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Contents

HEAVENLY THINGS

THE MORAL GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS

LINES FROM AN AGED SISTER

THE CHILDREN'S SAFETY

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HEAVENLY THINGS

Hebrews 3: 1-6; 11: 13-16; 12: 22,24

E.C.M. I have been thinking of the word 'Heavenly' in this epistle. The Lord might help us to keep before us the thought of what is heavenly. He said to Nicodemus, "If I have said the earthly things to you and ye believe not, how, if I say the heavenly things to you, will ye believe?", John 3: 12. I thought it might be encouraging and helpful to us to enquire firstly in relation to the heavenly calling, then the heavenly country and, finally, the heavenly city. It is important for us to understand that our calling is heavenly. The apostle prays to the Father in Ephesians 1: 18 that we should know what is the hope of His calling. It is His calling. These Hebrew believers were in danger of slipping back and there is always the danger, we would have to say humbly, of our slipping. Our blessings are heavenly and spiritual. I thought the apostle in seeking to help them was keeping this heavenly level of things before them. He first addresses them as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. Then in chapter 11 we get the confession. I thought we might consider Abraham as representing those who are characteristically heavenly. We would encourage one another so much the more as we see the day drawing near. Christianity is a heavenly system.

P.B. Why do you think that he brings in the Apostle and High Priest here?

E.C.M. That is interesting because Moses was the apostle and Aaron the high priest. Now, both are in one Person - the Apostle, the One who inaugurates the system, and the Great Priest, the One who sustains all for the pleasure of God. Whether Aaron functioned as a great priest I am not sure; Christ is the Great High Priest. I thought we could get help from one another because none of us knows anything yet as we ought to know it, so we are very dependent on the help that is available to us on an occasion like this.

P.B. Is it to help us and preserve us from slipping?

E.C.M. That is what I thought. We need to be preserved in a time of testing when there is so much to discourage especially our young people. On the other hand, there is very much to encourage.

A.B. Is it presented to us most attractively in the personal name of Jesus - "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus"?

E.C.M. That is good; and how the personal name of Jesus is brought into this epistle is very attractive. The priesthood of Christ is based not only on His sonship but on the truth of His Person. It brings the glory of that Person before us.

J.A.G. As we consider the greatness of the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, it would elevate the thought of the calling in our minds because we are linked up with such a One. Is the Apostle in the first chapter and the High Priest in the next one?

E.C.M. I think that is very helpful. It says "he who has built all things is God - a wonderful statement. Solomon built the house here Moses is brought forward but he is not more than a servant in the house, however distinguished a servant may be he is no more than a servant in the house. It says that Moses was faithful in all God's house. But He who has built all things is God. I have thought that that includes the building of the woman. God is the first builder and the building of the woman is the first building (see Gen 2: 22). We have had much light throughout the recovery but are we really answering to it. We are to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we have been called (see Eph 4: 1). I thought that chapter 11 is related to that. Our testimony is to be in keeping with our calling.

A.McK. It was a light out of heaven that arrested Paul initially; then there was instruction given as to the city - "enter into the city", Acts 9: 6.

E.C.M. I am sure we are helped as we keep Paul before us. The heavenly light came in through him. He was the vessel that the Lord used and the light shone round about him. The glory of that light has been shining round about us in the whole dispensation. How Paul grew in the appreciation of it, so that in the end it was a

light that was brighter than the midday sun - no clouds on the horizon.

A.B. What you say as to the woman is very interesting.

E.C.M. "He who has built all things is God", and the first building recorded speaks of the most wonderful of all the building - the assembly.

A.B. It is material out of the man, is it not?

E.C.M. Yes. He took the rib and built the woman.

J.A.G. Matthew 16 would confirm that, would it not?

E.C.M. Yes. We need to be established and to encourage one another to get something into our souls that is not going to be shaken. Everything is going to be shaken finally but we have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken. The enemy is always active to divert us from getting through to what is heavenly.

J.M. In Genesis 2, it says that God "caused a deep sleep to fall upon Man" and it also says "and he slept". I wondered if that was some allusion to the Lord Jesus in the perfection of His manhood in obedience.

E.C.M. I think that would be right. It is good to think of the glory of His manhood and that there is one suited to Him. As Adam viewed the creation there was nothing that answered to his affections; but then he says "This time".

