of grass. The grass has withered and its flower has fallen", 1 Pet 1: 24. Every other man is put out of court. The kind of man who does the will of God is going through.

D.R. Do we each need to lay hold of this precious light that the Man who is in heaven is the Man who has accomplished God's will?

G.A.B. Just so. This kind of manhood goes through everything, whether we speak of the testimony or of assembly sorrows or of the service of God, this kind of man, formed after Christ, is pleasing to God in every situation. We can achieve it only by the Spirit and by the negation of the flesh. I think it is important to bear in mind that the boards of the tabernacle are made to stand up in sockets of silver. They do not stand up by themselves.

J.H. Paul begins his militant ministry in Corinthians by saying: "I... entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of the Christ", 2 Cor 10: 1.

G.A.B. That is beautiful and, as you say, it is significant that it is militant ministry.

W.D. Circumstances here seem to be rather equivalent to Matthew 11, do they not? There the Lord speaks of Himself as being meek and lowly in heart (see v 29).

G.A.B. You mean, in the face of rejection? I think so. That is an interesting connection. It is in a situation of adversity that manhood shines.

W.D. The Lord was being rejected by His people at that time. In a sense Moses was being rejected by Miriam and Aaron here.

G.A.B. Yes, it is almost a parallel situation. This is what tests us. When things are going well among the brethren there is not the same tax upon our manhood.

J.R. I suppose Moses was no more meek naturally than any one of us is. He must have been formed somehow. I was thinking of his forty years in the wilderness and having to do with God personally. Do you think that is how it came about?

G.A.B. That certainly enters into it, an extended period of education in the school of God. We could also say that he made an early committal. It was a conscious decision on his part to choose the reproach of the Christ. He esteemed it greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt (see Heb 11: 26). Speaking typically, he saw a glory in the *rejected* Christ. Paul's ministry gives us the glory of an exalted Christ, but there is a moral glory about the pathway of the Lord Jesus in rejection here. Now, He is up there but we are down here, and even as He is we also are in this world (see 1 John 4: 17).

A.A.B. Moses "persevered, as seeing him who is invisible", Heb 11: 27. Manhood is tested in what has to be worked out here below, and he was faithful.

G.A.B. Quite so. The acacia is a wilderness wood, but the ark was still the same in Solomon's glorious temple as it was in the small conditions of the tabernacle.

R.S.R. Could you give us another word for 'meekness'? The young people may not understand what meekness is.

G.A.B. You tell us what it means, please.

R.S.R. Lowliness, humbleness, the nonassertion of one's own rights.

G.A.B. It runs completely counter to the common idea of what manhood is. We live in a world where manliness means aggressiveness. The man who gets to the top is the man who brushes aside all opposition.

R.S.R. I was thinking of the Psalm: "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way", Ps 25: 9. It seems

that as this feature is with us we are ready for guidance and teaching.

G.A.B. Yes, ready to receive admonition. And yet Moses could be angry too. "He went out from Pharaoh in a glowing anger", Exod 11: 8. That is not inconsistent with meekness, lowliness and humbleness. It was only his humility, I suppose, that gave him courage to go in and face Pharaoh, as he acted under the direction of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

J.McL. Peter speaks of "a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price"; 1 Pet 3: 4.

G.A.B. That is very beautiful, whether it be in sisters or brothers. It is the valuation which heaven has of these features. You will never be a success in this world displaying these features, but this is the wilderness, it is the testimony of God in alien surroundings.

J.R. Would Moses' intimacy with Jehovah and Jehovah's intimacy with him, which comes out in this chapter, account for his meekness?

G.A.B. Yes. You refer to the fact that Jehovah says "Mouth to mouth do I speak to him openly".

J.R. Jehovah says "If there be a prophet among you, I Jehovah will make myself known to him in a vision, I will speak to him in a dream". But this was something besides that with Moses.

G.A.B. I think so. There is Moses' official place as mediator, and that is a wonderful thing too, but there was substance behind what the man was officially.

A.McB. It says "he is faithful in all my house". Do you think that would be in the detail that entered into the tabernacle system? Moses attended to every detail of it.

G.A.B. It is remarkable that Moses made these things. We know that others like Bezaleel and Aholiab and all who were wise-hearted entered into it, but according to Scripture Moses made these things, which, as you suggest, means that he had to do with every detail: "And Moses did so: as Jehovah had commanded him, so did he",

Exod 40: 16. He would let nothing go. Is that so with us in our local meetings? There was a divine pattern to be followed and Moses would not deviate from it one inch. It is difficult for us in the conditions in which we are, to grasp the idea of a man who is so faithful that he will not deviate without being arbitrary. Faithfulness and arbitrariness are not the same thing.

W.D. Would not one feature of meekness which comes out in this passage be that there is no self-vindication?

G.A.B. I think so. There is a certain moral glory about it. God was pleased to put a certain glory on the boards of the tabernacle they were covered with gold, as though God approved of it. God owns this kind of man. In another setting, where Moses had to face Pharaoh, God told him "I have made thee God to Pharaoh", Exod 7: 1. He was able to represent God and carry God's full approbation. It is not any man who can do that.

W.D. It is important to let the Lord vindicate in matters, is it not?

G.A.B. You might have a long time to wait. Reference was made to the forty years in the wilderness. Moses' life was made up of periods of forty years.

J.R. We might never be vindicated here. The Lord has not been publicly vindicated after two thousand years, so we ought not to look for it.

