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"THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE-DOVE"

Song of Songs 2: 10-14; Revelation 3: 7-14

M.P. The passage in the Song of Songs was referred to this morning and so I thought about this wonderful scene which we have here. It is a scene of highest blessing and joy, a scene of wonderful love. I think we find some rays, some beams, of this scene reflected in that wonderful letter of the Lord to the assembly in Philadelphia. The assembly in Philadelphia has the features of the assembly. Among those seven letters we find just two assemblies where the Lord finds no fault. They are Smyrna, as we know, and Philadelphia; and if the Lord says, Thou "hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name", He enumerates beautiful moral features of the saints in Philadelphia. It is like the saying of Solomon to the bride: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away"; and then "My dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the covert of the precipice, Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely". Under this figure we can understand the Lord's appreciation of the moral beauty of the assembly which has been exhibited in the assembly in Philadelphia. Moreover, we have here the voice of the turtle-dove heard in our land, and that corresponds to the Spirit speaking to the assemblies. We have here the words of the bridegroom; in the letter to the assembly in Philadelphia we have the words of the Lord Jesus personally; but here it is a reference to the speaking of the Spirit - the voice of the turtle-dove. It does not say what the turtledove says, and in the same way, in the address to Philadelphia, the voice of the Spirit is referred to but it does not say what He says. It is for everyone to hear. The voice is heard in our land; it is to be heard at this time in the assembly for those who have an ear. In the beginning it is said that the assembly had ears (see Acts 11: 22), but in this time it is the overcomers who have the ears and they are able to hear what the Spirit says. It is not written down, it is for us to hear it. So I suggest, beloved brethren, that we be engaged in happy conversation about the privileges we have, to be the objects of the Lord's love and that we would desire to be among

such in this last time, the time of decline and ruin, to whom all these wonderful privileges which we find in this passage in the Song of Songs would be accessible. They are accessible to the overcomers, they are accessible to those who keep His word and do not deny His name, those in whom all these wonderful features of moral beauty are found. Do the brethren think that would be right?

J.N.M. When the Lord Jesus speaks, He can speak of what is new. The Spirit speaks in relation to what Christ has said - "he shall not speak from himself" (John 16: 13) - but the Lord Jesus gives new light. We should be ready and realise the possibility that He would speak to us, not just what has been said before but something new.

M.P. Yes, and the Spirit brings it to our hearts, does He not? We now have all in the Spirit. That is a wonderful truth. The Spirit is personally here; the Lord Jesus is not, in the literal sense, He is now in the glory, but here is the area which we can call "our land". It is a wonderful area where the voice of the Spirit is heard and, of course, the Lord and the Spirit are of one mind, in the mind of Godhead. There is no contradiction of Their speaking and They are speaking in love.

D.R. Is the thought of the Lord speaking here linked with relationship?

M.P. Yes, it is a wonderful relationship, is it not?

D.R. "My beloved spake and said unto me". I wondered if the experience of union as enjoyed earlier today was a most important time.

M.P. And it is referred to in the letter to Philadelphia; "and shall know that I have loved thee". That is a wonderful feature. I do not think we find it in any of the other six letters. The overcomer has the features of the name of the city written on him; that means that the features of the assembly according to God's thoughts are found in him and that he is a subject of the deep love of the Lord Jesus, His pleasure, His joy.

J.S. So He is going to make others know that He has loved the assembly. He says, "I will cause them to know", but we should know it presently as of the assembly.

M.P. Yes, that is accessible to all who are faithful to Him, being found among those who have kept His word and not denied His name, who are content to have a little power but who love Him.

J.S. Is that what you speak of as the moral features of the assembly developed?

M.P. That is what I thought. The beauty of the bride described here corresponds with the moral beauty of the assembly which the Lord refers to in the Revelation. "I know thy works" - the whole behaviour, the whole style of life, our walk in truth, in simplicity, in faithfulness, and in committal to Him. That all corresponds with the moral beauty of the bride.

J.S. Do you think that "thou ... hast kept my word" would mean that His word is treasured in the hearts of persons because it is His word, and we are formed by it?

M.P. That is what my beloved spake: "My beloved spake and said unto me"; that is deeply ingrained in the heart of the bride. So the words of our Lord should be precious to us.

D.R. Does it involve quickening? The Psalmist says - which is the moral side - "quicken me according to thy word"-, Ps 119: 154. So it is an inward movement of affection that is caused by the voice of Christ and brings about some correspondence to Himself.

M.P. Yes. It is good to refer to Psalm 119 for there we have such a wonderful appreciation of the word of God. There are many expressions referring to it - thy law, thy statutes and a number of such expressions - but all this refers to the appreciation of the word of God which is deeply sunk into the heart and it is that precious moral feature that the Lord Jesus delights in. It is springtime in the morning meeting, is it not, when we approach the sphere of the Lord's blessing. We are coming into the time of the eternal spring, that sphere of eternal life. The winter is past, the rain is over, it is

gone. We touch this wonderful sphere which has been referred to in our hymn (No.206): 'Where the saints in glory thronging, Where they feed on life's blest Tree' - the Tree of life. The overcomer in Ephesus has the promise: "I will give to him to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God", Rev 2: 7. That is our land. I love very much this expression "our land". Sometimes the respective countries we are living in are referred to as our land; we may use it for convenience but it is not the true thought. It is not our land but foreign lands for each one of us, but here is "our land" where the voice of turtle-dove is being heard and where our Beloved speaks.

