

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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LEVITICAL POTENTIALITY

James Alex Gardiner

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There is great potentiality, beloved, amongst the brethren, for there is great potentiality in every Christian. I thought about these scriptures as relating to Levitical potentiality and how that potentiality is to be realised in its fulness. We are all sons of God, we are all the objects of sovereign choice. We have all been numbered from a month old and upwards, for that is the peculiar privilege of the Levites. They are taken, as the brethren know, instead of the firstborn, and the excess are redeemed; it puts an exceedingly great value upon every person. As numbered from a month old and upwards we are taken account of, in that sense, for what is in the future. Our lives, then, are to be marked out, to be trained, and in one sense we are to graduate, we are to go on a course and come through to the point when we are ready for service. It is not military service. The tribes in the previous verses are all numbered: Judah, Reuben, every one of them, are numbered for military service from twenty years old and upward. Well, that is true of you and me as well. But I want to speak about the peculiar privileges that belong to us, as of the family of Levi. Everyone, brothers and sisters, all, belong to it. It is typical of what we are as of the assembly of firstborn ones who are registered in heaven.

Now we should be greatly exultant in the wonder of the privilege that is ours. You pass people in the street and they have not been chosen. Why? You do not know; they have not been numbered from a month old and upwards. As far as you know they have not been amongst God's sovereign choice. It is not that we have to regard ourselves as the chosen few, as exceedingly privileged as men speak, but in reality that is the case. We are amongst God's chosen ones. The Lord Jesus is especially God's chosen: "Behold my servant, whom I have chosen", Matt 12: 18.

We need to understand the greatness, beloved, of divine selection. God has chosen us. "Many are called ones"; on the other hand "but few chosen ones", Matt 20: 16. Here we have the tribe of Levi and they are taken account of from one month old and upward; that is all that is said about them. The little ones, young people, babes a month old, they all are registered, and their names would be put down. The Levites had to do with the service of the tent of meeting. They had to carry the burdens of the testimony, and I would like to say something about that.

The Lord Jesus has been the great burden bearer, and in seeking to follow up this impression, beloved, I came upon a word of Mr Taylor's on 'Burden Bearing' (see Vol.90, p.357). In Galatians 6 the scripture is, "Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfil the law of the Christ" (v 2). It was a very fine word, and out of curiosity I went and looked up where it had been given, and found it was given in Dundee. Now I thought that maybe that would be confirmation - that the brethren in Dundee were being helped to take up the burdens of the testimony. God would have every one put his shoulder to the burden. But training is needed, help is needed.

You can understand these young people growing up in the tents of Levi, seeing what their fathers would be doing, how they would be under the hand of the priest, how the sons of Aaron would be taking things down and packaging them up, and then the Levites would be carrying them. They were bound to ask questions and query what it was, and it would be answered, One day you will have to do this; now you had better get ready for it; you do not have to do it until you are thirty years old, but then there is a training time. All your life you must be concerned that when the call comes for you, you will be ready for it, then you will be equal to it.

The best model, of course, is Jesus. Look at the Lord Jesus for everything. Learn to go to the gospels, beloved, and I am thinking here of young people especially. Learn to go to the gospels and find the answer to your problem is there. In Luke's gospel we have Jesus going up to the feasts with his parents. I believe they may perhaps have become a little orthodox for they went up yearly.

They should really have gone up three times in the year, yet it seems they went up yearly to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover, although they may have gone up at other times. But there is something here about them that is lacking, and it needs adjusting.

But we are going to speak about the Lord Jesus as a boy, and where His interests lay and the great desire that He had in Jerusalem. You can understand the young people in Israel, young boys and girls about that age; when the time came to go up to Jerusalem it would be an event in their lives. They had heard so much about Jerusalem. They had heard about the place, that the Lord had placed his name to dwell there. They had looked forward to the time, no doubt. It would be a diversion. But then it had to be more than that, and it was more than that for Jesus. Think of Jesus, twelve years old, going up to Jerusalem, how He would be interested. Think of how He would have held Jerusalem in His heart, for what it was in God's heart and in God's mind. How interested He would be in the Scriptures! How thrilled He would be as He went through the book of Isaiah the prophet, as He read in Exodus about the deliverance out of Egypt, for His interest was there. We were saying on Tuesday night that it would not be unusual for young people to be interested and to question persons who can teach and help, but there is more than that about Christ here. It would be most unusual for some young person to be so engrossed in the holy things of God that he was prepared to stay behind, to tarry behind in Jerusalem. That was the intensity of His interest. It was beyond what was natural. It would be most unusual for a young person to say, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?". But I would appeal to young people in this age group; when you are about twelve years old you are coming on to the years of responsibility and you are becoming responsible. You know what is right and what is wrong. You know what you should do and what you should not do. It is very interesting to see normal growth and development in young persons, when you begin to take an interest in the meetings. How perfectly it is set out in Jesus as He was there in Jerusalem. "And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers and hearing them and

