

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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CONTENTS

[DISCRIMINATION](#)

[ACCUMULATION IN VIEW OF SERVING GOD](#)

[SHELTERED CHILDREN](#)

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DISCRIMINATION

Leviticus 11: 1-3; Job 34: 1-4, 16 -21; Philippians 1: 9-11

A.P.D. I was thinking of the need for discrimination. In Leviticus 11 it is a matter of our walk, in Job our hearing; then we get what is refined, what is superlative, in Philippians: "that ye may judge of and approve the things that are more excellent". I trust the brethren will be free. In coming to meetings like these, the Lord might give you an inkling and then you wait on the Spirit in the temple: it is wonderful to experience the truth of the temple. So we do not have everything in a mould to begin with; the Lord would lead us as to what He may have in His mind.

L.McF. Would what you have said have full growth in mind – a full grown man?

A.P.D. Very good: "who, on account of habit", it says, Heb 5: 14. It is to discriminate between good and evil, is it not?

C.F.D. Does this first section you were referring to involve in our walk who and what we are appropriating?

A.P.D. Yes, a cloven hoof would leave a certain imprint. I wonder what kind of an imprint we leave in our walk. Peter speaks about the Lord and our following in His steps, He being a model (see 1 Pet 2: 21). It would not be a matter of generally following but of picking out his steps. We should read the gospels to follow by the Spirit His distinctive steps.

G.H. It speaks in that verse about having your senses exercised. Would that be involved in discrimination?

A.P.D. Yes, I think that is a good scripture: "on account of habit". What are our habits? It has been said that piety is the habit of the soul to refer to God in everything.

J.A.P. In Leviticus there was a serious break down in the priesthood. Would that lead us to conclude the importance of what the Spirit says in chapter 11 which you read – that had that been attended to the breakdown might not have happened?

A.P.D. Yes, I think that Aaron would have probably had the same access that Moses had if it had not been for that breakdown.

A.C.C. We used to hear a good deal about the line of demarcation. What we eat would bear on that, that there might be discrimination and distinctiveness between what is around and ourselves, do you think?

A.P.D. It is what we appropriate, as our brother said. I think chewing the cud involves assimilation of the truth so that you practice the truth. Mr Hibbert used to tell us when we were young that if you want to know the truth you do not memorise it, you practice it. The best way to know the truth is to practice it. So you leave a certain imprint as you walk; it would be of the nature of what is heavenly, I think. He being a model for us, we are to follow in His steps; that would be the heavenly Man coming into expression.

W.W. It says of Noah that he walked with God (see Gen 6: 9); would that help us in our walk in the scene of testimony?

A.P.D. Yes, what company! He walked with God and God took him. Enoch had the testimony that before he was translated he pleased God (see Heb 11: 5). Would you not want this testimony? Surely we would desire such a testimony. I think that the translation is just imminent, beloved brethren. Do we have that testimony? Are all the sisters and the young people here concerned to have a testimony that they please God? That is a distinctive imprint the cloven hoof would give.

C.F.D. In the Song of Songs the masculine speaker says to the feminine, "How beautiful are thy footsteps in sandals, O prince's daughter!", chap 7: 1. I think that would point to the footsteps of Christ.

A.P.D. Yes. I am sure all the brethren would be concerned to be a model. Christ is the supreme model. I think we learn best by example, seeing the truth in others, seeing it practised.

L.McF. So Daniel, although a young man, purposed in his heart that he would not pollute himself with the king's delicate food (see Dan 1:

8).

A.P.D. We need to make resolves, do we not? It says about some in Judges that there were great deliberations of heart (see chap 5: 5) but it does not seem they had any power to carry them through. We need therefore the Spirit; we are to walk by the Spirit.

A.S.H. As to the feet, I was thinking of the scripture in Isaiah where it says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that announceth glad tidings, that publisheth peace", chap 52: 7. Would that fit in with your thought?

A.P.D. Yes. How beautiful the feet of Jesus were! In Luke 7 He brought glad tidings to that poor woman; she anointed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. So are the feet of those that announce the glad tidings. It seems to me that the general teaching of this chapter would involve our walk in everyday life and our being discriminative as to whom we may appropriate, keep company with.

That is a real exercise. We are affected by those with whom we keep company; I am sure of that. It would be for the younger brethren to keep close to the older brethren, keep company with them. Where do our feet take us?