J.S. So the apostle says "our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens", Phil 3: 20.

M.P. Our commonwealth, yes exactly, from which we expect the Lord, awaiting Him as Saviour. This is a wonderful outlook one often thinks of this as a consummation of what is going on now in us. We have now the moral transformation brought about by the Spirit but the final touch will bring about the transformation of what is outward - of our bodies. Our bodies are still subject to corruption and to all that is connected with the old creation, but then our bodies will be brought into harmony with what is going on in our spirits. The moral beauty of the bride will then be complete and perfect.

J.S. How is 'spring' to which you were referring brought about in us?

M.P. I think it is exclusively by the Spirit's power - being brought into the area of eternal spring. Spring is the most beautiful time in nature, is it not? All is being developed. Of course we are to tend to perfection, to an adult age, but that is not a contradiction; indeed often the half-open flowers in the temple are referred to, suggesting the freshness of youth that is to be found in our hearts, in reference to His love in relation to the affections He has, to which He seeks a response in our hearts. The eternal freshness of youth is so beautiful. I like to refer to the last verses of Psalm 92: "Those that are planted in the house of Jehovah shall flourish in the courts of our God: They are still vigorous in old age, they are full of sap and green". That is the spring, is it not?

J.S. So that is something in which the power of life is seen. It is what is living, it is not something that is just put on.

M.P. And we find it here: "the fig-tree melloweth her winter figs", "The flowers appear on the earth", and "the vines in bloom give forth their fragrance". What a lovely scene it is, all to be enjoyed in a spiritual sense in the Lord's nearness in the assembly!

J.M.M. The apostle speaks in Colossians about putting on the new man, where youth and freshness are emphasised (see chap 3: 10).

M.P. Yes; that is very good. There are two expressions for "new"; one means new of a new kind, of a new sort, but then "the new" is the newness of freshness of youth.

J.M.M. It is "according to the image of him that has created him". He speaks about removing all the distinctions that perhaps you referred to earlier when you spoke about different countries from which we come, and he goes on to say "where Christ is everything and in all".

M.P. Yes, that is exactly right and it is connected with the newness and youthfulness. It is ever renewing by the power of the Spirit. What a wonderful area it is! What I have specially in mind is that, in this time of ruin and decline, it is ever accessible as we find it in that letter to the assembly in Philadelphia.

J.N.M. The expression "her winter figs" would indicate that the ruin only adds to the sweetness of the response.

M.P. And it corresponds to what the Lord says as to His coming, that they should observe the fig tree, when its branch shall have become tender (see Matt 24: 32). The word 'tender' is interesting too, it refers to freshness and to sensitivity. I recently noticed the word of the prophetess to king Josiah; she said "Because thy heart was tender" (2 Chron 34: 27); that is, sensitive, sensitive to the working, to the influence of God, of His Spirit. Tenderness of heart is something which should characterise the saints of the assembly. That is responsiveness. It refers to the fleshy tables of the heart in 2 Corinthians 3 in contrast with the hardness of the stone tables. The

fleshy tables of the heart are sensitive, are tender, accessible to the slightest touch of the Spirit.

J.N.M. Verse 8 begins "The voice of my beloved" without saying what he says. Does that show the tenderness of heart?

M.P. Yes, exactly so. Mr Coates says, we have five senses physically but would like the spiritual sense of smell so that we get the scent of His presence, and the sensitive ear to hear His voice. It is like the ear of the overcomer who is sensitive, tender, to catch the slightest sound of His voice.

J.N.M. In natural things it is interesting that the ear can separate perhaps the noise of an aeroplane above from the buzzing of a bee in a flower and yet hear them both. Is that not just a type of what the believer is spiritually? Above the clamour of the world he hears the voice of his Beloved.

M.P. That is very good. How many voices there are in the world - the jarring tones of what is abroad, enmity and hatred and discontent and all that through which our Lord has gone so fully; He has experienced all the contradictions of sinners and yet how His heart was ever wonderfully keeping in communion with the Father's will. That is the pattern for us. His path was untrodden before. He was the first to have gone this path of suffering and experience the difficulties of all that which characterises this world, all the temptations of this world (see Heb 4: 15). Our path is facilitated now because it has been trodden through by Him and we have His own help and the Spirit's help and His wonderful power. So it is a very great privilege to be found here in the same path of committal and obedience and to exhibit such wonderful moral features so precious to Him.

J.C.G. One of the responses is singing: "The time of singing is come" and it is linked with "the voice of the turtle-dove". Does the singing elevate us and bring in everyone, and help us in relation to the assembly idea, the bride?