J.M. The moral question does not enter into that allusion, does it?

E.C.M. No; that is before the moral question was raised. I think that supports what you say as to the manhood of Christ and the purpose of God, that there should be one suited to share in His headship. What a moment it was when Jehovah brought the woman to the man to see what he would say! He had named all the creatures but now he names the woman. The Lord says, in Matthew 16, "On this rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it". That is encouraging for us.

P.B. Does it strengthen the thought of the immutability of the calling?

E.C.M. Immutable: that is a good word to use. "On this rock". It cannot be shaken. I think we should get into this area because there is so much that disturbs. It is to establish us and keep us stable.

A.M. Peter saw the sheet coming down out of heaven and was told "Rise, Peter, slay and eat", Acts 10: 14. Do we have to appropriate the fact that the assembly is heavenly in origin, character and destiny?

E.C.M. That is very fine. The sheet came down. It is what has come out of heaven that is going into heaven. Peter hesitated about it but the word is "slay and eat" - appropriate what God has cleansed. God has had to do with each one of us - a most wonderful thing - and has given to each a measure of faith.

A.C. You draw attention to the fact that we have to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus". Do you think that we need, individually and collectively, to consider more the Person of Jesus to get what is in His mind for the moment?

E.C.M. Yes; we sit down like this and read the Scriptures, but then what would the Spirit bring in? We need to make room for what God would say to us.

A.C. I was thinking of the reference already made to the voice out of heaven to Saul of Tarsus: "I am Jesus".

E.C.M. Yes; "whom *thou* persecutest". Jesus was in heaven but He was here in the saints - a very wonderful thing!

D.D. In Numbers 15 the people were to have tassels of blue on the corners of their garments, and that is presented in the presence of unbelief and departure "that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of Jehovah" (v 39).

E.C.M. Yes, the saints are heavenly and that is the way the apostle is looking at them - as sanctified. They are a heavenly company. We do not need to be afraid of the word 'heavenly'; it is a

characteristic word in Christianity. The saints are heavenly, the assembly is heavenly; the origin of the assembly is in heaven.

A.J.G. The heavenly ones are like the heavenly One, are they not?

E.C.M. Exactly; you are referring to 1 Corinthians 15: "the second man, out of heaven" (v.47). There is only one heavenly One, but such also are the heavenly ones. I think that links with our brother's reference to Numbers 15.

J.A.G. Would "bringing many sons to glory" (Heb 2: 10) bear on the heavenly calling? Perhaps you would help us as to what you understand by the heavenly calling.

E.C.M. I think what you remark means that the calling is sonship, God is bringing many sons to glory and that links with what is heavenly.

J.A.G. The reference to the house and the rest in chapter 3 all bears upon it. Is that the ultimate in sonship - the house and the rest of God, then the Son over the house as ordering all things for God's pleasure?

E.C.M. That is very helpful, and I think links with John's gospel. The Lord says "the bondman abides not in the house", chap 8: 35. It is the Son who abides in the house. It really is a link with what is eternal.

E.M. It says of Mary that "having sat down at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word", Luke 10: 39. Then, at the beginning of chapter 11, the disciples say "teach us to pray". Does that link with this idea of the Apostle and High Priest?

E.C.M. Yes, that is right. I think we should get the idea of the house. It is not a material house; it involves the work of God in the saints and that cannot be shaken. There is something going through. It is a spiritual house. We need to get away from what is material in our thinking and learn to think spiritually. Peter helps us there; he speaks of a spiritual house and spiritual sacrifices. We do not want to be afraid of that word 'spiritual'. Everything that is material is going to be shaken and what is spiritual will remain. The

One who built the house is worthy of greater glory. It is very beautiful to think of that.

R.B. Help us as to the greater glory.

E.C.M. Again, it is a link with the Person; the One who built all things is God. The priesthood is built up on the truth of the Lord's Person.

A.McK. You referred to the Hebrew saints slipping. Was it in relation to the truth of the Lord's Person? That seems to be the crux of it; they had accepted it but had been distracted by something else. Is he bringing in a system here that takes character from the One who built it?

E.C.M. I am sure we need to get through to the Person. Someone said recently that Christianity is a Person. Do you think that?

A.McK. Yes, related to where He is.