asking them questions". It was a great concern for His parents for they went a day's journey without Him. Have you ever done that? Have you ever gone a day's journey without Christ? Then they looked for Him in the company where they thought they had lost Him. He is not in the line of nature at all, and you will not find Him there; and then they spent three days looking for Him. Beloved, these things should speak to our hearts - or maybe it does not interest you. Would to God that it interested every soul here, in this room today, so that they would follow this teaching, see the flow, the current and the trend of the movements of the boy Jesus. His heart was in Jerusalem, He was set upon it. Later on in the gospels He was going to weep over it. O, Jerusalem, He is going to say, how I loved you; how My heart is moved for you; if you had only known the things that were for your peace. It was all in His heart here. The time of Jerusalem's visitation was upon them and yet they shut their ears to it, they shut their eyes to it. They had missed the time of their visitation. Beloved, let us be careful, young ones, that we do not miss the time of our visitation, because from twelve to thirty - that is the next time the Lord Jesus appears on the scene - is a very critical time. It is a basic need to progress in the truth, and we need application. We hear nothing about Him from twelve years old until thirty years old, but we get gleanings from the Scriptures. If we go to the types we can see how Jesus was at that age. Take Joseph when he was seventeen years old; he is feeding the flock with his brethren. Do you care for the brethren like that? You are not prominent, you are not supposed to be prominent, you are with the brethren, and you are feeding the flock. You are concerned that there should be food and care and help and nurture for the brethren, and that is how Jesus would have been. This needs application, young people; you need heart, you need to commit yourself to Christ, to the Scriptures and to the ministry with your heart. Maybe you will not fully understand it, but nobody is expecting you to. However, as you do that, something, some little thing, will come into your soul and that will remain. That will give you a little impetus to go a bit further, because you are to grow, to grow in the truth, and it is to be evident to all that there is life about you. There is the

evidence of spiritual life. The brethren should not have to use a magnifying glass to see spiritual life in anybody. There should be the evidence of spiritual life and spiritual growth. Maybe you come to the meetings, but He who is our pattern in every thing said in the type: "I rejoiced when they said, unto me, Let us go into the house of Jehovah", Ps 122: 1.

The meeting night comes along, maybe we are going to the meeting, but if we can have an option what are we going to choose? The Lord knows these things; He would be absolutely honest with us, put the whole thing before us. Do you take the option or do you say, Well, I am committed to Christ, then I must go out to the meeting and be committed to the testimony. The Lord will bless that kind of movement. I know what I am speaking about; all of us have been over the course. Prayer meeting - well, I go out once a week. It is very important, very basic and very real, and very essential, and conducive to growth morally and spiritually because teaching is needed and teaching is found in the meetings. You go there, week after week, month after month; there is a period of development over those eighteen years.

There is another eighteen years in this gospel. There is a poor woman and she is a daughter of Abraham and she is bound up for eighteen years, cannot lift up her head. It is like persons who go to the meeting and their heart is not in it. They think the whole thing is legal, the whole thing is bound by order and commandment and principle, whereas it is a whole system of holy joy and liberty. The Lord says that is not proper to a daughter of Abraham. We are going to loose her on the sabbath day. She had not the gain of these secret eighteen years. You can maybe appear to carry the features of the brethren and in your heart the spring, the urge, and the force of the Spirit are absent. It does not matter how you dress or what you do, that does not mean much at all from this point of view. Get the force of the Spirit of Christ, of the Spirit of God acting in your soul, and all the things that relate to divine order will come into their proper place. If you begin from the inside, things will come out orderly and properly externally.

Well, I think this is very important. That is how you grow. Young brothers grow. They start praying in the prayer meeting, give out a hymn, come to the ministry meeting and they say, Week after week, still the same three or four that give the words. Take up that exercise. Say, I should like to give a word this week. I do not know if I will be able for it or not. Well, it does not matter; if you try it the Lord will support you. He is near. He will support you in it, and you will feel joy in your soul. He will put something into your soul: that is a joy especially for you. Get something for your own heart specially from Christ. If you sit all your life studying the carpet you will get nothing, but the older ones will carry on. They will break the bread every Lord's day even if there are only one or two of them. They will get up in the meeting and pray, they will give out the hymns and yes! they will preach, if nobody else is going to preach. These are the burdens of the testimony that are to be carried, beloved. If you do not carry your share somebody else is going to have to carry more than their share. They will gladly do it, because they are bighearted in love, but they want you to come into the joy and happiness of true Levitical service. That is what is needed in every place. There is no place different.