M.P. Yes, and it is an expression of feeling, of the feeling of the heart. It is elevated as you say; it is a feeling response, stirred

affections in the heart.

J.C.G. Do you think that the measure of our reality in singing helps the Spirit - 'the voice of the turtle-dove'?

M.P. It is that the heart is stirred. I am thinking about David coming with the ark; he was such an enthusiastic singer and he says of himself that he was pleasant in the Psalms of Israel (see 2 Sam 23: 1). The service of song is very important, of course, but it is so important too that it should be the song in the playing hearts; to refer to Colossians again: "singing with grace in your hearts to God", chap 3: 16. The literal musical instruments are not living, but the heart is living and there is the wonderful melody going up to the Lord's heart.

J.N.M. One of the Psalms (92) is headed "a Psalm, a Song, for the Sabbath day". There are songs in the night and songs in the wilderness; there are no songs in Babylon but there are special songs for the land, are there not?

M.P. And, to refer again to this Psalm, there is a distinction there in verse 2: "To declare thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness in the nights". The loving-kindness is what we enjoy in the morning, the positive impressions of His love to us. In the nights the Psalmist falls back on the faithfulness. That is more the matter of faith when all around is night, is darkness, but then His faithfulness is here, which shines, whereas in the morning it is the living impressions of His loving-kindness.

J.S. Referring to our hearts being in the singing, we have referred to Colossians, "singing with grace in your hearts to God"; in Ephesians it says "singing and chanting with your heart to the Lord", chap 5: 19. Does it show the great value of our affections being involved in it?

M.P. The affections are essential, not just the knowledge - which is important in its place - but it is important to be kept in the spirit of living affections, and the spirit of singing in the elevated sense of feeling the Lord's love.

J.S. I was thinking that some may be affected by fine music and that kind of thing, but the Lord is interested in our hearts being affected.

M.P. Of course there may be a danger in it when we are, as you say, affected by music in the literal sense which touches just the natural feelings, but the Spirit's power and the Spirit's sphere is somewhat different, it goes deeper and higher, not just what is for the natural ear and for the natural sense. It is the inward, hidden man of the heart which is so precious in God's sight.

W.B. So would you say that our real singing comes out of our experience with divine Persons? I was thinking of what the Psalmist said, that we cannot sing on the soil of Babylon: "How should we sing a song of Jehovah's upon a foreign soil?", Ps 137: 4. But they spoke there about their other experiences, and out of this the real singing comes about.

M.P. The real singing is in "our land", is it not? not in the land of the strangers. In a sense we are ever in our land, not just when we are together in the assembly. We belong to that land, and at any time we can be in, and we are in in that sense. Maybe we are not always conscious of it but we are still in that land.

G.B.G. In our spirits, do you mean?

M.P. In our spirits, yes, and as to reality before God. Perhaps our experience does not is linked with transport. The actual singing would help to carry us over from where we might be where we can be, would it not?

M.P. Exactly. 'My soul is all transported Whene'er I think of Thee!' (Hymn 51). That is what has been referred to as the elevated and stirred state of our heart, not just the cold spirit and indifferent spirit that might be present. We need the elevated spirit in singing, and being stirred by the wonderful triumph of God. Michal, David's wife, could not understand it (see 2 Sam 6: 16). It is what characterises her family, the family of Saul. It is said that in the days of Saul the ark of God was not sought for; there was indifference to it, a lack of interest, but happily this kind of man will not have continuation: Michal had no children. This new man will continue, but not the old

man because he has been set aside, this man of indifference and of enmity which characterises Laodicea. There is the lukewarmness and the lack of interest and indifference to Him, but Philadelphia is marked by joyful and enthusiastic obedience, and faithfulness to the Lord's heart and that is infinitely pleasurable to always correspond to it, but still we are ever in it and we can ever revert to it, return to it in the consciousness of our minds.

G.B.G. That would keep the believer buoyant.

M.P. Buoyant, exactly so.

J.N.M. In Chronicles the thought of singing Him.

J.N.M. It is remarkable that Philadelphia and Laodicea are together at the same time, so that the overcomer has a great deal to overcome; and yet, as you say, the best assembly features come out when things are the worst.

M.P. Yes, it is a wonderful triumph of God's grace and mercy. It is like the life of the Lord Jesus here below; in the midst of dark ness and iniquity how wonderfully His unique and precious life shone here below. What a sight for the eye of God! And the same is with the overcomers here, in the midst of dark ness and indifference and lukewarmness there are such who shine. I love to think about how it says in Philippians, "harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among whom ye appear as lights in the world", chap 2: 15. That reminds me of the lily among the thorns in the Song of Songs. In the midst of a crooked and perverted generation how pleasurable it is in the sight of God and for the eye of the Lord. That is "My dove, in the clefts of the rock, In the covert of the precipice" - hidden, protected and guarded in the midst of all these dangers.