E.C.M. Yes, exactly. We could have no link with Him where He was here in flesh and blood. Our link with Him is as He is now in glory. It is a wonderful link, is it not? We have a link with that glorious Person where He is. He is the centre of the whole divine system.

P.B. Is that John's gospel, the backbone of Scripture, the truth related to the Person of Christ?

E.C.M. I think so, and that is what is going to hold the affections of the saints. I do not think mere doctrine itself is going to hold the saints. What do you think?

J.A.G. It is called salvation in this epistle. While it is the kingdom, it is Christ in the heart, is it not?

E.C.M. That is right, and we have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken - a very wonderful thing.

A.B. And He is faithful.

E.C.M. Yes, that is why, I thought, in chapter 11 all those men died in faith, all had light as to the world to come, even from Abel onwards. We have had much light but is our testimony in keeping

with our calling? That is what comes out in chapter 11: they confessed that they were sojourners and strangers on the earth. That bears on our testimony. What kind of persons are we in our localities, where we work? Are we in keeping with our heavenly calling in the way we live?

A.B. We have before us in chapter 3 the Person who never deflected.

E.C.M. That is very wonderful; He never deflected. We have humbly to say that we have deflected; but then we are to be brought up to the standard and I think that is what the apostle is labouring for in keeping the Person before us. After all, what is going to hold us? "Looking steadfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith: who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame", Heb 12: 2.

A.McK. It says of the promises that they embraced them. Is that an affectionate idea?

E.C.M. I think it is, but they waited for the fulfilment of them, which was in Christ Him self. "Whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him is the amen", 2 Cor 1: 20. He is the fulfilment of every promise. They embraced them. Well, have we really embraced the truth of the assembly?

A.McK. I was reading last night that the mind, that is the controlled mind, is the eye of the heart. It is one thing to have it in an intellectual way, but a mind that really has Christ as its focus is a different thing, is it not?

E.C.M. Yes, it involves the affections. We must keep that before us. There is something in the fact that the Son built the house. Solomon was a man of affection; his father loved him, his mother loved him and he was a man of rest, too. He is the one who built the house. He who built all things is God. Well, is our testimony in keeping with our calling? That is why I thought we should consider Abraham. He is a sojourner and a stranger here in his testimony. We should reflect in our testimony that we are heavenly. I think that Paul did.

A.B. It says, "they showed clearly". It is not only what is said but what is shown in our manner of life, do you think?

E.C.M. Yes, and that is linked with their confession. You confess in your manner of life. Paul says to Timothy, Thou hast fully known my doctrine and manner of life (see 2 Tim 3: 10, A.V.). Is our manner of life in keeping with the truth of our calling?

J.A.G. The doctrine is to be adorned, expressed livingly in persons. It is commended in the persons who are consciously linked up with the Apostle and High Priest.

E.C.M. I think that is the truth; you have put it in a very attractive way. The setting is adorned as we are in keeping with the calling.

T.M. It says of Peter and John that "they recognised them that they were with Jesus", Acts 4: 13. The footnote says, 'companions of Christ'. They were showing clearly.

E.C.M. That is a good reference. Peter says, "Look on us". What attractive men they were! It is not that Peter was drawing attention to himself but there was something to be seen in Peter and John that was the confession really. It is linked with the testimony. The setting is adorned. I thought we would come to that finally as to what we have come to. If we have come to anything, we have come to a heavenly city, the city of the living God - very wonderful.

A.C. Does that show that these persons were near to the Lord Jesus, so much so that it was what was of Himself that was seen in them? It was shining from them.

E.C.M. Yes, I think so. We need to keep near to the Person. John was in the bosom of Jesus, leaning on His breast. What a man John was! Even Peter could not ask the question: he recognised that John was nearer to the Lord. I would like to know more about what it is to be really near to the Lord. We get all our questions solved there. There are a lot of unsolved things. We have to pass through many exercises, but our salvation is in keeping near the Person.

A.B. Does it form the character of the saints as heavenly?

E.C.M. Yes, it does. It is not only that the assembly is heavenly in origin but it is the character of the heavenly Man.

A.B. Such also the heavenly ones.

E.C.M. That is right. It is a beautiful scripture. I had not thought about it but it appeals to me very much. I do think that we should consider what Mr Darby said, that if we are settling down on the earth in associations and the like, God would be ashamed of us. He said, God was not ashamed of a man like Abraham. God says "I know him", Gen 18: 19. "If any one love God, he is known of him", 1 Cor 8: 3.