A very dear young friend of mine was telling me this week that the meetings are not what they used to be. He told me about them and went on to get himself tied up. He is a very dear brother, but then, if the meetings are not what they used to be, you, as an individual, have the responsibility to see that they are. It comes back to my own state and how I am myself. You say, It is a poor meeting, very dry. Well, what do you do to help? You might be in the morning meeting and say, I did not get on very well; and someone else may say, That was a great meeting today. You may feel they have not much discernment. Be careful! They are enjoying something perhaps because they are closer to Christ than you are. All this is in the course of that period of the eighteen years that persons have to commit themselves to secretly, that there should be growth. Do you ever think about looking at the Synopsis before you go out to the reading? You should check it up; you should check up

what such brothers as Mr Taylor and Mr Coates say about the Scriptures and you will find that all these older brothers have been through it all, and their growth was because of this, and it is essential and necessary. That is sound teaching, that is an outline, what is called an "outline of sound words" (2 Tim 1: 13), and the meeting invariably will start on that line and into that will come something fresh from Christ. You find that the body is working. It is very practical. That is how it works and so persons are encouraged. Somebody comes and says, What you said really helped me. That is how the body works.

Well, beloved, if we do not apply ourselves, if we are not committed on this line of secret history (that is what it is, secret history, privately with God), it is going to be evident that we just do not have it. There is no need to try to pretend we have something when we do not. When asked in a reading, What do you say, about this? some just reply, I am enjoying what is being said. I said to a brother once, That is like a recorded announcement. Everybody should have something to say; communicate spiritual things by spiritual means. We have time for other things, but how much time do we give the Lord in our lives? How do we allocate our time? This applies to sisters as well as brothers. We have plenty of time - and rightly so - we use leisure time for leisure and exercise on that line is needed. Young people need exercise, and company. They need companionship. You cannot sit them in the house and push things at them. They need liberty; but then are we devoting the time to these things which we should be devoting to the things of God?

It all brings up the question, beloved, as to where our hearts really are. Is your heart really with Christ? He would love to draw your heart after Him. He has borne the burdens. He would appeal to you and me today in this hall in Dundee that we should put our shoulders a little more to the burden take a little more strain, take a little more weight, take a little burden off the older people, have the stress shared out a bit more. If the recovery, beloved, is to continue, and to continue substantially, this line must be pursued by every single person in fellowship. If there is to be quality and substance,

this is how it is going to be secured, by private committal and holy industry in the things of God, the pursuit privately of the truth in what we call our spare time.

A brother once said to me, Mr Taylor said that his spare time was from eight till five. That is when he did his work. All the rest of his time he devoted to the Lord. I am not saying that you should do that. I am only appealing that we should give some time to Christ to acquire the knowledge of God and the holy things of God and the truth. If you follow up the scripture in Timothy when Paul says to him "be wholly in them" (1 Tim 4: 15) it relates back to this section in Luke 2. The Lord Jesus is wholly in the things of God.

That, beloved, is what He would have us to be. I trust the dear young brethren will suffer the word of exhortation. I would really appeal to your hearts, and to all our hearts, to assess soberly in the Lord's presence how much time we give Him, and how much time we use for other things. I think if we were more concerned that the Lord should have a little more time we would find that we were growing and developing in our souls and we would be more prepared to take up the practical responsibilities of burden bearing in the local meeting.

I come now to the Lord Jesus when He is thirty. He is ready for the great occasion when He is about to be sent. Perhaps the Lord has something special for you in mind. It will not be this, for this is unique. He is equal to the anointing. Jesus Christ, the man, is equal to the anointing. He is equal to the commission that God is giving Him. It says here: "all the people having been baptised, and Jesus having been baptised, and praying": how dependent He was! Think of His taking the last place. He did not want to be among the first. All the people were baptised. How beautiful the spirit of Christ is! How beautifully you can see the reflection of it in Philippi as you read this gospel! It says that the heaven was opened to Him, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form as a dove upon Him and a voice came out of heaven: "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". He Himself is made conscious privately of heaven's approbation. Now I say again, this is unique and distinct

to Christ, yet in the principle of it God would honour your committal by giving you something yourself privately, some private sense of divine approbation that you are on the right path and that you are going to be supported by Him.