G.H. Maybe you could say something more as to having our senses exercised.

A.P.D. It brings out what is discriminative. We do not class everything as good, we do not say things are harmless when they are harmful. When we are in the presence of God we see things as He sees them. This chapter ends with that: "For I am Jehovah who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy".

A.C.C. Would you say more about the imprint. I was thinking about Mary of Magdala in Mark 16; it says "*She* went" (v.10); the 'she' is emphatic. And then "*they* went and brought word to the rest" (v.13). Is there a depth of imprint, a certain emphatic character there?

A.P.D. Yes, there would not be anything indistinct about her. testimony, about what she was. What do people think of you when

you are in your work? Do they realise that you are a Christian and that you love the Lord Jesus? There is something different about you, you have left an imprint wherever you go that you belong to another Man. You go out in the morning with the knowledge in your heart that you belong to the Man at God's right hand. That does not leave you all day. That would leave an imprint, an impression. You do not take colour from the men and women you may have to associate with; you do not want to appropriate them, because we become like those with whom we keep company, with whom we may socialise. This raises a great exercise as to the truth of separation. But then I think something positive is to come out in our walk. As has just been said, how deliberate, how emphatic would be the testimony of Mary. Is it so with us or are we just wishy-washy Christians?

K.N.P. The Lord says, "whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in the heavens", Matt. 12: 50. Is that the mark that the imprint makes? It is from another place, an order of things not linked with what is down here.

A.P.D. And it would leave an impression of what is characteristically heavenly. You may say that is reading more into this chapter than is there, but I think we would be entitled to bring that into it – follow in His steps. He is the great model for us and you pick out His steps, pick them out one after another, the deliberate way in which He was in the will of God and brought what was heavenly into expression here.

G.D.P. As to younger brethren being with the saints, was that not the burden of Moses, that they would go out with their young and their old (see Exod 10: 9)?

A.P.D. Yes. That is where we learn what Christ is like. I remember as a boy a beloved brother in Toronto, Mr Ernest Pittman, who set out to me features of Christ. I remember that distinctly.

T.E.D. Tell us about the fact that some of these animals have a cloven hoof but they do not chew the cud.

A.P.D. It is Pharisaical. What do you say?

T.E.D. I was thinking of the need not only for the distinction in our walk but the need for going over things privately.

A.P.D. I am sure of that – the assimilation of the truth. Someone said "Alas, master, and it was borrowed! ", 2 Kings 6: 5. We need to assimilate the truth and make it our own so that we practise the truth. We need, dear brethren, to practise the truth, not hold it as a theory.

S.E.H. Is Cornelius a good example of this? The vision that came to Peter was that what God had cleansed do not thou make common (Acts 10: 15) and Peter says, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him" (v 35). He had become a clean animal in that sense, He feared God and worked righteousness.

A.P.D. Those are fine characteristics, are they not? What is to come out in the life of a believer is that we fear God and work righteousness.

J.A.P. Is that not an important matter that we have all had to learn? We used to think that everybody who was not in our fellowship was unclean, but God has a great work which we must respect, although the matter of separation seems to be the test as to fellowship. But we must respect God's work.

A.P.D. Peter had to have his vision enlarged.

G.H. It says of Cornelius that he feared God with all his house. He must have had a wonderful influence over his household.

A.P.D. A remarkable man, Cornelius! Why did God take up Cornelius to bring the Gentiles into the truth? He would not be offensive to the Jew. He was a pious man and he had a memorial in heaven, as if God made it easy for the Jews to accept him. He could have taken up a Gentile in whom the flesh had been manifested in a flagrant sense, but He considered for His people in the kind of a man that He took up to bring the Gentiles into the truth.

C.F.D. The work in that man preceded anything in him in regard to what was apostolic. An independent work of the Spirit was in the man, and that really came out in his prayers and in his alms. The

Jew would understand prayers and alms giving, making Cornelius, as you have mentioned, more acceptable.

A.P.D. Exactly. God even considers for our prejudices. You say, We should not have any. God in His goodness introduced such a man in view of making the whole matter of the work among the Gentiles more acceptable. Now to go on to Job. Elihu is a remarkable young man. He says, "Hear my words, ye wise men; and give ear unto me"; then he says, "For the ear trieth words, as the palate tasteth food". It is interesting that this simile should be used.