G.A.B. I think that is important. We might say, If I wait long enough it will come. But we look forward to His vindication. When He is vindicated that will be soon enough for us.

M.W. Would the fact that this plain of acacias was at the side of the Jordan suggest that this is the road we travel to this kind of formation in us? Was Moses so developed in manhood that he could leave this kind of thing to Jehovah, as all servants can do? He was not affected by this attack, by acrimony, or anything like that. The bearing of the Jordan had its own weight.

G.A.B. Yes. The greatest things were just about to happen at the Jordan - a glorious move. But of course Moses did not go over with

the people. The next we hear of him is on the mountain with Christ; that was his Jordan. He was on the other side with Christ in glory, "appearing in glory", Luke 9: 31. Still, the saints are to go through this exercise.

J.McL. The Spirit of God says that Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had taken, but here they do not say anything about that; they bring forward something else. When the Lord was here it was often something entirely different from the real motive that was brought forward against Him.

G.A.B. The Ethiopian woman, I judge, would refer to the assembly. It is not acceptable to the Jew. But in this case that was simply the occasion of it. There must have been something underlying it. Moses is prepared to take it all. It would have made no difference whatever they had said about him. This is personal. If it had been a question of the rights of Jehovah it would have been a different matter. You might have seen Moses "in a glowing anger" over that, but here it is personal so he waits upon Jehovah.

J.R. Here the occasion was the Cushite, but there was a root, was there not? How often it is the case, where there are difficulties, that there is a root unjudged.

D.R. Would there be a lack of appreciation of God's sovereignty? The spirit of the world is a radical spirit, where everyone has an equal say and an equal right. This is what Miriam and Aaron are saying, that they have as much right as Moses. If we recognise God's sovereignty we shall recognise that in the assembly we fill the place God has given us.

G.A.B. The plain of acacias is a lovely thought. Nowhere but in the assembly can we find such a place, where the "trees of Jehovah are satisfied... which he hath planted", Ps 104: 16. You find things working in a way which is quite impossible in man's world. Organisations of men may agree about certain things, generally those which form the basis of their association, but in Christianity everything is held together by the Spirit.

D.R. Each of the sockets of silver is a divine setting.

G.A.B. It is important to grasp that. This kind of thing cannot be developed amongst us apart from a moral element entering into it.

The sockets of silver represent that. In heaven everything is divinely perfect - 'Divine perfection in a Man!' (Hymn 20) - but if the saints are to stand up here in the wilderness in manhood according to God it must be in Christ in a moral sense.

W.W. Would that be borne out in the choosing of David by Samuel?

G.A.B. You mean that the men who might have appeared to be the best rulers are rejected. Even Samuel himself had to learn that.

Then the time comes when it is unmistakable: "Arise, anoint him; for this is he", 1 Sam 16: 12.

W.W. If God distinguishes Moses it is in view of the help of the saints. In 1 Corinthians 12, where the truth of the body comes out, it says "For to one, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge" (v 8), and so on. If we appreciate divine sovereignty, not only in ourselves but in others, we would get the greatest possible gain from the truth of the body working.

G.A.B. I think it is very important to say that. The quality amongst the saints should be the same, but the stature is not the same.

There are those who have far greater stature than others, and there would need to be readiness to sit down if, as in 1 Corinthians 14: 30, someone else has more than you have. It requires, however, some development of manhood after Christ that you would be sensitive enough to know that.

J.N. Would that feature come out in what is adverse?

G.A.B. I think it would be proved in adversity. It would be there all the time, of course. The reference earlier to the long years of experience with God which lay behind the manhood of Moses is important. Moses was a meek man long before this happened. The crisis arises and there is quality in manhood which rises to meet it.

J.N. That quality goes right through. Moses says in Deuteronomy: "Jehovah was angry with me on your account", chap 1: 37. He was

not allowed to go over with the people, as you said, but he receives compensation in that he was on the mount of transfiguration.

G.A.B. He gets the most glorious compensation. Yet even in that scene of glory a cloud overshadowed them, and there was no one except Jesus alone.

D.McG. Does Paul set it out in 2 Timothy 2? "And a bondman of the Lord ought not to contend, but be gentle towards all... in meekness setting right those who oppose, if God perhaps may sometime give them repentance" (vv 24,25). That brings in the divine sovereignty to which reference was made.

G.A.B. That is right. We cannot initiate repentance in anyone, nor can we initiate the work of God in anyone. We can stand by the truth and display the features of Christ. We just have to leave the rest with God.

W.G. Do we see this feature in Ephesians 4 where Paul says "I... exhort you... to walk... with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love; using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" (vv 1-3)?

G.A.B. That is the wilderness, although it comes into Ephesians. Ephesian believers have to live down here, and it is here that lowliness and meekness are called for. I do not suppose these features will be needed so much in heaven because there is no adversity there. The precious manhood of the Lord Jesus, of course, goes through and will be seen in those in whom He has wrought, but lowliness is needed while we are down here.

W.G. "Bearing with one another in love": if we really have love for one another these features will be seen.

G.A.B. That is what comes out in Moses here. He was a great burden-bearer in many respects. He bore the whole burden of the people.

W.D. Why did the judgment come upon Miriam, not Aaron?

G.A.B. It would appear that she was the leader in the matter. She seemed to be more active than Aaron. Perhaps Aaron was weak.

He does not shine so much as Moses in the history of the people.

We would learn more from his office than from what he was personally. Miriam seemed to be the leader on this occasion.