Now it says that "Jesus himself was beginning to be about thirty years old". That is the levitical age. He is ready to take up the burdens of the testimony, and how He took them up! It bows your heart in the presence of such devotion. Who can lift up their heads in the presence of the devotion of Christ in committal to the will of God in the outshining of divine grace? In the next chapter He is evidencing what is proper to persons who are numbered for warfare. He is meeting the devil and He is meeting him with the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word. But here, what is in mind primarily is the levitical position, because this gospel brings out the distinctiveness of priesthood and priestly grace in Christ.

Well, beloved, we should think about these things. He knows the Scriptures; He can meet the devil at any point with these verses of the word of God. Beloved, can you repeat the books of the Bible? Do you know them? Could you go from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers right through to Revelation? Think about it. If you do not know that, start learning. Then you will not have to say, What is the number of the page? Not that there is anything wrong with that, but Christians are expected at least to know their Bible and know where the scriptures are. You will not know it all. God has graciously and mercifully given us concordances and lots of reference books that are so essential in facilitating our understanding of the truth and of the word of God. There is no need for anyone to be stuck, or hard-come-by on that line. Everything is available. You think of what God has given us in the revival, the immensity of the provision that God has given us that we should know the truth and that we should come into the gain of our place before Him in sonship.

Now I just want to touch on the scripture in Numbers because this is something further. As we move on the line that I have tried to indicate we will get the gain of the Lord's support in priestly grace.

There is one man out of death, beloved, and that is Christ. You may have an ideal. No doubt various persons in Israel - these other princes - were good men, great men, wonderful men, but God has used them to show that there was only one man that He had in mind to raise from amongst the dead and that is Jesus. We come through this exercise and begin to see that Christ alone is to be the object of our hearts. This service which He renders is for the whole house of Levi. The staff of Aaron it says, for the house of Levi had budded and blossomed, produced ripened almonds. There is the power and vitality of an indissoluble life and the power of that life is to sustain you all the way through the wilderness. You are sustained in life, you will live then in the power of that life, you will be saved in its power.

The previous chapter records the rebellion which came about through indiscrimination amongst other things. We need to discriminate and we need to be separate and be apart for God. All the people are holy, people say; you are not the only ones that are holy. It is ecumenical thinking. Christendom is full of it and divine principles go by the board. Our bond is the truth and the principles of the truth. The principles of the truth beloved, stand in whatever circumstances there may be. They remain as they always are and will be. They are the governing features of God's house, and the priesthood of Christ has in mind that persons who are seeking to be regulated by them are maintained in vitality and life. It is great encouragement and great comfort for us. From buds, from young people, right through to old people, bloomed and blossomed and ripened almonds He will sustain us right through to full maturity. Think of the underlying service of Christ to an assembly like Philippi: the power of His life is coming out in evidence, the wonderful graces and beauties of Christ coming through amongst the brethren, which are so delightful; there was the evidence that He was behind the whole matter.

Well, beloved, I trust we may be encouraged and helped. I do not want to make anybody depressed. I want to encourage your heart to proceed on this line of what is normal to Christianity. Forget

about every other thing. They have their place, maybe, but if we put what is called 'first things first' then things will come into their proper place, and we will find that we are prospering and growing in our souls. It is the secret of true and lasting happiness. Somebody spoke in the reading about deep joy as over against what is superficial. I think this is the way to it.

May the Lord help us in it, for His Name's sake.

DUNDEE

12 November 1988

UNITY OF MIND

Eric Burr

John 17: 22,23; Romans 15: 5,6; Philippians 4: 2

We have, in Mr Raven's teaching, which most who have ready his ministry will have read because it is in the first article in the first book, that there are certain scriptures which bear particularly upon Christians and that the spirit and end of them all is unity. Our beloved brother had sorrowfully to experience in his own time that the company with which he was then in fellowship was not maintained in that unity, and that over a matter of the interpretation of Scripture and of doctrine which now seems quite simple to us all, that is Mr Raven's teaching as to eternal life being in the Son of God and involving a sphere of things outside the world where such life can be enjoyed.

It is astonishing today, some eighty years later, that that could become a matter of division, and yet it did, and it lingers down to the present time. It may suggest to us that it is not in this scene that we shall experience that total unity which Jesus had in mind. In fact, if we think of the general public position in Christendom and the profession of Christianity, we would hesitate to say that it could even be so. There is a hymn which says:

Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed.

That is the public position of the church.