We need to have discrimination as to what is ministered. If you think of these three friends of Job a lot of things they said were good, but the spirit of truth was not in them.

W.W. Is that the Berean spirit? They searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so and they received the word with all readiness of mind (see Acts 17: 11).

A.P.D. Yes. Sometimes there is ministry and there is no salt in it. The palate tasteth the food and it is savourless: salt brings out the savour. Such ministry would not exercise us but is just a lovely picture on the wall without producing any exercise. The Lord Himself speaks about salt.

J.A.P. We have to sort out the scripture of truth in the book of Job. In reading the Bible we need to get the scripture of truth. Does that help?

A.P.D. I think that is good. Eliphaz speaks of his experience; he had a vision (see chap. 4: 13). Bildad speaks of tradition, and Zophar what can be known scientifically. But God says to them "ye have not rightly spoken of me", chap 42: 7. Ministry entitled 'The Second Established' (see Vol. 51) greatly helps to open up this remarkable book: I suppose the beloved brethren read Mr Taylor's ministry constantly.

C.F.D. Why should we read Mr Taylor constantly?

A.P.D. I think that is the test at the present time. What you find is that the spirit of truth is in that ministry.

C.F.D. Do you think it involves that the ministry is not only cumulative but that it becomes magnified as we realise that the Spirit of God has carried on from what has been given earlier by the Spirit. Do we get final touches of all those ministries in those volumes?

A.P.D. I seek to read those ministries in the light of Mr Taylor's ministry. I think in that way we get the gain of the current voice of the Spirit.

S.E. H. So the Spirit is still here and is still speaking. Would it be right to say that we do not want to view Mr Taylor's ministry as the climax of the testimony because the Spirit is still speaking and further light may come out by the Spirit in the temple?

A.P.D. We want to be ready for the current speaking of the Spirit, but I also believe that there has been a certain distinctiveness and authority which gives character to what may follow.

L.McF. In the light of what you have said I was thinking of the bones of Elisha and the life that came out of them (see 2 Kings 13: 21), linking with the ministry you are referring to.

A.P.D. I am sure you experience that. I think there is much in this suggestion that "the ear trieth words, as the palate tasteth food".

G.D.P. Is that the suggestion in Kings where Elisha said "Bring me a new cruse, and put salt in it", 2 Kings 2: 20?

A.P.D. Yes, and the Lord's references to salt. You want some sense of God speaking, exercising our hearts that we might be consistent, that the truth may be manifest, may be practised by the beloved saints.

A.C.C. Hearing would be trying things, not only what you hear but how you hear.

A.P.D. You do not swallow everything, you try. the words. It is not that you are sceptic al, not that you are wanting to be critical, but there is what is critical in a right sense. We sometimes use the word only in the sense of condemnation but there is the critical faculty that the saints have as having the Spirit to discern the truth.

J.A.P. The Lord said to the lawyer in Luke 10, "how readest thou?" (v 26).

A.P.D. Yes. I have thought recently that you can savour the truth, you can enjoy the truth. How do you read the Scriptures? Do you read them just to get through them? You may say, I have read a chapter this morning, but do you read them to enjoy them? Think of the words the Spirit of God employs. Peter says, "such a voice", 2 Pet 1: 17. You want to stop and think about that: "such a voice".

Think of all the depth of the Father's feelings and affections that must have come into Peter's soul as he said "such a voice"; not just a voice but "such a voice" and "uttered to him by the excellent glory". I think, dear brethren, that we want to read the Scriptures read the ministry, to enjoy them. How do you tell if the ministry is from God?

The suggestion is here: "the ear trieth words, as the palate tasteth food". Let us choose for ourselves what is right; let us know among ourselves what is good!

C.S.E. I think that all ministry should point to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the model Man in all things.

A..P D. That is right. I think the element of exercise would come into our souls that I would like so much to be like Him. I am so unlike Him. You feel in His presence how much help you need.

W.W. In 2 Kings 4 they were able to discern that there was death in the pot. The answer was, "Then bring meal" (v.41).