W.D. I wondered whether there was something subjectively formed in Moses but a lack of the subjective element in Miriam that we should take account of currently.

G.A.B. That is a very much needed word. I believe that if Aaron had been firm with her when she spoke to him about this, as she must have done, he might have saved the situation. But he allowed this lawless element to go on, as he did at another point in his history. I am thinking of the golden calf. He did not set the thing on but he allowed it to go on. We need headship and we need moral power, and Moses shines as having moral power.

W.D. Miriam is a complete contrast to what Moses sets out.

J.H. Paul had these qualities in view. He says in 1 Corinthians 16: "Be vigilant; stand fast in the faith; quit yourselves like men; be strong" (v 13).

G.A.B. "Quit yourselves like men". This is the time when that is needed. We are in difficult days, both from without and from within.

We are so near the end, and what a success it would be for the enemy if he could sow discord and cause trouble and prevent the saints from getting over into their heavenly inheritance.

M.W. Does not Moses' manhood shine too in that he cried to God for Miriam?

G.A.B. I thought we should consider his intercession. There is not a trace of vindictiveness.

A.T. The scripture in Luke 9 says "two men... who were Moses and Elias".

G.A.B. That speaks volumes; "two men".

A.McB. It was a very short intercession. I wondered if it bore on what was said earlier as to Moses' intimacy with God. It was short and powerful.

G.A.B. Yes, he said all he needed to say. Sometimes we lose power by saying more than we need to.

R.S.R. Moses is marked by soul when he says "O God".

G.A.B. That is a great feature entering into intercession. I feel in regard to our prayer meetings that we might become perfunctory, but this is a man whose soul is in the matter. He is thinking not only of this one person but of the progress of the testimony, because there can be no movement until this matter is put right.

R.S.R. He would have that in mind: "And afterwards the people journeyed". The whole camp was held up by this.

G.A.B. What a success that is for the enemy to have everything held up! May none of us be the cause of such a hold-up.

W.W. Would manhood according to God be the expression of the Spirit of Christ? I was thinking of Stephen: "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke", Acts 6: 10.

Then there was the fearlessness of his indictment, his meekness and gentleness as they stoned him and his intercession: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge", Acts 7: 60.

G.A.B. Yes, he is a wonderful New Testament expression of what we are speaking of.

J.M. Psalm 99 speaks of "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name" (v 6).

G.A.B. That is a very interesting reference in the Psalm, that Moses was a priest. That was not his office but he was that unofficially.

J.R. He had a direct link with Jehovah. Aaron had not. Aaron appealed to Moses. Moses was with God and God was with him. Is not that how meekness is produced and how manhood is produced?

G.A.B. It was evidently a habitual matter: "Mouth to mouth do I speak to him".

D.R. Is that why he speaks of healing? He knows what God can do, that He can not only adjust the matter externally but He can adjust it at its root.

G.A.B. I suppose he must have thought of Miriam's better days when she led the song at the Red Sea (see Exod 15: 20,21). We do not want to see anyone made unsuitable for service. We want to see persons healed and the camp moving forward in power.

D.R. The priest did not go to see whether the leprosy was still there. His reason for going was to see whether there was something of God there, whether there was healing.

G.A.B. That is a word for us. We should be vigilant on these lines.

Now Elijah has failed here. We cannot connect failure with the acacia wood, I am not suggesting that, but his ministry had been one of power, and manhood had shone in it in the face of the greatest and most serious issues, but here his faith has failed. He lapses.

But as Mr Stoney said, it is not how the horse falls which matters, it is how it gets up, the direction in which its face is set when it gets up. I thought we might see how quickly Elijah is able to recover himself and proceed with the final phase of his service in power.

A.AB. Peter did not fully appreciate what took place on the mount of transfiguration, but later, when he writes his epistle, he is in the full appreciation of what transpired. He failed, like Elijah, but he was restored and could strengthen his brethren.

G.A.B. When he writes his epistle he is encamped in the plain of acacias, just about to go over; he speaks of "the excellent glory", 2 Pet 1: 17.

J.N. Was Elijah's recovery based on the fact that he accepted the divine provision?

G.A.B. That is right. He also accepted the fact that he was to be superseded. I think that is an important feature of manhood, that we are prepared to accept that there are others more capable than we are. That is the secret in which Elijah goes forth to complete his service. He completes it in power. He does not fade out. It happens in men's affairs that certain monarchs abdicate in favour of a son or daughter; they fade out, and the younger one comes into

ascendency. But Elijah does not fade out; he goes out in power. In fact he has the distinction of being taken up to heaven.

J.N. I thought that was seen in John 20. Although there was failure there, the Lord says "Come and dine" (v 12). Peter then gets his commission.

G.A.B. Yes. The Lord had a very special place for Peter: "go, tell his disciples and Peter", Mark 16: 7.

J.R. Would the chapter show that the Lord Himself appreciates and values manhood, in the way that He feeds Elijah and keeps His eye upon him? He is not going to let a man like this go to the wall or fade out.

G.A.B. I think that is right. God sees to it. If we are exercised to be developed in these features, we can count upon the Lord to stand by us. Everything was against Elijah here. There was a tremendous onslaught against his person.

W.D. Everything in the chapter seems to hinge on the supply of food which Elijah gets, the cake baked on hot stones and the cruse of water. Would it represent Christ and the Spirit?

G.A.B. Yes, formatively. The water was in a vessel and the cake would be Christ formed in us. The cake would also speak of the assembly, viewed as formed and complete.