J.S. What do you say about her voice? We have had the Lord's voice and the voice of the turtle-dove but now he says "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; For sweet is thy voice".

M.P. The Lord loves responsive love, does he not? He loves to hear what the heart of His saints is saying to Him. It is, of course, stirred

by the Spirit in the hearts - the love of God poured out into the hearts of the saints and the affectionate response of their hearts, thankful, appreciative, worshipful, and praising Him; what the Lord is for the heart finding expression in what we say to Him in our hearts and also in the assembly audibly. That is what He appreciates so much. Would you tell us something more.

J.S. We have the hidden man of the heart that is Christ in our hearts, but if He is in our hearts, the voice would bring it into expression in response.

M.P. The loving appreciation of His person. I often think of the contrast between this and what we have in the book of Exodus as to the wish of Moses to see the face of God. It was then impossible. But here it is the face of the assembly that the Lord is desirous to see. It cannot be expressed in words how wonderful it is that the assembly would be so precious and so lovable for His heart that He desires to see her face. And He will see it; as it was expressed in a hymn we sang this morning, the assembly will be His joy throughout eternity. He will eternally enjoy that face of the assembly and hearing her voice.

D.R. Do you think we need to treasure in our hearts something of the understanding of the Lord's valuation of the assembly? I was wondering if there were two sides to overcoming. We generally link overcoming with overcoming evil, but we need to learn how to overcome so that we are maintained in the positive joy of the truth and in the very precious understanding of the Lord's valuation of the assembly. That the enemy would snatch that away, especially today, but is there not something very precious in being in the company of persons, such as now, where there is an understanding of the Lord's valuation of the assembly. Is that overcoming, do you think?

M.P. Yes, the enemy is tending to bring us down to the level of Laodicea, is he not? That is the area of indifference and lukewarmness but, as you say, it is a wonderful feature to keep in the stirred affections of our hearts, thrilled affections finding ever fresh

causes, fresh touches to admire the Lord and to find in the Lord that which binds our hearts to Him, which attracts our hearts to Him.

J.C.G. Do you think therefore that the overcomer at Philadelphia would have a real appreciation of the Holy, the True? "These things saith the Holy, the True". The overcomers in that assembly are really appreciative of the value of the Lord, and seek to be marked by those features.

M.P. In the midst of defilement and all that which is contrary to Him He is paramountly the Holy, the True. These features are being brought about by the Spirit in those who are His, and it is essentially this which He appreciates so much. In the Song of Songs it says first His sister and then His spouse. His sister, that is the moral affinity to what He is; His brethren in Matthew, Mark, and Luke are those who, like Him, hear the word of God and obey. These features of His own are exhibited in Him, they are morally His brethren.

J.C.G. That is what makes the assembly a lily in that sense.

M.P. Yes, the lily in the valleys, in the midst of thorns, in the midst of the crooked and perverted generation.

J.A.W. Is that the force of holding fast what thou hast, as the passage says: "hold fast what thou hast"? Is that maintaining something positive that He can come to?

M.P. Yes, in our hearts. That is wonderful; as has just been said, there is not only the negative side, to overcome what is evil, but to keep what is positive in the affections and the appreciation of Him.

D.R. Elijah was comforted, perhaps even rebuked, by the negative presentation. It says, I have seven thousand whose knees have not bowed to Baal (see 1 Kings 19: 18); that is the negative side. But do you think that the Spirit's service brings about correspondence to Christ? The assembly is formed by the Spirit as corresponding to Christ. Is that the triumph of the present moment?

M.P. Yes; it has been said that it is a poor thing when the saints are known by what they do not do, and not by what they do.

J.N.M. Our brother has referred to the scripture "hold fast what thou hast"; would that be the whole body of truth that has been revealed to us, not just certain parts of it?

M.P. Yes, all of it. It is important to keep aloof from evil and what is corruptive. It is quite in order that we are known by what we do not do, but that is not all, is it? We have to be kept in that positive sense of appreciation and affection for the Lord and the admiration of all that He is.

J.S. So that the Lord, in speaking to the overcomer in Philadelphia, touches on certain very precious features of the truth. Would that all be included in holding fast what thou hast?

M.P. Yes. Say more please.

J.S. I was thinking that the overcomer would value these things. The Lord values all these things, He speaks of them so personally as 'My' in certain instances.

M.P. "The name of my God, and the name of the city of my God ... and my new name".

J.S. The Lord obviously values these things and the overcomer would value these things and hold them fast.

M.P. Do you think that it is the aim of the Spirit to bring us into harmony with His own feelings? I increasingly find that is one of the highest privileges we are called to, to share the Lord's feelings, to share God's feelings, to have pleasure in what the Lord has pleasure to joy in what He joys in, to feel how He feels about things.

J.S. Quite so. So it would be just like a wife in relation to her husband; all his interests would be her interests.