A.P.D. Very good. I do not suppose that the ma who gathered the wild colocynths did it deliberately; I think it was carelessness. Then they discerned that there was death in the pot. I think the meal is like Paul's corrective epistles. In Corinth he brings in "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2: 2): that is the meal. It is very interesting to see how Paul brings in adjustment by the presentation of Christ.

C.S.E. In Mary sitting at the Lord's feet and listening to His word I suppose her ears would try, so to speak, the Lord's words as they came from His lips, and the Lord said she "has chosen the good part, the which shall not be taken from her", Luke 10: 42. Getting into the Lord's presence as we read, and having our outlook and

affections focussed on that blessed Man to get the confirmation that what is coming from Himself, is food for our souls.

A.P.D. That is very helpful. Then of course we need to be discriminating in what we hear. There is a lot of evangelical literature current in the world, but much of it contains doctrinal error. We need to be careful because we are affected by what we read.

C.S.E. The same is true of the hymns. There is a lot of sentiment expressed in certain hymns but we have to see whether the truth is in the hymns that we sing. Care entered into the selection for the book that we have currently.

A.P.D. Yes; you would not be too legal about these things but what is sentimental does not effect anything morally in the soul.

C.F.D. Singing seems to be something that intelligently has been reserved for man. So,

„in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises", Heb 2: 12. The Lord sets the thing on and we are related to Him in it and it is really for the heart of God. It is not from angels; they are said to shout but not to sing.

A.P.D. We should close with the reference in Philippians. It is what is superlative that is before us: "that ye may judge of and approve the things that are more excellent". Paul, for instance, speaks of "a way of more surpassing excellence, 1 Cor 12: 31. I suppose it was described in his own service in Corinth, a way of love.

L.McF. So he is praying to that end: "that your love may abound yet more and more in full knowledge and all intelligence, that ye may Judge of and approve the things that are more excellent". I feel the need of discrimination, as you have been saying, to discern the things that are going through.

A.P.D. Yes. So he speaks in this book of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord", chap 3: 8.

J.A.P. It is the positive here.

A.P.D. Yes. You might say you can compare one glory with another. It is spiritual refinement that is in mind here.

A.C.C. Choosing what is right is a bit of a job, and then knowing among ourselves what is good. You have something in view. Would these verses give us that objective?

A.P.D. I think so.

A.C.C. I heard Mr Lyon say once that it is now not a question of choosing between colours but between shades of colours. That is Philippians, is it not?

A.P.D. That is very fine. Peter speaks of the excellent glory (2 Pet 1: 17) and Paul speaks about a way of more surpassing excellence, the way of love. We want to occupy ourselves with these things that we may be pure and without offence for Christ's day. What a day that will be, Christ's day, when everything that is excellent will be displayed!

G.H. Paul said "Daily I die", 1 Cor 15: 31. What is involved in that?

A.P.D. What does that mean, Mr Craig?

A.C.C. It is a constant exercise, is it not? That would precede being able to choose rightly, would it not?

A.D.P. Yes.

A.C.C. Do you think that here we have the wedding day in mind?

A.P.D. Yes, very good.

A.C.C. We want to look our best, do we not? Any bride wants to look her best on that day.

J.A.P. She says in the Song of Songs, "Yea, he is altogether lovely", chap 5: 16.

A.P.D. What a description she is able to bring forward of her beloved! How can we describe our Beloved, not just because of what we have heard or what we have read but because of what we have experienced? What can you say about Jesus because you

have found Him to be altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand?

A.G.S. Mary regarded Him as her Lord. That should be true of us, should it not?

A.P.D. I am sure that is right. She says "They have taken away my Lord... and I know not where they have laid him", John 20: 2. It was love that kept her there at the tomb. We may say she was somewhat unintelligent; but what kept her there was her love, until He manifested Himself. I think what has been suggested is most interesting, the wedding day, and then our brother's reference to the Song of Songs, "Yea, he is altogether lovely". Can you say that dear brethren, dear sisters, from your own experience, that He is altogether lovely? I think we want to be real Christians; we do not want to be half-hearted Christians.

C.F.D. What is a Christian?

A.P.D. Luke says about the brethren at Antioch that they "were first called Christians", Acts 11: 26. I suppose because of the characteristics that were seen in them, some thing was named that was there. Followers of Christ would be perhaps a definition of it, if you could define it.