J.M. It says here in Hebrews 11 concerning Abraham, that he dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob. I have thought sometimes that I would have put it the other way - that Isaac and Jacob dwelt with Abraham, but here it says that Abraham dwelt in tents with the succeeding generation.

E.C.M. Yes, I like what you say. God has generations and the continuance of the testimony in mind. What an influence Abraham would be as he went into the tent of Jacob!

J.M. Abraham would be a heavenly influence in relation to the succeeding generations.

E.C.M. Yes; and that raises the question with those of us who are older as to what influence we have on our young people. We like to put the blame on young people. I remember it being said that it is the old men who are the difficulty and that is why the Lord said in John 21 "Shepherd my sheep" (v 16); look after the sheep and the lambs will not be very far away.

J.A.G. "Ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers", 1 Cor 4: 15. Abraham shines in fatherly influence.

E.C.M. That supports what was said; the old and young are to go on together.

J.A.G. We can lay down the law and say what should and should not be done, and possibly it would be true, but then the skill of priestliness and fatherhood would gather young ones, would it not?

E.C.M. Yes. Paul says to the Corinthians that they came behind in no gift - many instructors but not many fathers. I think there is a need today to develop in the features of fatherhood. You see it coming out later in Jacob. He says to his sons "listen to Israel your father", Gen 49: 2. What an influence as having been affected by the influence of Abraham!

J.A.G. He says "Gather yourselves together ... ye sons of Jacob"; then he says "listen to Israel your father". He had arrived at that himself.

E.C.M. Yes, it is a question of experience. We may have a lot of knowledge arid, as I said, we have had wonderful light, but we have been greatly affected, not only by ministry but by the spirit of the servant himself. It comes back to what influence we have in our localities.

A.B. So it is a question of what we seek: "they seek a better".

E.C.M. They seek the heavenly and when you become a citizen you have all the advantages and privileges.

A.J.G. You have the responsibility, too. Do we need to be responsible persons?

E.C.M. Yes. There is a great responsibility on the older brothers and sisters as to what kind of influence we have for the preservation of our young people. We perhaps put a lot on our young people but we have to face up to our own responsibilities. I think that was what Paul was doing in Corinth: they were not really facing their responsibilities.

A.B. In chapter 2 "he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (v 11). "Those sanctified are all of one". Is this the answer to it practically in that God is not ashamed of them?

E.C.M. I think that is beautiful. He is not ashamed of Abraham; he is said to be a friend of God.

E.M. I wondered if the truth of justification would bear on this. We are justified in view of another world, are we not?

E.C.M. Yes, that is good; we are justified in a glorious and risen Man. If Christ were not risen we could not be justified. It is another world and Christ is the centre of the whole universe. God has a Man, the Heavenly One, who is finally to be the centre of everything. He is the centre now, for "the Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35.

P.B. It says "if they had called to mind that from whence they went out", but they did not call that to mind. Is it the fulness and sincerity of committal, do you think? I have often thought of Mr Darby's hymn: "We have nought to regret nor to lose' (No.139).

E.C.M. Yes, it comes out in Abraham; he came in for everything. As citizens of that better country we come in for everything.

G.McC. I was thinking, further to what was quoted - "they had had opportunity to have returned". What marked these persons was reality. When we were younger what we looked for in those that were older was reality.

E.C.M. That is good. It is wonderful to find a person in whom there is no guile. God saw something in Nathaniel, and he put the Son of God before the King of Israel. The Lord says "thou shalt see greater things than these", John 1: 50. I think the greater things are the heavenly things.

T.M. Ruth had an opportunity to return; she says "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God", Ruth 1: 16.

E.C.M. I think that links with the reference to committal. We need to be fully committed to the Spirit today. In Genesis 24 Rebecca says, I will go with this man. "Where thou diest will I die" is full committal.

P.B. Are we to be helped to appreciate what is of real value?

D.D. The Lord says "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven", Matt 6: 20. The saints are to have an investment there.

E.C.M. That is very good; "where thy treasure is, there will be also thy heart". It brings up again the question of the affections. Where

are our affections today? Paul says "have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth", Col 3: 2.