M.P. Exactly, to be one with him. I think that is the highest level of what the Lord says, that where I am they also shall be, not only as to place but as to feelings, as to affections, as to the mind; where He is, there should be His saints, His assembly, one with Him. That is, I think, the highest point to which the love and the mercy of God desire to bring us - to harmony with Him in all things and to sharing His feelings of joy and pleasure and satisfaction. God finds His

satisfaction in the Lord Jesus and so should we. The Lord Jesus finds His joy in the presence of the Father, and in His assembly, and so should we. It is infinitely precious to be brought into harmony with the feelings and affections of divine Persons.

DUNDEE

22 April 1990

Key to initials

(Dundee if not otherwise stated)

W.Becker, Endbach; G.B.Grant; J.C.Gray; J.M.Macfarlane;
J.N.Mather; M.Pavlik, Dolny Kubin; D.Robertson, Cumnock;
J.Strachan; J.A.Walker; M.G.Wood

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

Milos Pavlik

Hebrews 2: 1-18

I have read an extended portion of the Holy Scripture, not intending to enlarge upon all the details of it but just to point out certain blessed features which this passage of the Holy Word presents as to the Lord Jesus and His wonderful work, and at the same time some wonderful features of this present time in which we live; for we live beloved friends in a wonderful time indeed, and also in very solemn time.

This chapter follows upon what we could have read in chapter 1 where the writer delights over the glory of the Lord Jesus. How wonderful a subject it is! This present time is characterised by this wonderful feature, God has come to this earth manifest in flesh and God has been spoken of in the Son. We are so very much privileged in having the manifestation of God in the person of the Lord Jesus. So that it says - it is very important - "we should give heed more abundantly to the things we have heard"; not to treat them lightly. We live in a very solemn time and it is very important to give heed to these things, for the greater the privilege the greater the responsibility. I would like to press it to give an impression of the very great solemnity of the present time. God has come so near to men, as near as possible; He could not come nearer. He appeared in the likeness of men and has taken upon Himself all our difficulties, all our troubles and sufferings, indeed all our sins. Is it not wonderful that we have to do with such a One? The Lord Jesus came to this earth as a Man like ourselves, sin apart (which the Holy Scripture carefully underlines), in order to bring us to His own position, to Himself. It is a wonderful thing that the Lord Jesus has taken up what we are, all that attached to us, come into our condition in order to bring us to His own wonderful condition of glory. There can be nothing greater and nothing more wonderful. Still, there is the possibility of being negligent of it. The Holy Spirit emphasised that:

"how shall we escape if we have been negligent of so great salvation?" I will say something about the word 'negligent'. In a very solemn chapter, Matthew 22, where the king gave an invitation to the wedding feast for his son, there were some who were negligent of it and went after their own things. They considered their own things more important than this wonderful invitation. But beloved, to be invited to a marriage is a very great privilege, for it means, Come and share my joy. That is what God is doing; He is inviting everybody to come and share His joy, His joy in the Son. And what is the answer of man? Is it, I have no interest in it? That is terrible and because of that we have here the warning - let us not be negligent of it. God has poured out His own heart to mankind and invites everybody to share His own feelings of joy, His own satisfaction in the Lord Jesus.

We have read of the future world, "the habitable world which is to come". The world to come will be subjected to this wonderful Man. Therefore the writer quotes the eighth Psalm where the wonderful glory of the Lord Jesus as seated on the right hand of God is described. Let us repeat it: "What is man, that thou rememberest him, or son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him some little inferior to the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast subjected all things under his feet". The writer says that is not yet fulfilled. We do not see it yet. There are four points: "Thou hast made him some little inferior to the angels"; "Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour". These two points have been fulfilled already. He *has been* made a little inferior to the angels; He has been crowned with glory and honour. Beloved, that is a warrant that these other points will be fulfilled as well. It will be all subjected to Him; He *will* be set over the works of the hands of God, and *everybody* will bow to Him; *everybody*. My dear friend, it is absolutely certain that you will bow your knees before Him; your tongue will confess Him as Lord, to the glory of the Father. If not yet, then in the future. But how blessed it is to do it *now*! in this present time, in this wonderful time of grace, to bow before Him and confess Him as your Lord, to

accept His lordship, to acknowledge Him whom God has set over all. How great it is to see Him so! Not yet is all subjected under His power. Unnumbered mouths crying, We will not that this man should reign over us, are not yet stopped. This cry is everywhere to be heard, but it will be stopped, beloved, and everybody will acknowledge Him. But there is a wonderful opportunity to do it now, to bow before Him now in the present time, in this wonderful time of grace.