C.F.D. When Mr Craig was here – I think it was the last time – he said, Could you call yourself a Christian? He put that out as a challenge. He asked me if I thought that. Now what did you mean when you said that?

A.C.C. That is a year ago. How far have we moved on since then? I think it is very interesting that God is working to this end – "Jesus Christ's day". What an incentive therefore and encouragement for us that we might aim at the same thing!

A.P.D. Yes. We spend so much of our time with the moral question in ourselves, our tendencies, our propensities; how little time we spend in being occupied with Christ! You hasten to get home, get free from your work, of course to see your wife, but to get into the presence of the Man at God's right hand, to enjoy Him again and

again and again, to enjoy His company. And, if I might say so, He is looking for you to come, dear brethren. He wants your company.

G.H. That beloved man , Mr Otsing, certainly must have been enjoying it; he writes 'Thy radiancy draws us apart' (hymn 131). He had a sense of that.

A.P.D. Yes. This is a very interesting section because it is not a question of good and evil; it is comparing glories, you might say; it is comparing one excellent thing with another excellent thing. It involves spiritual, refined judgment to be occupied with what is more excellent. How do we regard these beloved brethren that we have the privilege (c1nd I say that dear brethren as feeling it most intensely) to be in fellowship with? Do you regard the fellowship that way, that it is one of the greatest privileges we can have, to be in the fellowship of God's Son, these beloved brethren whom the Lord has given to us?

A.S.H. What do you think of the queen of Sheba? She went to great lengths to learn the wisdom of Solomon and the Lord says, "Behold, more than Solomon is here" Luke.11: 3.

A.P.D. Very good. It says that "Hiram always loved David", 1 Kings 5: 1. That was a love of admiration, but the queen of Sheba's was a love of association, she came to where he was and she found out that he was so much more than she had ever heard.

A.S.H. The half had not been told.

C.S.E. Judging and approving seem to call for a mature development with all of us. Most of us would admit that we like to have things made very simple so that we can just digest them, but this judging and approving the things that are more excellent, I suppose, is a state for each of us to arrive at individually because there is discernment that is to come into all this here. How can we be sure that our discernment and our approval of things are according to what is right?

A.P.D. That is an exercise I am sure.

A.C.C. It seems to originate in love: "And this I pray, that your love". There is nothing more quick to detect, is there, than love? You do not need to be told: love you can detect by itself. That is how the Lord judged in Revelation 2 that Ephesus had left its first love – by His own heart, not by those all seeing eyes. He judged by the feeling of His own heart that there was not the same warmth, not the same response.

A.P.D. That is fine.

S.E.H. John's gospel, we understand, was written last; it shows how love and family affection would continue until the coming of the Lord. I wonder if that is something that the Lord has given us particularly at the present time, an area of things where love is experienced among the saints and where His character of judging and approving the things that are more excellent can be worked out.

A.P.D. I think that is helpful. So we want to appreciate being one of the family. One thing to notice about the family is seen in what Solomon says: "I was a son unto my father... an only one in the sight of my mother", Prov 4: 3. It is a lovely suggestion. However many children you have, every one is an only one; you understand what I mean, every one is special. There is something about the family of God that is most attractive because every one is special.

C.F.D. Do you think that, as we hurry to get to our homes, we would have some experience of that kind of hurry – to get into the presence of the second family? There is something attractive about the children of God as belonging to the family, that if they are going to be together, that is where I want to be too.

A.P.D. That is helpful. Referring back to Job, "Let us choose for ourselves what is right", that is one thing, but "let us know among ourselves what is good!". You have a sense when you are in the company of the saints that you have come to what we can enjoy, what is good. You say, That is better than anything the world can offer. The dear young brethren need to realise that. We come to that conclusion, that it is so much better.

W.W. The psalmist said , "I rejoiced when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of Jehovah", Ps 122: 1. That is the second family. Then he says, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (v 6).

A.P.D. Well, we need to do that , we need to pray that the elements of respect and affection and confidence are known amongst us, having in view happier assembly conditions in every place. That should be a daily cry to God every place. That should be a daily cry to God from all our hearts. I think He will hear us. I felt the Lord might whet our appetites that we might enjoy and savour what is more excellent. Peter must have grown in his appreciation of that wonderful time on the mount of transfiguration. He spoke out of turn. It is very interesting that those men who appeared withdrew as soon as Peter says what he does. It is as if they would not obscure, not eclipse, the glory of Christ in any way. I wonder if we have ever done that, Sometimes we make too much of men. When Peter speaks of three tabernacles they withdraw. I think sorrowfully when persons realised that they were gaining too much of a place in the minds of the brethren they did not withdraw, they did not get out of sight to make room for the voice out of heaven, "This is my beloved Son". Would it be fair to say that?