P.B. It says that "he has prepared for them a city"; is that what we want to come to?

E.C.M. Yes, it is what we have come to. I would gather that Paul wrote the epistle from what is said at the end: "our brother Timothy is set at liberty", chap 13: 23.

J.A.G. We were speaking about it on Thursday night. In chapter 2 it alludes to things spoken by angels - as though Paul was not there; then he speaks of what was confirmed to us by those who have heard. Peter was also quoted as referring to things which our beloved brother Paul has written.

E.C.M. That is a lovely touch because Paul had been very faithful with Peter and yet the brotherly covenant was there; it was not weakened. We do not want to weaken our brotherly relations with one another. We may have to speak faithfully at times but the brotherly covenant will stand it. Our beloved brother Paul speaks things "hard to be understood", 2 Pet 3: 16.

J.A.G. They are at the level of the heavenly calling, do you think?

E.C.M. That is exactly right. Well, we have come to them by faith and by the Spirit. We have come to mount Zion. It reminds us of Psalm 78. When everything looked black, when He gave His strength into captivity and rejected the tent of Joseph, He "chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved" (v 68). It says "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob", Ps 87: 2.

D.D. Is it the purpose of God that is alluded to?

E.C.M. God resorted to His sovereignty when things were so dark. He rejected the tent of Joseph. God will never again place His glory in the hands of man's responsibility, where it all broke down. But He chose mount Zion, "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth", Ps 48: 2. Where else other than here will you find such beauty in elevation?

A.McK. Does it find its expression in God's rights in mercy? He has taken persons up so that they should be in the full gain of this administration.

E.C.M. Do you think that its administration is one feature of the city? You can walk about Zion; you cannot walk about in some of the cities today. We have to face all the corruption in the cities around us today: but there is a city which is the city of the living God.

A.B. It is worth telling to the following generation.

E.C.M. Well, that comes back to our responsibility as older brothers in our localities. If we lose one brother or sister it is no credit to any local assembly. I think we should do all we can and seek to have a heavenly influence on our young people, make things attractive to them.

J.M. After all these things, he says "and to Jesus". In the end of Revelation, after all the testing and divine workings in relation to men, what comes on to view is "I Jesus".

E.C.M. The reference to the blood of Jesus would stir the affections of the saints. It speaks of better things than Abel. So all the way along there are better things.

P.B. Do you think that when Peter, in his second epistle, brings in the holy mountain and goes on to speak of the prophetic word being made surer he has in mind that what shone on the holy mountain makes all prophecy surer and is to strengthen us as to what is being made surer in our souls, centring in Christ glorified?

E.C.M. Yes, it is good to get into this stable and sure order of things. Paul speaks in Timothy of being preserved for His heavenly kingdom. Our kingdom is a heavenly kingdom.

P.B. Speaking of that which cannot be shaken.

E.C.M. We have received a kingdom. It is very wonderful. It is the work of God in the saints that cannot be shaken.

J.A.G. He is speaking of the brethren as the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven. It is a very dignified idea. The levitical idea is there, and is sonship in mind?

E.C.M. Yes, I think so. It is a very dignified family.

J.A.G. That is what they were to rejoice in that their names were written in heaven.

E.C.M. Every one in that assembly is a firstborn.

P.B. Have you anything to say about being registered in heaven?

E.C.M. Well, that confirms what was said about Luke: "rejoice that your names are written ... in the heavens", chap 10: 20. We used to be told that if your name is there you have a seat there; that is sure.

J.M. Did not the assembly of the firstborn have its origin in Exodus 12 when, under the blood of the passover Lamb, the firstborn was sheltered? And does that go right through?

E.C.M. Yes, God claims the firstborn. Think of the family of firstborn ones, what we have come to in the assembly. There is no other family like what we have come to in the assembly.

A.McK. It involves the double portion, does it not?

E.C.M. It says in Ezekiel that Joseph is to have a double portion. I think it suggests the levitical family. They are all firstborn ones.

A.McK. So for us is it persons who are indwelt by the Spirit and are consciously motivated by the Spirit?

E.C.M. Yes. I like that expression, 'consciously motivated by the Spirit'. One brother said he could go up to any man and say, God's purpose for you is sonship. It makes the gospel very wonderful because God has nothing less in mind for every man than sonship.