It would be a sorrow to any true-hearted believer (Mr Lyon used to speak about broken-hearted churchmen) to reflect at all on that present position when it is so manifest in the Scriptures that the divine intention is that there should be unity amongst the people of God. We find it, of course, in John's writings. We find it in the scripture I have read, to which I will come back, but we find in

chapter 10 that there should be one flock, one Shepherd. Would that we experienced it more! Do our hearts stretch out to other believers with a longing that they should be embraced at the present time under the care of that same Shepherd? Of course, He cares for them circumstantially and providentially in the blessedness of the present disposition of God, but what it would be for all the flock in the present time to be under the gain of His headship. Our hearts should weep over it, that there is such division, such sorrow, and that we ourselves have contributed so much to it. One may quote a brother again who said that if we were not the humblest people in Christendom, then we had learned nothing.

Then, the thought of unity runs of course through Paul's ministry. One God and Father of all; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one Spirit, one body; one hope of your calling (see Eph 4: 4-6). One could, given moment or two, think of more references in Paul of which unity is the great objective.

There is however a glory in John 17, and a unity which I believe it would be right to speak of as a *conferred* unity. Think of that! There is a unity in that chapter on which nothing can trench. "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them". We can look at that, beloved, only in the light of what is open for all believers on account of the present position of Christ. That is where God sees them. He sees them in Christ. We distinguish, perhaps sometimes over-particularly, about "in Christ" and "in the Lord", but God sees them all in Christ Jesus, and He sees them in the glory which He has given to His Son. How blessed that is! What room for expansion, and what a sphere of unity, where there is nothing to detract from and nothing can detract from it. Would that our own spirits were more in the power of that sphere. It would preserve us from any inappropriate attitude of exclusivism, that we realise the place that we have in the glory that God has given to Christ that we have a place there, as have all those whom God has given to Him. Think of Jesus saying "those thou hast given me", John 17: 12. What a wonderful thing! What a great presentation: "those thou hast given me", and there is that sphere of unity into which nothing can intrude.

It does not depend on our responsibility. It does not depend on anything we do. It does not depend on the maintenance of anything. It is something established by God in Jesus glorified. "Jesus ... lifted up his eyes to heaven" (v 1). I have begun to savour more than I used to the references in the Scriptures of Jesus, and it was Jesus who lifted up His eyes to heaven. We take up the official titles very readily, and very rightly, but the glory that God has given to Him in this chapter is glory that is given to *Jesus*. Beloved, there is unity there which - I use the word, I cannot think of a better one - is as it were conferred, because the unity flows out of the glory. "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one"; you see, the unity flows out of the glory. The glory is conferred, and there is a unity there which is part of it. That does not belong to the sphere of our responsibility.

But there are other scriptures, such as the two that I have read, which touch on unity in the sphere of our responsibility. I have been struck with how much in Paul's references of this kind it depends on our minds. Unity in practice depends on our minds. It says in Romans 15 "be like-minded", and to the two sisters referred to in Philippians: "be of the same mind in the Lord". It says in chapter 2 of that epistle: "If then there be any comfort in Christ ... ye may think the same thing, ... thinking one thing ... let his mind be in you".

Therefore beloved, I think the Lord might call our attention to the spirit of our minds in relation to unity. We speak about things, and we discuss things, and so on, and rightly so, but often what these conversations bring out is where our minds are, and minds - would it be wrong to say? - not necessarily formed under the power of the Spirit, but minds formed according to an opinion reached on other grounds, for I suppose no individual would claim that he alone had the mind of the Spirit. The mind of the Spirit is in the company.

The mind of the Spirit, as Paul teaches us, is life and peace, and if in any way life, and above all peace, are intruded upon, one might wonder if the mind of the Spirit is there - the mind of the Spirit. I was struck with the fact (I take it to myself) that Paul attaches unity in the sphere of responsibility to our minds. That suggests that we

need continually to be in the gain of Romans 12: we are transformed by the renewing of our mind, and if there is any element of disunity it may be that minds need to be transformed: not opinions. Opinions will be changed when minds are changed. "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind", Rom 12: 2.

In the two scriptures that I have read from Paul there is a standard given for unity. In Romans 15 it is "according to Christ Jesus", "like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus". Now that is not according to anyone's view of anything; that is not according to any particular aspect in which I or anyone else might see something. There is the divine standard, which is absolute, "according to Christ Jesus". I think you have in some way to be able to go up to heaven, where Christ Jesus is, to discuss what is according to Christ Jesus, because He is there, exalted in a sphere where nothing can detract from His glory, but nothing can detract from the fact that the mind of God is established in the Man that God has exalted: "according to Christ Jesus". So beloved, it behoves me, behoves you, behoves anybody, brother or sister, that if I speak on any matter, is "according to Christ Jesus" my standard? Paul helps us. He does not say just that you should be like-minded one towards another, because that might leave the door open for natural friendships, natural prejudices, natural relationships with those whom we might find acceptable or who share our own opinions, or anything like that. Paul puts in this guarding expression, "according to Christ Jesus".