A.C.C. What you are saying is very exercising – that the Lord Himself might be pre-eminent. That is what is in this epistle, is it not? He lets everything go that Christ might be pre-eminent.

A.P.D. That is lovely: the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord", chap 3: 8.

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ACCUMULATION IN VIEW OF SERVING GOD

Paul Devenish

Job 42: 1; 2 Samuel 7: 18,28; Psalm 108: 1-8; 57: 7-11; 60: 6,7; 45: 1,2

Paul speaks about those "upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor 10: 11), things having been written for us. So it is a wonderful time that we are in, everything, we might say, flowing into the present moment, the Spirit of God having conserved everything that is precious. Another Psalm speaks thus; "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God" (Ps 46: 4) – a great river, to which every dispensation, every age, has contributed. I suppose even the praise, the future praise, that awaits for God in Zion, is anticipated in the assembly.

The very expressions of men such as ourselves have been conserved. How often we hear in the service of God the words of Job: "I know that thou canst do everything, and that thou canst be hindered in no thought of thine". Indeed it is in one of our hymns, the very expression:

'We thus extol afresh Thy wondrous Name,
And bow before Thy glory all divine.

We worship still, while gladdened hearts exclaim -

"Thou canst be hindered in no thought of Thine!" (No.406)

It is wonderful to think about how the Spirit of God has conserved, brought forward, the precious words reached in the experience of a man who lived supposedly in the time of Abraham. Nothing is lost; he arrived at it through discipline. I suppose we may say the same words just repeating them; I trust not, but rather that we can say "thou canst do everything, and that thou canst be hindered in no thought of thine" through some experience with God, perhaps through discipline. Some of us have lost our families; that is current amongst us, a great sorrow. It is not that we can think of ourselves having the depth of the apostle's feelings but he speaks of himself as having "uninterrupted pain", Rom 9: 2. I suppose that is in some

measure a current felt experience. Job is brought step by step; first of all he put his hand upon his mouth – that is a good thing to do – then he comes further, Elihu brings in conviction. Elihu is a remarkable minister, he says I am just like you are, I am a man. He speaks of his terror not making Job afraid. He drew alongside of him sympathetically and affectionately. How much we need to do that, dear brethren, need to help the saints, help one another into the truth. Sympathy and affection enter into any service that is for God; we bear fruit to God.

So Job arrives at this remarkable utterance. He is just a man and a poor failing man who had experienced such discipline in his body and in his family, but the Spirit of God loves these words, and He loves the man who gave voice to them. So that the preciousness of them even now, thousands of years later, is expressed in the service of God. Scripture speaks of "the voice of a man" (Josh 10: 14) which would look on to the voice of Jesus. Never such a Man as He! Never such a voice as His! It is wonderful to me that flowing into this dispensation is the wealth that was reached in a man's soul like Job. It is cumulative, it is brought forward, gathered up you might say in view of the enrichment of God's service. It was something reached through discipline. So if we repeat these wonderful words – and there is no reason why we should not, this remarkable utterance that Job reaches through his experience – I think we would in some degree have to come the same way. He says, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes". He said, "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear" – that may be the case with many of us – but he says, "but now mine eye seeth thee". That is spiritual vision. It is probably so with many of us, that we have heard many things by the hearing of the ear or read many things, but it is wonderful to come to the point in our experience where we can say, "but now mine eye seeth thee". He says, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes".

I suggest that we want to value what has gone before which has been reached through the experiences in men such as we are. I wonder if any utterance that we make would be carried forward like

Job's, so precious to the Spirit of God that it is current in conversation and the service of praise now. Job would never have anticipated that what he said would be on the lips of those who love God at the present time. So nothing is lost, the Spirit is the One who is conserving everything that is precious.