A.McK. Is sonship in view of service? It says here that we are to serve God acceptably (v 28).

E.C.M. Yes, and to serve God with reverence and fear. There may be a need for more reverence amongst us.

A.B. Would you say something about the spirits of just men made perfect.

E.C.M. I do not know much about that, but think of the spirit of a man like Abraham made perfect. I think it must involve resurrection. It has been said that there is nothing for the pleasure of God outside the resurrection sphere. I think that is true. "Spirits of just men made perfect": sometimes we get a little afraid of the word 'perfect' but I think we should keep it before us.

A.B. Does it involve formation in such persons - in just men?

E.C.M. Well; think of these men. What wonderful men they were, but look at their spirits. We are all tested as to our spirits. Think of the spirit of Stephen; he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit", Acts 7: 59.

T.M. Was it Stephen's spirit that affected Saul - the spirit of a just man?

E.C.M. I agree with that. "If any one has not the Spirit of Christ he is not of him", Rom. 8: 9.

J.M. Does our formation rest in our love? "God is love".

E.C.M. Yes, I think our formation comes about by appropriating Christ by the Spirit. Formation and deliverance go together.

J.M. Paul makes much of love in 1 Corinthians 13. Even if I give my body to be burned and am defective in love I am nothing. It is a very challenging chapter.

E.C.M. It is. I think that formation goes on with us through all the disciplinary ways of God. We are to be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live. It has in mind formation after Christ. One of the verses in Galatians that tests me is what Paul says: "Christ lives in me", chap 2: 20. That is the result in formation, Christ living in the saints.

A.C. It says "consider him", Heb 12: 3. Do you think that we would be formed more as we consider the life of Jesus, what there was for God in it? Would it also involve in us feelings like His own feelings?

E.C.M. I think it does involve feelings. I have to ask what formation is there in me? But think of that statement, "Christ lives in me". I think Saul saw something in Stephen. Christ was really living in Stephen and that is the testimony, do you think?

J.A.G. Christ is the testimony.

E.C.M. Yes. When He was here He was the testimony, but now it is Christ in the saints.

J.A.G. "Why persecutest thou me?", the Lord says to Saul of Tarsus, Acts 26: 14.

E.C.M. Yes, that is, that the testimony is Christ in the saints.

A.M. I wondered if you had anything more to say as to being reverent.

E.C.M. Well, there is a need of that amongst us. Two things which should be characteristic of us in the presence of God are that we should be reverent and worshipful.

A.B. It says, "to God, judge of all". Would that promote these features? Sometimes we tend to forget when we are in assembly that we are in the presence of One who is God Himself in the Spirit.

E.C.M. Yes, that is exactly it. We are to serve God with reverence and godly fear. To serve God is the great ultimate. I think Mr Darby says that it is the sons who serve but where they serve is in the sanctuary and how they serve is as priests. That involves our state.

J.A.G. The footnote to 'reverence' goes back to chapter 5. It says of the Lord that He was heard on account of His piety - or in that He feared (v 7).

E.C.M. God has set apart the pious man for Himself. We should develop a little more the feature of piety.

PETERHEAD

11 March 1989

Key to initials

A.Buchan, Peterhead; P.Buchan, Peterhead; A.Buchan, Peterhead;
A.Cummings, Macduff; D.Duthie, Aberdeen; J.A.Gardiner, Aberdeen;
A.J.Gaskin, Aberdeen; A.Mair, Cullen; A.Mckay, Brechin;
E.Mair, Buckie; G.McCrone, Brechin; J.Mair, Cullen; T.Mair, Cullen

THE MORAL GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS

James Mather

John 17: 5; John 6: 68,69; Acts 2: 36

We were considering on Lord's day, in a general way, the glory of the Lord Jesus. I would like to speak now about His moral glory.

First, to put it in its proper setting, it might be well to cover what has been taught previously: that the glory of the Lord Jesus may be distinguished in three settings. There is His personal glory as implied in the verse read from John 17; there is His moral glory which we can discuss from the verses in John 6; there is His official glory as seen in Acts 2.