What does it mean? It means being brought to glory. Verse 11 and the few verses following show us the purpose of God. "For both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one". That is a wonderful part of God's purpose. It is, of course, on the footing of His resurrection. In His condition as He was here below there could not be any relation ship with Him. It is a very deep and very precious word of our Lord Jesus when He said, "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone", John 12: 24. The Lord Jesus would have remained alone had He not died and risen again. But on this wonderful footing of resurrection all are of one. Who are they all? Those who have believed Him, who are sanctified by Him. Is it not wonderful? But what was the way He reached it? Let us read further: "Since therefore the children partake of blood and flesh, he also, in like manner, took part in the same, that through death he might annul him who has the might of death, that is, the devil". He became like us, taking part in blood and flesh condition. Why? In order to be able to die. Does it not touch your heart? He came into manhood in order to die to taste death for every thing, that is for me and for you, for everyone. The work is finished, accomplished once for all, and now as "the leader and completer of faith" (Heb 12: 2) He is set down on the right hand of God in glory, and from that wonderful position of glory an invitation is being proclaimed. It reminds me of David in the second book of Samuel, where we have at the end of chapter 8 the words: "And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice to all his people. And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was chronicler; and Zadok the son of Ahitub, and

Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests", and so on. The wonderful glory of his court is described there. All the difficulties of his life were behind him, he was now exalted to his royal glory. And what follows now? "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? ", 2 Sam 9: 1. This wonderful Overcomer, this wonderful Victor, who is seated at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour, now extends His invitation: *Is there any to whom I could show mercy?* *Mercy* is proclaimed for everybody. What a wonderful mercy!

What is in view is that He should have brethren made like Himself, to be brought into this wonderful condition "all of one" and to be brought into what we have in verse 12. "I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises"

- to be brought into His glorious assembly where the praises of God are being sung, to be made one with Him! There cannot be any greater glory, any greater mercy, than that shown by the Lord Jesus, beloved. This is the glory of this wonderful Saviour. And not only that, there are a few verses now which point to His present service to all those who have received salvation. This precious letter to the Hebrews develops that. It displays this precious truth of His present office as the High Priest, who is ever able and ever willing to help those who have confided themselves to Him. Such is our wonderful Saviour. 'I love to sing of Jesus', as the hymn says (No.290) - wonderful Person! Let us confide ourselves to Him. Let us value this wonderful privilege we have in Him. Let us give Him the praise and glory. Let us be such of whom it can be said, "I will declare thy name to my brethren", and "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises".

Let us value this wonderful privilege, to be among those who sing the praise of God in the assembly under His leading now and for all eternity, for His eternal praise and glory.

DUNDEE

22 April 1990

"KEEP THYSELF PURE"

James Renton

Hebrews 9: 13,14; 2 Timothy 2: 22; 2 Peter 3: 1; 1 Timothy 5: 21-25

It is in mind to speak about purity. We go through the world where there is plenty to contaminate, even in the religious world. One of the great needs at the present moment is, purity.

I would like to illustrate these scriptures from women in the New Testament. The first one speaks about a pure conscience, which we see in the woman in John 4. The wherewithal for a pure conscience is presented in the scripture read in Hebrews 9: "how much rather shall the blood of the Christ, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God, purify your conscience from dead

works to worship the living God?" The righteous basis has been laid by which we can have a pure conscience, which is a very important thing for every believer. In John 4, which is one of the most beautiful incidents in the New Testament, we see how the Lord Jesus in His conversation with that woman presents first of all the attractiveness of what is in God's mind in the gift of living water. He gains her confidence and her interest in such a blessing as living water; and then He raised matters which affected her conscience. Things that were not on her conscience He raises with her, not to get her depressed or unduly occupied with her history but to clear her history and to set her up with a pure conscience. He goes into her history as, dear brethren, He would go into every one of our histories. "Go, call thy husband, and come here" raises the whole matter. What had not been previously on that woman's conscience the Lord put on her conscience to clear her conscience.

We arrive at and maintain a good conscience by self-judgment; and let us understand what self-judgment is. It is not judgment of self to satisfy self, it is judgment of self to God's satisfaction. The woman arrived at a pure conscience to God's satisfaction. She said "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done". She did not say, Come see a man to whom I told all things I had ever done. That would have been to her satisfaction, but she said, Come see a Man who told me all things that I had ever done. She knew that everything was cleared, everything was out, because He had undertaken it. Selfjudgment is not judgment of self to satisfy self. Self-judgment is judgment to God's satisfaction. That woman saw herself as the Lord saw her. Self-judgment involves that we see ourselves as God sees us. That is how we arrive at a pure conscience, and how we maintain a pure conscience. "Purify your conscience from dead works to worship the living God". Did not that matter of the worship of God come into the conversation with that woman? "The Father seeks such as his worshippers". Who would such be? They would at least be persons who had a pure conscience, who saw themselves as God saw them with everything cleared to God's satisfaction. How that is needed at the present

moment! I believe that all the difficulties that arise and continue among us are due to the lack of self-judgment, having judgment of ourselves to God's satisfaction. It is elementary, but it is most important to have and maintain. Hebrews 4 indicates the process of this judgment: "For the word of God" - that is the divine standard, the word of God, the expression of the mind of God, the *logos* - "is living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and penetrating to the division of soul and spirit, both of joints, and marrow, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (vv. 12,13). It is a very inward process.