So with David, the sweet psalmist of Israel. It is remarkable that sweetness is linked with David, not with Solomon. He speaks of himself as "the sweet psalmist of Israel", 2 Sam 23: 1. I do not think Solomon is so much the thought of experience as David is, experience with God. What is linked with David's service is sweetness. Intelligence certainly; 2 Samuel 7 is a remarkable chapter, David in the spirit of sonship sits before Jehovah and says, "thou art that God". Among many other remarkable utterances he says, "Lord Jehovah, thou art that God". We sang that hymn: "'Thou art that God' to the ages eternal" (No.129), the very words uttered by one who was a man after God's own heart, and it has been carried forward. So it would encourage us to long to have experience with God and to come to this conclusion, "Thou art that God", and to sit before Him in the spirit of sonship restfully absorbing His great thoughts. You may say, We are so few, things are so splintered, will we be able to continue? what will happen to us? Oh, beloved brethren, we are in the presence of the greatest thoughts that God has conceived for men who love Him, and He is bringing us through experience, through sorrowful experience, having to reach things in our own souls as David did. What experiences David went through!

Why does Scripture give us such a life size picture of this man, of his failures as well as his successes? Something was reached in his soul that brought out this remarkable expression of praise in this book: "thou art that God". He had pure motives in this chapter; at the beginning it says, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedars, and the ark of God dwells under curtains. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thy heart; for Jehovah is with thee". But he came to it that God's thoughts were much greater than his. That is something for us to come to. And he distinguishes God in his service. The Spirit of God brings that forward for our help to see that what David

reached we can reach. You say, I have been such a miserable failure. I suppose many of us can say that. But David rose up out of it. I would like to see the brethren rise up out of failure to see the greatness of God's thoughts and to distinguish, to mark out, the God whom David marked out, the same God. We need to come the same way; otherwise we are repeating what someone else said.

Such an expression needs to come from the soul. You young people want to think about this. What has been your occupation touching the King? Have you something to say? Psalm 45 is often repeated: "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer". "I say what I have composed" – what has been my occupation – "touching the king". Can you say something because you have been occupied with the Lord Jesus? You can repeat something that others have said, but you want to have your own experience; there is to be a sweetness reached through experience in serving God. In Judges the fig-tree says, "Should I leave my sweetness and my good fruit...?", chap 9: 11. There is something peculiarly delightful about David, the sweet psalmist of Israel. Such sweetness is to enter into the service of God now, sweetness that God can enjoy.

I have read these other scriptures in the Psalms. It is very interesting that the words of Psalm 108 are words selected from Psalms 57 and 60. The Spirit of God takes out of one setting these remarkable utterances of David's and puts them into another setting, takes them out of the setting of history and puts them into the setting of the service of God. You say, They are the same words, why would they be repeated? One is in connection with David historically in relation to the cave of Adullam when he was rejected and the men that were in distress and in debt and embittered came to him and made him a captain over them. That was part of David's history when this Psalm was given utterance to. It is a remarkable Psalm: "My heart is fixed". You say, But David you are in rejection, everybody is against you, Saul is against you, you are going to flee for your life. He said, "My heart is fixed, O God... I will sing, yea, I will sing psalms".

So with Psalm 60, it is something gone through historically, through a happening in David's life, something reached in the knowledge of God in his soul. But then the Spirit of God, as it were, takes these Psalms and puts them together into another setting. I think someone said it was like the re-setting of precious stones. It was a dark setting in which the brilliance shone but the repetition of it is in the setting of glory, a setting of exaltation, a setting that links with the service of God. It is lovely to see, when perhaps coming out of a day at school you felt persecuted because you confessed the name of the Lord Jesus, something rose up in your heart towards God, towards Christ. The Spirit of God says, That is so delightful to Me, I want to bring it into the service of God, I do not want to leave it just in the history of that believer, that young believer, I want that to enrich the service of God. That is a fine thing, what happens in the experiences of the saints. That is what the Psalms mean, a psalm involves experience with God. What happens in the experiences of the saints is to be brought forward by the Spirit of God as most precious to enrich God's service.