The Lord's personal glory is the glory He has because of who He is. That is what comes into this verse in John 17 where He, as in manhood, is asking the Father to glorify Him along with Himself with the glory which He had along with Him before the world was. It is an amazing thing that, as in manhood, He should ask for that. It is the glory that appertains to Deity which was innately and eternally and intrinsically His. Yet He left the circumstances of Deity where it was His only and ever to command and came into circumstances of flesh and blood where it was His to obey. That does not alter the truth of who was here. God was here - amazing truth! The Man who was here was God. 'Never ceasing to be who He was by reason of what He became' are well known words, beloved, but it does our souls good, I believe, to ponder them. How often we have spoken of them in the preaching of the gospel - the Person who was here - veiling that glory because man could not bear it, it was so great. His personal glory was so great that only on relatively few occasions was the veil drawn aside for a moment of time. Remember when He was about to be taken He said: "I am" (John 18: 6) and they went away backward and fell to the ground. At that time of His deepest humiliation, when He was submitting Himself to man and, indeed, to what the devil could do to Him, just for a moment the Spirit of God in the record moves the veil aside and lets

us see the intrinsic glory of the One who was going to die to take away sin. He was not captured, beloved, He gave Himself up.

His moral glory was not so much who was here but, I think, it was what was here in Jesus, how He did things. We read that passage in John 6. It might seem an unusual one to illustrate the moral glory of our Lord Jesus but it is extremely interesting. Peter, when questioned, answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal; and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God". It seems evident to me that the twelve, attendants on the Word, sympathetic hearers, sympathetic viewers of what Jesus said and did, must have spoken with one another about these things. Peter and John must have spoken together and worked out in their own souls the impact of what was happening in their midst. There never was a moment in the annals of human history like the time when Jesus was here. There never has been a time like that absolutely stupendous time when the Son of God was here. There were a few - at least eleven of those twelve men - who allowed the impact of Jesus and the way He did things to affect their souls, so that Peter (not John) speaking for them all comes to this conclusion - for that is what it is: "we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God". This is not a revelation as in Matthew; this is what they had come to themselves by watching Jesus.

Now, as I have said, the moral glory of the Lord Jesus has to do with what He did and how He did it. He did the same things that other people did. He was baptised, for example, and other people were baptised at the same time, but you remember that in Luke's gospel it says: "all the people having been baptised, and Jesus having been baptised and praying", chap 3: 21. There was the difference. The moral glory of the Lord Jesus shone out at that moment: not who He was exactly, but what He was. He was there for the pleasure of the Father. It all culminates in the garden, where He says "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee: take away this cup from me; but not what I will, but what thou wilt" Mark 14: 36.

What a prayer! There has never been a prayer like that one: the moral glory of the Lord Jesus, not only what He did but how He did it.

That moral glory of Jesus extended towards man also, to His saints. You recall the occasion when He washed His disciples' feet. Their feet would have been washed many times, as was the custom in the East, usually by a servant or slave, more rarely by the householder maybe, but think of the glory as it says: "Jesus ... rises from supper and lays aside his garments, and having taken a linen towel he girded himself: then he pours water into the wash-hand basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the linen towel with which he was girded", John 13: 4,5. They had never had their feet washed like that; they had never had their feet dried like that. In a way I can understand Peter, although he was wrong, saying: "Thou shalt never wash my feet". That testimony of Peter's gives us some realisation of the impact of the moral glory of the Lord Jesus on Peter's soul. He had to learn, of course, and have not we all as we have experienced the personal service of Christ? Although He is not now in the circumstances in which He then was, He has His own way of doing things, not by virtue of His Person, nor by virtue of His office, but just by *what* He is - as the word says: "full of grace and truth", John 1: 14. How fine to experience that! There is no one like Jesus. I am not now talking of His capabilities in His many offices, but just of the kind of Person He is and how He does things. "Full of grace and truth": Peter had seen that, and allowing it to affect his soul he says: "thou art the holy one of God", and "to whom shall we go?" Jesus was indispensable to Peter, and to them all.

Now there is a further glory, spoken of in the Acts - His official glory. "Both Lord and Christ" is His present position but it does us good to dig a little deeper. He was Lord when He was here, and He was Christ when He was here, although not officially so. When the woman in John 4 commented on the Christ, He said: "I who speak to thee am he" (v 26). Then there is the Man of John 9. He was both of these things while He was here, in all the essential substance that these titles imply, but He was not them officially and publicly. When

He went to heaven He was glorified officially and installed in these offices but His moral glory underlies that. With God you never find an official office without the Person being morally qualified to fill the office, although you often find that among men. These things have been given to the Lord Jesus officially. It is good to dwell on that for a moment: the moral background that there was to the present position that Jesus occupies as Lord and Christ. He is first in the universe - both Lord and Christ. Not two persons as Moses and Aaron but one Man has been found able and chosen of God to fill this dual office, which He now fills so fully and so feelingly. These things are very precious as they apply to the Lord Jesus and I would like to comment on their application to ourselves.