"There is not a creature unapparent before him". The word of God brings us to Him. "All things are naked and laid bare to his eyes, with whom we have to do". We have to see ourselves as God sees us. It has often been said, and it is very true, that the most difficult person for me to judge is myself. I have known men who had a pretty good judgment of everybody else except themselves. It is easier to judge others than to judge self. We tend to be easy on self. The woman who said, "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done" had come under the scrutiny of the Lord and everything was clear to His satisfaction. May this be true of every one of us.

If we had and maintained this pure conscience what a wonderful company we would be. Such persons would be in unity, would see eye to eye, have the same judgment as God has. May it become attractive to every one of us! It becomes attractive as seen in that woman in John 4. She went out in testimony to the very men whom she would likely know and who would likely know her. Her testimony was effective for they came to know the Lord for themselves. They believed not only because of her word but because they had come to the Lord themselves. True testimony would result from persons who have this pure conscience.

Now there is a pure heart, and that relates to the affections. In second Timothy it says "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". Paul writes to the Corinthians and addresses them as those who call on the name of the Lord, but in times of public ruin,

such as we are in, which second Timothy visualizes, Paul adds "out of a pure heart". I believe we see the pure heart in the woman in Luke 7. Jesus was invited to the Pharisee's house and no doubt felt the cold atmosphere, but she brought the warmth of affection that the Lord appreciated. He did not find it in the Pharisee; He does not find it in mere profession; He finds responsive affection in pure hearts. She was a woman in the city, publicly known as a sinner, but she gave herself in response to the Lord Jesus. She washed His feet with tears, wiped them with the hairs of her head. It was herself fully committed with a pure heart in response to the Lord Jesus. She was a repentant person. She was one who loved much; she had a pure heart. Think of that house, the coldness, the indifference of it; so it is with mere profession today. How the Lord Jesus values persons who have a pure heart! "Pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". May we all be concerned, dear brethren, to have this simple reality of purity of affection for our Lord Jesus Christ. How important is attachment to the Lord Jesus with a pure heart as that woman was. The Lord said to her, "Thy faith has saved thee; go in peace". She is not named. Her name could have been Faith or Peace, but whatever her name was, the Lord said to her, "Thy faith has saved thee; go in peace". The Lord said also, "Her many sins are forgiven". "She loved much". How He values a pure heart! The bridegroom says "my love, my dove, mine undefiled", Song of Songs 5: 2. You can see it in principle in that woman, not long on the Christian way, but in reality with a pure heart. May we continue in simplicity, dear brethren, with purity of affection for the Lord Jesus Christ! In second Peter we have a pure mind. In his first epistle Peter speaks about the pure mental milk of the word: "as new-born babes desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word", chap 2: 2. That, dear brethren, is to feed our minds. Our minds need food. If our minds do not feed on pure food they will be contaminated. Our minds are always occupied with something. I suppose the most important faculty a believer has is his mind. What kind of food do we provide for our minds? In the world around us there is abundance of food for the mind, but we need to be delivered from all such food and

value the pure mental milk of the word. We need to feed on pure food to maintain a pure mind. The pure mind is illustrated in Mary of Bethany. In Luke 10: 39 it says, "Mary ... having sat down at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word". She was feeding on pure food that would build up and maintain a pure mind. Our minds, I emphasise, need food. We are always thinking of something; the mind is never inactive when we are awake. The responsibility is on each one of us as to what kind of food we provide for our minds. There is an abundance of pure food in the Scriptures which would build up and maintain a pure mind.

When we think of all the contamination in the world around us, how valuable is pure food! The ministry that we value is pure food. I am not so sure about literature that is sometimes attractive to our young people. It may be more readable than the ministries that we value, but I can commend to everyone here the pure food of the ministries that the Lord has been pleased to give us in abundance in the recovery of the truth. Our brother referred to about 200 volumes. Is that not sufficient for us? Do we want anything else? The mind needs food, and there is enough in the Scriptures and ministry which has been accredited and the ministry which the Lord is giving currently. Mary of Bethany, as a result of feeding on pure food, became affectionate, but also intelligent. The Lord said, "Suffer her to have kept this for the day of my preparation for burial". The Lord had taught His disciples about the Son of man suffering, going into death and rising again, but they were not sufficiently interested; they understood not the saying; they did not follow it up; they were not interested in the suffering side; but Mary of Bethany is credited with having understood what the Lord was saying at that time. We ought to be in the current of the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will not come about without feeding our minds with pure food which is available in abundance for every one of us. May we be concerned, dear brethren, to have a pure mind! Think of what it means for the Lord Jesus to have persons here who have a pure mind to whom He can communicate what His mind is at any given moment. We read in 1 Corinthians 2: 16, "we have the mind of Christ". By means of

having the Holy Spirit we have the wherewithal - I hesitate to say it - to think as the Lord Jesus Himself thinks. What capacity we have in the Spirit of our minds!