W.D. It is certainly an invigorating experience to have our thoughts enlarged concerning the assembly.

G.A.B. He is given everything he needs for the great matter which is before him. He went forty days in the strength of it, so it must have been food of an extraordinary quality. It was of course divine provision.

J.H. Do you think it has a counterpart in the New Testament? There are two eatings. In Matthew 26: 26 it says "And as they were eating, Jesus, having taken the bread... said, Take, eat". The first eating refers to the passover. Then the Lord says "Take, eat; this is my body". It is remarkable that there are two kinds of food to give us

strength to move further. Would it also help us to be here for the will of God?

G.A.B. I think that is a very important side of the truth, to grasp what the Lord's supper is as food. There is what is symbolic, but the Supper is food also, not literal or physical as one system might regard it, but it is food of a spiritual nature designed to facilitate the growth of manhood after Christ.

A.McB. Along with the food, Elijah was touched twice.

G.A.B. It is a very fine thing when you can go away from a meeting and say you have had a real touch from the Lord. It should happen every time, but it is specially needful when you are down, as Elijah was here. The man who had faced Ahab with such moral courage finds himself in retreat.

W.W. Immediately after this he was instrumental in bringing forward Elisha, recognising that he was going to take his place. Notwithstanding his outlook at this point is it not beautiful to see how he went up in power and glory? Elisha as replacing him is not exactly resting in the glory that belonged to him but is spoken of as one "who poured water on the hands of Elijah", 2 Kings 3: 11. Do you think that if anyone becomes despondent or discouraged, it is open to any of us to pour water on the hands of such a one to invigorate him again?

G.A.B. It is a very fine service if we are able for it.

J.R. In chapter 18 Elijah thinks and acts for God, but in this chapter he is thinking of himself. It is as if he says to God, You have only me left and soon you will not even have me. Things were so low.

Would you link the cake with the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal?

G.A.B. I thought that. It seems to indicate something that is there in the divine knowledge which Elijah was not aware of. It is there and it is divinely formed.

J.R. And to have all believers in mind, not to be restricted but to have a wider outlook. If we have anything it is for all believers, is it

not?

G.A.B. The seven thousand were persons who were in relation with God.

J.R. God says "Yet I have left myself seven thousand in Israel".

G.A.B. Quite so. God had His hand on them and they had their own relations with Him, not through the prophet. He was quite unaware of it.

J.R. I wondered if we should look for and pray for a revival amongst believers in view of the Lord's coming.

G.A.B. Perhaps if that were so we would have more constructive thoughts. The cake is something which is unbroken, it is a whole idea, it is freshly baked. The assembly has been here for nearly two thousand years, but there should be a certain freshness in our gatherings, so that however few are available there would be something of this character of what is complete and fresh. If this light were shining brightly in our souls and in our gatherings we might be able to attract some of the seven thousand. If persons are the objects of the work of Christ and have received the Holy Spirit they belong to the assembly. So let us work to the end that there might be more available. We need to have the divine ideal before us; this was what Elijah needed at this point. He thought that he was the only one left, but he gets this view of what the saints are to God and that seems to give him this surge of power in which he goes on to complete his ministry. Another scripture speaks of "the spirit and power of Elias", Luke 1: 17.

J.M-I. There was a wind, an earthquake and a fire, but it was the soft gentle voice that affected Elijah.

G.A.B. It says that Jehovah was not in the earthquake. We tried these methods in the past, but the "soft gentle voice" is more effective. Elijah was coming to see this, and I think his meekness comes out in the fact that he readily goes to anoint his successor. He is told to anoint the king of Syria first, then Jehu is to be anointed

king of Israel, and thirdly he is told to anoint Elisha in his stead. But he accepts that and goes and anoints Elisha first of all.

T.R. Why were the cake and the cruse of water at his head?

G.A.B. Do you think he needed adjustment in his thinking? He was thinking small, on ever declining levels. His thoughts were going down instead of rising. But I was not thinking so much of his failure but rather of how quickly he is able to rise to the divine thought when it is brought to his attention, and with what power he goes about the final phase of his ministry. It is fine to see a man who has come to the end of himself. His successor is anointed so there is no question of any increase in Elijah's place in the testimony. It is a question of 'all thought of self' now being for ever over (see Hymn 247). That is the secret of his power as he goes on to the conclusion of his ministry.

GRANGEMOUTH

17 September 1983

Key to initials

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MINISTRY IN GLASGOW

HYMNS

A.Taylor

Isaiah 38: 19,20; Habakkuk 3: 18,19

I have been thinking since Lord's day about the value of the hymn book, and the way it is used in divine service, especially the variety that comes into it, and how it helps us to respond to the way in which God has made Himself known. We can say that no two Lord's days are the same. It shows the great variety there is in the hymn book itself although it is limited to four hundred and fifty six hymns. There is great variety in divine service; the richness and value that there is in the hymn book impresses me, and it is something that we should greatly value. It helps us to take our place alongside of Christ; it helps us to respond to Him; it helps us to answer to the Spirit and to the Father. There is a fulness attaching to divine service, and the hymn book is a tremendous aid, I would say, to the understanding of divine service, and the response to divine Persons.

That is why I have read these passages because they refer to stringed instruments; I think that these instruments relate to persons. There are wind instruments and stringed instruments but in heaven only stringed instruments are referred to - harps. The reason behind it is that we can not only play but we can sing, we can do both; you cannot do that with a wind instrument. A wind instrument is for testimony but a stringed instrument is in view of taking our place alongside of Christ, in view of answering to Him in His own precious thoughts. The Scriptures are so magnificent; they clearly set out certain things that are surely for our understanding and to help us.