As to the first glory, we have no personal glory. We would all understand that we had no pre-incarnate existence and no life before we were born. There is nothing that is personally glorious about us. We recognise the One who is unique and we worship Him.

When it comes to moral glory, the saints have moral glory and as to official glory we shall have that - bodies of glory like His own. Have we ever considered our right to those bodies of glory? There will be a moral basis for it. When first you put your faith in the blood of Christ you entered on a new moral pathway, the end of which would be that you, and I and each one of us, would have a body of glory like Christ's. That is where it began for us. It was on a moral line; we were justified through faith in His blood, going on until finally we share with Him, with bodies like His own. The present time by the Spirit is when moral glory is being wrought out in us. We have no personal glory and it is not the time for our official glory; it is the time for moral glory and this is taken on, I believe, largely through suffering and certainly through exercise and desire.

What moral glory there is when a soul kneels down at the bedside to pray! I would encourage the young people especially, to find the time and privacy to pray yourself - to kneel down and pray. There is great moral glory in that action. It is one of the moral glories that was seen in Jesus which had such an impact on the disciples that when He rose up from prayer one of them said: "Lord,

teach us to pray", Luke 11: 1. Oh, the impact of the life and actions of Jesus, beloved, how He did things! The Spirit brings these things to us now so that moral glories might be developed in us.

May we enjoy these things as they were seen in Jesus! Men did enjoy them, I know some hated Him but, oh, there have been many, many more who enjoyed Jesus. Moses longed to see Jesus when he said: "Let me ... see thy glory", Exod 33: 18. What he really wanted to see was Jesus and he was not allowed to, at that time, except in type. But there have been men, women and children, who were deeply indebted to Jesus, who enjoyed Him, enjoying what He did and especially how he did it. May we belong to that company, beloved!

DUNDEE

4 July 1989

LINES FROM AN AGED SISTER

This corner of the roof
Is heaven on earth to me:
'Tis here the Spirit gives me proof
I soon the Lord shall see.
That blessed One above
Becomes more dear each day;
And all the time at B---'s house
I'm travelling, on the way.
The time cannot be long
And journeying days will cease:
Till then His love will be enough –
Sufficient now - "My peace."

*These lines were dictated to me by Mrs Evernden of Tunbridge Wells
when she was 98: she is now with Christ aged 102.*

THE CHILDREN'S SAFETY

It is especially sad when we hear from time to time of children and young people being harmed in 'accidents'. We can, however, rest assured that God in His wisdom allows these things to happen and there is always something for us to learn in them. He has many agents in the protection of life; for instance many persons have been saved from harm at sea by lighthouses, and by lifeboat-men who risk their own lives to save those of others. These do not announce that they have a very nice lifeboat which please consider at your leisure! They would urge you to jump in as quickly as possible. How like the "glad tidings of the glory of the blessed God". Once in the safety of the gospel, believers can indeed look around and see how every soul need has been provided for.

In the blessing of Benjamin by Moses it is said "The beloved of the Lord, he shall dwell in safety by him" An unbeliever once asked how this could be reconciled with Jacob's blessing which says "Benjamin - as a wolf will he tear to pieces ... the prey". The quick answer was that Saul of Tarsus of that very tribe of Benjamin had, when unconverted, ravaged the Lord's people. After his conversion, however, they were able to dwell in safety by him. We too may be kept in the testimony of our Lord and the enjoyment of life eternal by keeping close to the ministry of Paul.

To confess the name of the Lord Jesus is a means of protection for believers, be it at school, at business and in the ordinary course of home life. The wisest of men said that the name of the Lord is "a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it and is safe". How different this is from the first tower mentioned in the Bible which only led to the severe judgment of God and the confusion of tongues. Even so the Bible in every language has, I believe, the word "Abba", meaning in our language "Father". Do you know God as Father?

J.C.Evershed