Now in 1 Timothy, a very interesting scripture, we have "Keep thyself pure". We say this sometimes to young people and, of course, it applies to young people. How important it is for them to keep themselves pure, to keep their bodies pure! I am not minimizing the importance of this word to young people, but the context indicates it is not only for young people. The writer says, "I testify before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels" - how solemn he is in his testimony - "that thou keep these things without prejudice, doing nothing by favour". This keeping thyself pure is being without prejudice. Young people can have prejudice, but so can older ones. Prejudice and preference are two matters that we are all susceptible to. "Keep these things without prejudice, doing nothing by favour". These two matters, prejudice and preference, often hinder us in knowing what the mind of the Lord is. Then he says, "Lay hands quickly on no man, nor partake in others' sins". Verse 23 is obviously a parenthesis; he says, "Keep thyself pure. Drink no longer only water, but use a little wine on account of thy stomach and thy frequent illnesses". Verse 24 obviously links with verse 22: "Lay hands quickly on no man, nor partake in others' sins". "Of some men the sins are manifest beforehand, going before to judgment, and some also they follow after". In between there comes verse 23; "Keep thyself pure". I believe the emphasis is, keep thyself from wrong influence. This applies not only to young people but to elderly ones too. Lay hands quickly on no man. Do not commit yourself too quickly. Keep thyself from wrong influence. We are all susceptible to wrong influence. This was written to Timothy and he is mentioned in this epistle as having youth: "Let no one despise thy youth" (chap 4: 12) for he would be younger than some of his contemporaries, but he was to have moral power and authority.

There were at least seven kings of Judah who were good kings, helped of God, some in a remarkable way, but they failed

when they were old. This is a word therefore for those of us who are older. Beginning with Solomon, what a bright start he had! What a wonderful king he was! He had wisdom, given of God. What happened to him when he was older? He took 700 wives. That was not very wise, was it? They influenced him; they turned away his heart at the end of his life. We need to keep ourselves pure when we are old. "Keep thyself pure, Drink no longer only water, but use a little wine on account of thy stomach and thy frequent illnesses". If we get weak in body, old and feeble, we are more liable to be wrongly influenced. It seems to me this verse 23 comes in in that context. Then Asa, a good king who was greatly helped, was characterised by dependence on God, but at the end of his life he ceased to depend on God, but on the king of Syria for help. Jehoshaphat was a commendable man in many ways, but he made alliance with the ungodly. Joash, another good king, began as a young man and while Jehoiada the priest was alive, when under right influence, he was commendable and helped of God. Johoiada died, and Joash began to be wrongly influenced by princes. Uzziah was marvellously helped, but later he presumed to take up matters that he was not qualified for and became a leper. Hezekiah began a wonderful recovery in his time, and was a pious king, but later succumbed to the flattery of the men of Babylon. Josiah was a great man who set on a great passover; there was no such passover since the time of Samuel. Think of the help Josiah received from God. Then what happened to him? He tried to interfere in a matter that was not his responsibility. Dear elder brethren, keep thyself pure. Brothers and sisters, keep thyself pure. It is a word for all of us.

We are rightly concerned about our young people. I am a little more concerned about elderly ones who know the truth, have taught us, and instead of uniting they tend to divide the brethren. That is a greater concern. We may have been greatly helped when we were younger - I am addressing older ones, and I am one of them - but let us continue in humility and dependence, and keep ourselves pure. Nehemiah consulted with himself; David strengthened himself in Jehovah his God, the God he knew. Nehemiah had intimacy with

God, he often appeals to God. He is in touch with God. In consulting with himself he would be acquiring the mind of God. I have no doubt Mary of Magdala in John 20 was keeping herself pure. She had one Object to the exclusion of all else.

Dear brethren that is all I have to say. I say to young people and to older ones, keep thyself pure for the Lord's own sake. Amen.

PLAINFIELD

29 May 1989

CHILDREN AND PROPHECY

In our minds, prophecy has often been confined to the fore-telling of events. In Scripture however it means also the 'speaking forth' of the present mind of God through persons chosen and available at the time. Thus we say that prophetic speaking always has its 'bearing' upon all who receive it. The book of Hosea, the first of the 'Minor Prophets', records that by a prophet the people of Israel were brought out of Egypt and by a prophet they were preserved. Doubtless this was Moses.

As would be expected, prophecy has come and comes mainly through men, although we read in the Scriptures of prophetesses, some older and some relatively young, some married and others unmarried, also a widow. As to children there was one child, Samuel, who was divinely taught to speak out God's mind for the then people of Israel. Besides all these there have been angels who were called upon to utter the divine mind in connection with the birth and life of John and of the Lord Jesus Himself, and also in other circumstances.

The prophet Elisha had much to do with young people. There were always the sons of the prophets who represent those who have an interest in the truth of God but who need to be taught in His school by word and by example. Also mention is made of individuals such as the maiden in Naaman's house and the two sons of the poor widow. You will remember too that he brought back to life a child of tender age. The boy sneezed seven times and then opened his

eyes. This miracle shows that when God in His grace gives a new life to us, however young, we should use the power to open and keep open the eyes of faith. Do you do so?

J.C.Evershed