Surely we would all desire to have a composition because of having personally been occupied with the King. I suppose two things are very much needed by us; one is what is spontaneous. It is a wonderful thing to bring into the service of God what is spontaneous. You get a sight of the King in His beauty and you cannot sit still, you must express your thoughts as to Christ. I suppose the children in the temple singing Hosannah is just what is spontaneous. In a sense it should be a current experience. Every time we gather in relation to all our meetings, but specially the Lord's supper and the service of God, there should be what is spontaneous when the King comes, when we see His beauty, when we see His glory. It says, We see Jesus, not yet all things put under his feet but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour (see Heb 2: 9). We are in full concert, we might say, with heaven's delight in that Man. I must give expression to it – something springs up in me spontaneously that fills God's heart with pleasure.

But then there is the thought of composition which is very fine. The part that we take, I believe, should in a sense be a composition involving that we are affected in our souls by the greatness of Christ. Well, Psalm 45 is very interesting; he says, "I say what I have composed" or what has been my occupation. You do not have anything to say unless you have been occupied with Christ.

Composition involves rather that something has been accumulated in a way of knowledge and affection for Christ through experience that comes into expression. "I say what I have composed touching the king. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured into thy lips". Oh, dear brethren, let us read the Scriptures and enjoy them. In one of the Bibles the preface says that if you read so many verses a day, you get through the Bible in a year. That might be a wonderful experience but I do not think it is the most important experience. I think we need to read the Scriptures to enjoy them, just savour them. "Thou art fairer than the sons of men"; think of all the sons of men and he says "Thou art fairer". He discovered that for himself. Have you found that out in your occupation with Christ, that He is fairer than the sons of men?

"Grace is poured into thy lips". Enjoy how the Scriptures speak of Him. It says in John 1, "for of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace" (v 16). In Luke 4 it says, "And wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth" (v 22). The psalmist says, "therefore God hath blessed thee for ever"; and goes on to speak of "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy companions".

These are wonderful words in this Psalm – "Of the sons of Korah. An instruction; – a song of the Beloved". Well, we know what that means, what the background is, what mercy, sovereign mercy, was experienced by the sons of Korah. They are objects of the sovereign mercy of God and so are we. Let us through occupation with Christ enjoy the truth, enjoy the Scriptures, enjoy the ministry – read them to enjoy them. I wonder how we read. How readest thou? Do we read it to enjoy it? Philip said to the eunuch, "Dost thou then know

what thou art reading of? And he said, How should I then be able unless some one guide me? And he begged Philip to come up and sit with him. And the passage of the scripture which he read was this: He was led as a sheep to slaughter, and as a lamb is dumb in presence of him that shears him, thus he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment has been taken away, and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answering Philip said, I pray thee, concerning whom does the prophet say this? of himself or of some other? And Philip, opening his mouth and beginning from that scripture, announced the glad tidings of Jesus to him", Acts 8: 30-35. Just enjoy that scripture, dear brethren, read it to enjoy it. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.

One would just desire that we may be encouraged at this time, not discouraged, not depressed; it is not a time for depression, it is time to be encouraged that we have come into such a time that all that has gone before is brought forward and is held in current power and reality and sweetness in the hearts of the saints and that we have our own part. May we be encouraged in this time, this peculiarly wonderful time in which we are, that God may find infinite pleasure in the praises of those who love Him.

May it be so in His Name.

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SHELTERED CHILDREN

In a certain country and at a time when Christians were being persecuted, one who was in danger noticed that the soldiers, when they had slain the inmates of a house, splashed blood on the door as they left. He therefore hurried to a large house where many of his friends and their children were hiding. As quickly as they could, and only just in time they killed a goat and sprinkled its blood on the door. When their enemies came along they passed by the house, leaving the inmates in safety.

It is not difficult to see in this story a great gospel truth. Imperfect as the illustration may be, it reminds us of the soul-saving words of our God, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you". The people of Israel with their children were as much exposed as their enemies to the righteous wrath of God in regard to their sins. He had, however, provided for them a way of perfect safety, in the type, by the shelter of the blood of a slain lamb. Our own salvation from judgment is by faith in the actual shedding of the blood of Jesus at the crucifixion.

In thinking of our salvation it is good to dwell on the Person of the Lord Jesus and His great work of atonement. The children of Israel probably said to one another, 'Why should the lamb suffer, what harm has it done?' We would answer that God must have a Lamb without blemish as a sacrifice for sins and offences and, in our case, available worldwide on the basis of faith. Also the Lord Jesus being without sin was the only One who could become the Saviour of all who believe on Him. Do you?

J.C.Evershed