In Philippians 4 he says "be of the same mind in the Lord". Paul will have unity in the sphere where our responsibility is guarded, and he guards it again. He does not say that these two sisters (one makes nothing of the fact that they were sisters evidently), but these two brethren (because 'brethren' includes brothers and sisters) should not just be of one mind, because they might be able to agree about anything, they might share an opinion about anything. Paul says "the same mind in the Lord". He guards it again. I am struck, as I say, with the fact that in the first place, when Paul speaks about unity in the sphere of our responsibility he

brings it home to our minds. We should think about that. But then he guards what he says by these standards: "according to Christ Jesus" and "in the Lord".

Now this might make me, might make anyone, slow to speak, might make them slow to express an opinion; might make anyone feel that if there is a sphere where the mind of the Lord is known and where the manifestation of the presence of the Lord is known it may sometimes imply that my mind is silenced in the presence of the Lord. "Be of the same mind in the Lord". "Be like-minded ... according to Christ Jesus. As I say, it has come to me that there is a sphere outside our responsibility where unity exists; unity exists because of the glory. Our beloved brother has just been speaking about the glory of the Lord, the Lord manifesting His glory, but here He has been given glory as Man, and that glory He has given to us.

Sometimes we say that is the glory of sonship. Well, certainly it is the glory of sonship, but it may involve much more than that. The glory which He has been given as Man, that glory He has given to us, and the consequence of that is unity. That is, I believe, a kind of conferred unity. But when it comes to our responsibility, our responsibility in regard to unity in the sphere in which we have fellowship with one another is immense. Let us not diminish our responsibility in relation to unity; but Paul hangs it on our minds, and he would test us, Where is your mind? How does your mind run? What is your mind governed by? Is it governed by Christ Jesus? Is it governed by the Lord? Is it governed by any other consideration? Because if it is any other consideration Paul would rule it out.

Well beloved, these things affect us. They will affect us all the time. They will not affect us just in relation to any particular matter that may be current. If we wish to maintain unity in responsibility, in the sphere where the light of the unity that comes from the glory that we have been given is taught, spoken about, something known about it, then we have to bring our minds into agreement with what is in Christ Jesus, "according to Christ Jesus" - I think that is the only place where Paul uses that expression, "according to Christ Jesus" - and we have to bring it "in the Lord". This is continuous, and it

requires, indeed it brings about, a state of submission, and from that kind of submission flows contentment. I believe, beloved, the Lord will help us in these things. One thing I am quite sure of in the city is that there is a desire for help, a desire for help in enabling us to go on in this kind of unity. Paul would enjoin us to take care of where our minds are in every matter that may arise.

One speaks of these things, not in any way to diminish occupation with the glory of Christ, of which our beloved brother has spoken, but because the enjoyment of that glory can easily be detracted from by any sense of disunity in the company. Well beloved, may the Lord just help us, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

7 March 1989

'LOOK UP'

Reg Flowerdew

John 17: 1; Acts 7: 55,56; Hebrews 12: 1,2; 2: 8 from "But now" to 9 "glory and honour"

I have the impression, which has flowed from what we have sung (Hymn No.213) and what we have already heard, that the Lord in His love would encourage us to look up. There is much in this scene which appears to command our attention and would fill our gaze, but I think the love of Jesus is operative to this end, that we may look up; look up with an object in view, that is, Jesus Himself.

Scripture encourages us to look up; to look off and away from that which so fully presents itself to us for our attention; to look up to Christ Himself. I think He is attractive to such a degree that, as we focus on Him and are occupied with Him who is so glorious, there is for us satisfaction of soul and stimulation in a scene of difficulty, where our pilgrim path is. There is, above all an answer to His affection. We often think of what is for the satisfaction of our affections, and God in His grace provides for their satisfaction, but how much greater is the satisfaction of the affections of Christ! As we are stirred by His word in love, and as our attention is attracted away from this scene towards Himself, as our occupation is with Him, how much there is for the satisfaction of His heart, for this is a scene in which there is general refusal of Him, a refusal to look to Him.