So we have these passages which peculiarly bring out the greatness of what is available to us, what there is in one another, because the strings on these instruments, in a certain sense, relate to persons, one person has one particular impression and another has another impression, and as we merge together there is a complete answer to the thoughts of God. We might say how much each has gained through the experiences in their links with God and with the Lord; how much each one, therefore, has accumulated in spiritual wealth and substance; even the children have part in these things. There is room for the very simplest impression. Mr Taylor spoke about the choir, and the choirmaster realising that there was one little note missing. He said, Where is the little piccolo? It was a

short sharp note, but helping to give tone and character to the service, so vital, you might say, to the singing. Every voice is so necessary, every impression so essential in view of the working out of things.

So Hezekiah is brought forward as one who is rich in experience and yet his experience was such under the hand of God that he is told he is about to die: "Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die and not live", Isa 38: 1. What a solemn statement! But he was allowed to go through an experience so close to death in view of something coming out in life, something that was worked out through the experience that he went through himself that gave him an added impression of Christ. How wonderful it is that each impression and whatever we pass through is intended to affect us and result in something precious for the heart of God. So he says "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I this day". He was given an extension of life - fifteen years. What an extension of life! What a testimony to the Spirit's power, and the Spirit's resource, and the Spirit's supplying! We sing:

'Blest Spirit, we would sing to Thee,
Thou source of life and liberty'

(Hymn 261)

O the preciousness of relying on the Spirit of God in view of there being something formed in us that we can take up and simply express before God in view of answering to the heart of God! That is what Hezekiah does. "The father to the children shall make known thy truth": something is going to come through in the coming generation as it is passed on, by the fathers, by those with experience, by those who appreciate and value and realise that as one generation passes another generation is coming on. And what do they take on? Surely they take on the impressions that have been seen and demonstrated in the fathers; surely they take on something of the spirit of the father. How important it is that scope is made for the enlargement of what there is available amongst us! How important it is tonight that they are here! Is it not an encouragement?

Is it not an enrichment? Something being given by way of an impression from the fathers to the children: "the father to the children shall make known thy truth". O, how precious "thy truth"! The truth has been so clearly set out for us right through from Mr Darby's day, and even further back than that; it must be further back than that because it says "Jehovah was purposed to save me". Then he adds "And we will play upon my stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of Jehovah". It is not just 'I will play' but "we will play", that is that everyone joins in, brings in their impressions, and there is an answer cumulatively that results in something for the heart of God. That is the intention as we come together Lord's day by Lord's day, that some impression is gathered up, some impression of the preciousness of what Christ has secured; not only what He has undertaken but what He has secured as loving the assembly, and as having Himself the opportunity to display some manifestation of His glory. And that impression remains with us as the week proceeds, and it gathers up as we go along in view of something further being added to us. Such is Hezekiah.

I want to speak of Habakkuk in relation to what is gathered up in recovery. One of the most interesting things about this short prophecy is that there is a verse in it which has been taken up right from the inception of the recovery of the truth; it is brought forward three times in the New Testament, so important it is, so valuable it is, so vital it is; and it is a principle which has been held to through the centuries right to the present day: "the just shall live by his faith" (chap 2: 4) - 'the just shall live by his faith'. How important the principle is! Let each one of us grasp that we can be here in faith, we can be here as set up, justified, perfectly clear of every moral issue on account of our faith that the Lord has gone on high. Then Habakkuk enters into this wonderful prayer which ends up with a song. He says "Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation". You can see how burdened he is, how keyed up he is as he realises what will come in in a day yet to come! But "Jehovah the Lord, is my strength, And he maketh my feet like hinds' feet, And he will make me to walk upon my high places". It relates to what we

reach in assembly service, what we touch in response to divine persons - "my high places". "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God": it relates to that side of things, as the Lord comes in leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. Just think of it! He is moving in the high places, reaching one locality after another Lord's day by Lord's day, moving on, you may say, but giving each one a sense of what it is to enter upon these high places, these heavenly places.

We shall soon be with the One we love, the One we know. Then it says "To the chief Musician"; it makes you think of the Psalms, psalms that bring out the quality of spiritual wealth. "On my stringed instruments" - how many are there? How many psalms to the chief Musician? How many relate to the stringed instruments? It is worth looking into because there is profit in delving into the Scriptures and finding the richness and resource that is there, not only just for knowledge but in view of acquiring something in the way of wealth in our souls that will help us to respond to the One who is the Chief Musician. It relates to the Lord Jesus Himself, the One who is ready to take up every divine answer and then to relate it to what is for the Father and for God. "On my stringed instruments": that is how He views the local assembly; He claims it for Himself, and then He says He is going to have an answer from every one in view of something being reached in assembly service. May this stimulate us and encourage us just to look into these precious things and acquire these impressions that will add wealth to us, for His Name's sake.

MINISTRY IN GLASGOW

WARMTH

G.McKay

1 Kings 1: 1-4; Romans 12: 9-11

I was thinking a little, dear brethren, of warmth and fervency: the word fervency implies warmth. I think there is a need for warmth of affection at the present time; it is one of the great needs of the moment. We live in Laodicean days, that is clear. Thou art neither cold nor hot, says the word to Laodicea: "thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot" (Rev 3: 16), distasteful therefore to the Lord.