It occurred to me in connection with John 17 that there was no hindrance to the view that Jesus had of the Father and towards the Father. He "lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father": simple words, but how profound! I suppose of no other could it have been said that there was that clarity, that range, that directness of view which Jesus had of the Father. How blessed a portion, we might say, He had knowledge of the Father's affection in the scene of contrariety. How much there was by way of pleasure, one might say joy, for the Father as the gaze of Christ was lifted towards Him,

Christ knowing full well what lay before Him. There was no resentment in His spirit. There was only shrinking and recoiling from that which He was facing at this juncture, as the synoptic gospels bring out. That is not emphasised here. The spirit of Christ was unruffled, and He delighted in the communion suggested in the uplifting of His eyes, He having a view in which there was an exchange of affection between Himself and the Father. There are many verses in John's gospel which are stated in great simplicity and which are exceedingly profound and glorious. This is one of them. Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven, with no thought for Himself but every thought for the Father whose pleasure and whose glory He sought; "Father, the hour is come". There was no hint in the words of Christ that this was the hour of pressure, but rather that it was the hour in which there should be the glorification of the Father. What a matter of wonder it is for us; "that thy Son may glorify Thee".

There was an unhindered view when Christ lifted up His eyes. By virtue of His work there may now be an unhindered view for those who have their trust in Him. I hope we all have our confidence in Christ and are able to lift up our eyes in the joyful knowledge of the fact that His work in its completeness, its fulness and its perfection, has removed every hindrance to our view towards heaven. What an incentive it is to lift up the eyes, when we realise that all hindrance, darkness and greyness, has been removed in the death of Christ. Stephen was in the gain of this. He was in a setting in which there was persecution as no other had faced it before. Many have faced persecution subsequently, yet he in a sense led the way in the experience of persecution. Every means was given by which he might be sustained in the face of the greatest threat, surrounded as he was by adversaries. Being full of the Holy Spirit he was able to draw on infinite resource. He fixed his eyes on heaven. He was able to do it. One marvels at it. Would you and I be able to do it? The means is given to do it. If Stephen was able to fix his eyes on heaven in the scene of the greatest opposition, can we not think that there is the means given for us to fix our eyes on an object able to fill

them, to fill our hearts and our souls, to bring effect (for there is bound to be an effect as glory is in view) to our lives and in our testimony? How fine a testimony Stephen was. "He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God", the place of power; there was a heavenly acknowledgement of the power and effect of Stephen's testimony. At the point of greatest pressure and persecution his view was unrestricted and he was in the gain of it. How much are we in the gain of it? They bore witness to him, that his face was as the face of an angel (see Acts 6: 15).

In Hebrews, if I may trace through the scripture rapidly, we are given the encouragement to lay aside certain things which become a weight to us, which on the face of them are entirely legitimate and seemingly harmless, may be a weight to us. "Laying aside every weight, and sin which so easily entangles us". We can so easily be ensnared. Satan is a past master at putting snares before us and causing hindrance. However, there is encouragement in the words "Let us", which run through this epistle. "Looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith"; "Let us ... run with endurance the race that lies before us". Jesus ran the whole course (as we often say as to this section of Scripture) of faith; He ran the whole course, and faith is given in order that we may do so. As for Stephen, the full supply of the Spirit is available to us, in order that we might proceed with ever quickening pace, and we have One before us to whom we can look off. Let us look off, then, to Jesus; look away from that which is around, and from self, look off and look up. This becomes a stimulus to greater activity in service towards Him, helping us to be disengaged from what might otherwise occupy us here, so that the testimony might be promoted and that there might be prosperity in the pilgrim pathway, which is oft times beset by difficulty. If we look up we find that strength is given us to continue.

Earlier in Hebrews, in a scripture which is most precious to the believer, the occupation of the writer is not with "all things", but rather with Him: that is the emphasis; He is to be our occupation. "But now we see not yet all things subjected to him but we see Jesus,

who was made some little inferior to angels ..." What grace! He came within our range so that we might in faith lift up our eyes to Him! We see Him, "who was made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour". This section of Scripture is to encourage us to honour Him in our minds, our words and our practice. And as we look up to Him in simplicity, moved by His affection we sense that His gaze is upon us. His gaze expresses interest in His own in this scene. It expresses compassion, as ever it did. There is a sequence in Hebrews to which attention has been called: Jesus succours, sympathises and saves completely. He acts towards those who look to Him with great practical effect, so that there might be with us even more the readiness to respond to Him for His satisfaction.