That is the day we live in. A very remarkable allusion in Matthew's gospel is to the love of the most growing cold (see chap 24: 12). It does not refer exactly to our day, it refers to the time of the tribulation. "And because lawlessness shall prevail, the love of the most shall grow cold". You wonder why there is a reference to love at such a time. You might say that in a time of tribulation there is a call for faithfulness, and it may indeed be necessary at that time for persons to stand faithful, but the Holy Spirit records this fact as to love, that "the love of the most shall grow cold". I think there is a point in that for us. We can think of our own time; we live in a day when there is a miss in the amount of affection. I think it applies to our own time as to how much warmth and zeal and affection, and how much love for the truth and love for Christ there is with us.

There is a very great need. It should enter into our lives and into our occasions of meeting, that there should be warmth and affection and zeal; not that matters should be a burden or lukewarm or just casual, just a kind of routine, but that there should be zeal and fervency with us. That is what the day calls for, that is what we need. We know that Christianity historically has fallen and constantly falls into a state of lukewarmness and an outward form.

There was a time in the eighteenth century when I suppose all the ministers would not even be believers (as it is now), when it was actually looked upon as a reproach if you were fervent and spoke

enthusiastically about the truth. At that time others were raised up who were enthusiastic about the truth, persons who were fervent.

So we have in Kings a reference to king David, not a type of Christ at this point but the great saint David, the one who had been so devoted in his life, a great example in his youth, not giving sleep to his eyes until he found out a habitation, a place for the ark. And here, at the end of his life, there is an indication of what can happen, and does happen, and has happened publicly, that is that decline and coldness set in. "And they covered him with clothes, but he obtained no warmth"; that is, coldness has come into the profession, dear brethren. Let it not come in amongst us, let there not be a coldness, standing aloof from the truth and from committal. Let there not be that kind of spirit, because it is hateful to the Lord to be lukewarm. Let there be warmth with us. The answer in this case was that a young virgin was found. It points to the warmth of youthful and assembly affections, warmth of affection that would give the king warmth. And so she was found. This is what is necessary.

We can understand this scripture and the figure that is in it, understand that this is what was necessary. They had to search for a fair damsel throughout the territory of Israel. This element had to be found; it was missing, it had to be sought for and it had to be found. Well, dear brethren, let us find it if any coldness comes in.

Coldness is a spreading kind of thing, is it not? If you are warm, and I am warm, you might find other persons get warm. Sitting beside someone who is enthusiastic and is zealous you feel affected, but if this coldness comes in it spreads. Here this young damsel was found and she brought in warmth, and the warmth lay in the purity of her affection. It points to these true, pure affections that bring warmth in, fervency of affection. It belongs to youth, but in Christianity these things are to go right through. There is no thought that we have to become old and obtain no warmth. The thought is that things are to be maintained amongst us in freshness of affection and vitality. Let that be with each one of us, contributing some warmth, some interest in the truth. Warmth is a great sign of life.

One of those in the scripture who was raised, a child, grew warm.

We would love that to happen to those who are younger, certain amongst us who have grown cold, that they should begin to get warm - a sign of life, a sign of affection for Christ. Let us contribute to this, dear brethren. Let us challenge ourselves: are we getting lukewarm? Or is there warmth of affection? Be zealous and repent, the Lord Jesus says to Laodicea. He calls for zeal.

In Romans 12, where relations between the brethren come in following on the wonderful individual side of things that has been depicted in the gospel truth set out in Romans, you get allusions to committal among the saints. In chapter 12 our bodies are committed, each one of us having to come into it individually. Then you have these powerful allusions to what is working among the saints, what is normal to persons who know the compassion of God and have placed their bodies on the altar. It is a very great matter. I suppose the test would be as to whether we have placed our bodies on the altar, whether we are conformed to this world or whether we have been transformed by the renewing of our minds. If we are conformed to this world it will bring in coldness as far as the Lord Jesus is concerned, because friendship with the world is enmity to God. The nearer we are to the world the colder we get in regard to spiritual things. So the word here is: "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (v 2); that is, that it is not a burden, you prove that there is a need of accepting the perfect will of God because you have a new outlook and your mind has been renewed, and you are proving that the will of God is what is good and acceptable and perfect. So if someone says, What about doing something else? you say, No, I know what is perfect, the will of God. You find as a spiritually renewed person and renewed in your mind that the will of God is an acceptable thing, and you can also arrive at it that it is perfect; that is where you find your happiness.

So this chapter goes on developing from that, from what the believer has arrived at as knowing the compassions of God, the great love of God towards him in the glad tidings. It brings him to the

point of committal, and then what works out in the rest of the chapter is energy and zeal, activity. Romans 12 is a great chapter of activity; the persons in it are acting, doing things. I just read that section to get an example of it and because it brings in the word fervent. "Let love be unfeigned": not just that we should love one another, but it is to be unfeigned, the real thing; not just a kind of gloss on things or a human heartiness but what derives from spiritual affections. Then it is not only that we keep away from evil but we abhor evil. That is what the saint does, he abhors evil. You do not say it is not too bad; you abhor it, especially the evil that has come in at the present time in the house of God. That is what has happened, evil principles have come in and there has been division among the saints on account of these evil principles, and you have to abhor them, not just say it is evil and it is wrong but abhor it. Then, of course, you are to be a balanced person, cleaving to good. That shows the affection, the interest. It is not just that you hold what is good but you cleave to it. Be "kindly affectioned towards one another". "Kindly affectioned" brings in the thought of warmth, does it not? It brings in the thought of a quality in relations between ourselves. Then "as to honour, each taking the lead in paying it to the other"; not just saying I will give honour to whom honour is due, though that is right, but you have to take the lead in that, to be first to give honour to others.

Then "as to diligent zealousness, not slothful; in spirit fervent; serving the Lord". "In spirit fervent" seems to point to the fact that by the action of the Holy Spirit in his soul the spirit of the believer is fervent. And by the Holy Spirit there is fervency, there is a glow, there is an enthusiasm, there is a committal. That is what is necessary in a day when the love of the most has grown cold. Is there warmth, is there this damsel to be found to give warmth, to minister? Well, may it be so with all of us. As to diligent zealousness, not slothful": what a collection of words! Just a few words but each one of them so powerful; "diligent" and "zealousness" and "not slothful". Sloth is just to take it easy, to lean back a bit. And then "in spirit fervent serving the Lord". If you look up the note on that you will find it is to serve as a bondman. There are other references in the chapter to priestly service, intelligent

service, and so on, but here it is bondman service, that kind of service, serving the Lord. So it is not just that you are conforming a little bit, doing what you can, but it is that the Lord is the Master and you are a slave, you are a bondman serving the Lord; the spirit is fervent serving the Lord. Well, you could go right through the chapter and bring out much more as to that, as to the activity that is to exist. But let this be amongst us, dear brethren - love for Christ, love for the truth, intense love for the truth and for the brethren, so that there may be warmth amongst us, an atmosphere of warmth.

Perhaps then persons will not grow cold. Why should we not be warm? Why should not persons get warmer? Why should there not be warmth amongst us and such warmth as would banish the evil as when Paul placed that bundle of sticks on the fire and the serpent came out but did no harm? That is what we want: fervency and committal to the truth that would expose the evil so that evil can no longer remain because of the warmth that exists among the saints.

Well, may we each be helped in that for His Name's sake.

MINISTRY IN GLASGOW

CONVICTION

R.J.Campbell

John 6: 67-69; Nehemiah 6: 1-4; Genesis 48: 17-19 (to "I know, my son, I know")

I just had an impression, beloved brethren, as to conviction. I feel for myself the tendency to lack conviction as to things. I think the enemy is satisfied if we are just maintained in the externals of things with a mental knowledge of the truth without a real, inward, deep conviction. If we are thoroughly and deeply convicted I do not think we would ever change from what we have come to accept in our souls. I just feel the challenge of it, that if things are arrived at inwardly we are thoroughly sure about where we stand in relation to the truth. Even the young ones here, are you convicted as to your links with the Lord Jesus, positively sure of your living link with the Lord Jesus? Paul was sure about that; there was no doubt in his mind about his link with the Lord Jesus. He says "I... am persuaded" (2 Tim 1: 12) - absolutely persuaded that he had a link with Christ and that as fully committed to Christ, Christ would keep what he had entrusted to him for that day. He was absolutely sure. I would like to ask each one of us and the young ones, Are you sure about your link with Christ? It is something to be convicted about, that you are inwardly, positively sure that you have a living link with Christ. If you arrive at that in your soul nothing will ever shake that. You can always fall back on that, what you have arrived at in soul history and experience, that you have a living link with Christ.

I read these scriptures because we read of three men who were absolutely sure about things; there was no doubt in their minds. In John 6 there were persons who had an external link with the Lord Jesus; there were those who professed to be His disciples and they had gone along with the Lord Jesus until this chapter. I remember Mr Lyon saying that John 6 is a very stiff examination and that the final test floors many promising candidates. The Lord is testing

persons all the way through the chapter and eventually it says "many of his disciples went away back and walked no more with him" (v 66). They had maintained an external link with Christ but the path had become so testing and they were not convicted about it, they were not certain that their link with Christ would see them through, and so they went away back and walked no more with Him. Then the Lord says to those around Him, "Will ye also go away?". I thought the Lord would say that to us: "Will ye also go away?". As our brother has said, the love of the most has grown cold. It applies to our day that the love of the many has grown cold; the great profession is marked by heartlessness as to Christ. The Lord says "Will ye also go away?" Now just think of the fervency, the heart that Peter had; think of what he says: "Lord, to whom shall we go?". Where are you going today? There is nowhere else where we can go. "Thou hast words of life eternal; and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God". That was conviction, absolute conviction with Peter. There was no doubt in his mind that there was nowhere else they could go but to be linked with the Lord Jesus.

This is not a position, beloved brethren, this is not brethrenism, this is a link with a living Man who has words of eternal life. And I can say that in my own history in some measure I have proved that Christ is the only One from whom we can get words of eternal life.

So Peter says "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal; and we have believed and known". That is not just a mere belief that is an inward conviction: "believed and known that thou art the holy one of God". Beloved brethren, may these things be real to us. How the enemy would seek to maintain us just in externals without the vital heart without the vital conviction as to our link with Christ and our association with one another in relation to Him. In John's gospel He is the centre and every one of us is in orbit in relation to that glorious centre of the world, that Christ is maintaining for God, and supporting us in the testimony here. May we be convicted.

What a man Nehemiah is! He is a man with light as to the recovery of the truth, and a man who laboured in relation to the recovery of the truth. You think of the recovery under Mr Darby, what vital recovery there was in relation to the fact that there was a Head in heaven and a body down here, that there were persons here that formed the body of Christ. These persons were convicted as to that, absolutely convicted; they left the profession, they left what was outwardly accredited in that day. They were sure that the Lord was not in it and they left it and came out in separation and sought to follow Christ in a pathway that was pleasing to Him, and they found others and had fellowship together and the recovery began. What a movement began in that day!