His satisfaction is detected, if I might so say, in the pulsing of His own affection towards His own, and as we respond in simplicity, disengaged from that which might otherwise legitimately occupy us. What an opportunity that is for the gratification of His heart as we are in faith (not in a state of suspense or in the exercise of imagination: there is nothing so solid as faith) and in the power of the Spirit, just as Stephen was filled with the Spirit in the greatest adversity. That power is available to us. As we look up to Christ, we are given every incentive to be pleasing to Him and to answer to His affection in a scene where He has been rejected. What a privilege it is! The heart is uplifted as one is engaged with Him. The difficulties of the way shrink, and the glory of Christ is enlarged and brighter to us. Above all, His own heart is satisfied.

LONDON

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UNDER THE JUNIPER TREE

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die".

1 Kings 19: 5; 2 Tim 4; Rev 3: 2

Disheartened and weary he lay

Down under the juniper tree:

So faithless was he - not a ray

Of cheer 'mid the gloom could he see.

"Apostasy spreads", hissed the foe,

"Truth fails ... all thine efforts are vain".

A Voice whispered: "Though it be so,

Still 'Strengthen the things which remain'."

"The things which remain! What are they? "

The man of God asked with a sigh.

The Voice breathed: "Around thee to-day,

They faint, they sink, 'ready to die'.

Though strife and division abound,

Though evil thou canst not restrain,

Yet still 'mid the ruins be found

To 'Strengthen the things which remain'."

"On earth still *the Spirit* abides,

The gospel still sounds from above;

Go forth and wherever He guides,

Still tell the glad message of love.

The Supper - the bread and the wine –

Still speaks of the One Who was slain,

Still spreads thee a feast still divine;

Then, 'Strengthen the things which remain'."

"Each week still a few meet for *prayer*,

And graciously thus are they led

To cast upon Him all their care,

Who numbers the hairs of their head;

And still by His love some are stirred

To gather in faith yet again
To read and to ponder the *Word*,
And 'Strengthen the things which remain'."

"The little ones still seek to save;
Oh! care for them; let them be told –
Of Him Who His life freely gave
To save them as well as the old.
The *tempest-tossed* and the bereaved,
The sick in their weakness and pain,
Still need to be solaced, relieved:
Oh! 'Strengthen the things which remain'."

"'Stand fast!' *for the faith* still contend, Rise!
Gird thee, 'Be strong in the Lord'.
'Hold fast what thou hast to the end',
And great then shall be thy reward
'The Lord is at hand!' Ne'er forget
The hope of His coming and reign:
Despond not, nor murmur, nor fret,
But, 'Strengthen the things which remain'."

"The Church as a witness has failed,
Her lamp-stand has gone from its place,
Her light for her Lord has long paled,
Yet still shines the *light of His face*.
Look up - see how brilliant it gleams!
His glory and grace cannot wane;
Go forth then, reflect His bright beams, -
Go, 'Strengthen the things which remain'."

Then from under the juniper tree,
The servant went forth with this prayer:
"My Lord, still there's something for me
To do and to be and to bear;
Though feeble, despised, and obscure,
My soul by Thy love still constrain
For Thee and for Thine to endure,

And 'Strengthen the things which remain'."

S.J.B.Carter

1858-1938

THE CHILDREN'S TIME-KEEPING

Even the most grown-up of persons cannot tell what it would be like if there were no such thing as time. Yet we must always remember that one great blessing of the gospel is that we have the assurance of salvation for time and eternity as well, as believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. The sun in the sky, the greatest blessing in the old creation, rules the day and hence our time. Jesus said that it rises on the evil and on the good - in loving kindness putting evil persons first. The sun in the heavens is also a reminder of the Lord being now in glory, having made purification of sins by His blood.

It is therefore the sun that really governs our time-keeping although we have clocks and watches for obvious reasons. Even younger children will have seen a sundial showing the time as gradually getting on as the shadow of the gnomon moves round the dial. A king of Judah once wanted a sign that God would bless him. The prophet then asked him whether the sun should go down or go back ten degrees on the sundial. No doubt Hezekiah had proved that it is easy to lose time and that it was therefore a light thing that the shadow should go down. So he wisely asked for it to go backward and this came to pass by a miracle thus, as it were, gaining time. If the degrees were the same as in our geography books the time gained would represent forty minutes - just about the time of a gospel preaching!

Even when we feel that we have wasted time, God's grace is still towards us in the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we are told to redeem, or buy back, the time, which means using it wisely because it is so valuable. Centuries ago the last words of a queen of England were 'All my possessions for a moment of time!' I suppose that she felt that she had neglected God's salvation. Do you prove that now is the well-accepted time and today is the day of salvation?

J.C.Evershed