Then there were fifty years of patient service of Mr Taylor bearing on the truth. I thought in that period there was a service in relation to the building of the wall. I think that in Mr Taylor's day there was a certain assurance amongst the brethren, conviction as to the truth and in that way the wall was built and we have come into that. Over against that, you think of this attack here, a very subtle attack; it was not a bold attack, it was not as earlier, a seeking to minimise and weaken and belittle the efforts of these persons, saying that even if a fox went up it would break down their wall.

Here it was a very subtle thing, a suggestion to come down to the plain of Ono. In fact they did not even say, Come down; Nehemiah discerned that it was dangerous for him to go down to the plain of Ono. He says "I cannot come down"; the work is so great, there had been so much labour put into this; you think of these persons joined together side by side in the earlier chapters working in relation to the truth, building up the wall, and Nehemiah says, the work is too great, there has been far too much put into this for me to reduce things to the level of what is social to come down to the plain of Ono. What a test! And it says that "they sent to me four times". You think of the constant and insidious attack of the enemy in this subtle way seeking to bring Nehemiah down to the level of what was social. He says "I cannot come down". O, the conviction of the man. The service of God is to be maintained; what is for God will always be maintained

as there is conviction as to the truth and a preparedness to maintain things according to God. Later on there were choirs. They finished the wall before there were the choirs, and thus the service of God is maintained. But Nehemiah says, "I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down. Why should the work cease whilst I leave it and come down to you?" - "down to you". Well, brethren, divine things are elevated, there is a certain dignity about them, and my desire is that we might be preserved in conviction as to things. Conviction as to the truth, gate by gate built, the gates all built; Nehemiah went through these exercises, the fish gate and the sheep gate, all these exercises gone through, and Nehemiah says, It is far too great, I am not going to come down. He is absolutely convicted that the truth must be maintained. May this conviction enter into our souls. It is absolutely vital that the truth is maintained and that we do not reduce ourselves to the level of what the enemy would seek to reduce us to - Come down, he says, but Nehemiah says, I will not come down.

I read in Genesis because Jacob is also one who arrives at conviction as to things through spiritual experience. Joseph is a younger man and a very skilful administrator, and sometimes our natural minds might tend to think that this is the way that things should go. It seemed obvious that the older should be blessed first, but Jacob says "I know, my son, I know". Think of the conviction of a man who has been through things by experience! There is no substitute for it, and if we have been through things with God we will never ever change. We may do things just because we have taken them on merely academically and because it is the right thing to do amongst brethren. That is not the way the truth is maintained; we go through things in experience with God. What a history Jacob had! And right at the end here he is blessing these lads. How morally superior Jacob was; when before Pharaoh this poor man was morally superior, even blessing Pharaoh. Then right at the end of his life he is blessing these lads; he puts his right hand on the younger and left hand on the older, and it says of Joseph that it was evil in his eyes "and he took hold of his father's hand to remove it". Joseph was slightly out of line here, his own natural thoughts governing him

in relation to what he thought should be done, but Jacob, with all his moral history with God and all his conviction as to things, says "I know, my son, I know". I think it is something to listen to one with experience with God, and the absolute assurance that enters into persons' souls as to the rightness of certain things: "I know, my son, I know". May we be encouraged, beloved brethren. I just feel the challenge of it, that there might be inward conviction as to things, so that we are not "tossed and carried about by every wind of that teaching which is in the sleight of men", Eph 4: 14. How many things would seek to turn us aside! Conviction as to things, beloved brethren, will keep us steady. May it be so, for His Name's sake.

Words in meeting for ministry

GLASGOW

5 June 1984

THE CHILDREN'S COURAGE

The early history of David affords well-known examples of how great courage may be acquired by one still quite young. In the eyes of his own brothers David was but a 'stripling' and had not yet become filled out with manhood's strength. But in secret he had awakened in himself, doubtless by confidence in God, a courage that could slay a lion and a bear in his simple duty of protecting his father's flock. Like a true shepherd he had become fond of the sheep and in caring for them he had acquired a 'heart-strength' - which is the meaning of the word courage.

At about the same time David was moved in his spirit to fight against Goliath who was threatening God's people. In this he was, of course, a type of the Lord Jesus Himself who met the power of Satan in that great enemy's own stronghold of death. But David's conduct is also an example to us in our care for the flock of God.

Besides his staff and sling he had with him only his shepherd's bag. What, I wonder, did this contain? Probably there were bindings for wounds, a knife to free a sheep from entanglements, comforting oil for a sore head - and some simple food for himself! But there was also a "pocket" into which he put the smooth stones on which he relied, with God's help, in the combat. It is important for the believer whether young or old to have a secret heart-knowledge of God which gives courage in dangers and difficulties. As the Scripture says, "So that, taking courage, we may say, The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid".

As a seasoned man the apostle Paul was able to help others to take courage when disaster was close to the ship taking them towards Rome. It was his knowledge of God that gave him this power. He said "I believe God". Should we not all be able to say this although in very different circumstances? It shows that faith is in exercise. Later, as the ship with 276 "souls" on board was about to founder Paul, having given thanks, ate bread and encouraged all others to take food. For a fortnight they had eaten nothing, probably because of sea-sickness and anxiety. How the God of all

encouragement is honoured when His people are able to encourage others in what is good. Do you do so?

J.C.Evershed