

A
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THE PRACTICE OF THE TRUTH (3)

Philippians 2: 1-21; 1 John 3: 1-6; Psalm 133: 1-3

B.M.D. We might see from these passages how the practice of the truth involves unity: unity in the truth and unity in love, worked out in the family of God . No doubt the beloved brethren have been thinking over these things, and their conversations have shown that the exercise may be that questions would have to be raised as to it. The great thought of oneness is a fine thought with God. The Lord in His prayer to the Father said, "that they may be one", and He adds, "as we" (John 17: 11) - a very remarkable statement, as if the unity of the Godhead would be reflected in what is formed here in the assembly. In fact the Lord uses that word, "one in us" (v 21) and "as we are one" (v 22). That is a very remarkable allusion to the Father. I thought we should make time for one another and for questions that may be helpful to us all. I counted this morning the number of times that Paul refers to rejoicing - at least seven in this epistle. It is a question of "Happy are thy men! happy are these thy servants ...!", 1 Kings 10: 8. Paul would enthuse over that even though he was chained. In everything , in circumstances that could have depressed him, he is enthusing in the happy liberty of the children of God among these beloved Philippian brethren.

Ques. Why the "if" here?

B.M.D. I think it bears upon our enquiry: we are to prove the thing in its practice. I do not think it is the 'if' of any doubt. We would prove that there is such a thing as "comfort in Christ" and "consolation of love". These two sets of four things culminate in "thinking one thing". That could not be arrived at on any democratic principle.

A.P.D. Would that involve the same source?

B.M.D. It comes from the same source. The source of infinite oneness is its very nature - oneness in love, is it not? It is wonderful to think that the very nature of God will be reflected in His operations.

W.M. It is interesting that the Spirit is brought in too: the "fellowship of the Spirit".

B.M.D. So unity is there too, the unity of the Spirit which we are to keep "in the uniting bond of peace", Eph 4: 3. Things have to be worked through, but we do need to keep the clear objective in view, and that is oneness.

Ques. Is there a distinction between oneness and unity?

B.M.D. Do you think there is a difference?

Rem. I think perhaps oneness is a finer thing, related to the Godhead.

B.M.D. I would agree with that: it is a finer thing.

W.M. Does unity involve that there may have been separation but that we have come together, but in oneness there never has been separation.

B.M.D. Oneness is indivisible; that is very good. That is what we arrive at, is it not? "As we are one": the assembly, though a creature, will in that sense be a reflection of it, so near the Deity as having been formed by the Spirit and reflecting that oneness. It is seen in the city.

A.P.D. Where there might be divergence as to impressions of the truth, how do we come to the truth?

B.M.D. That is a very practical question. The practice of the truth involves working through things, does it not, and I think these scriptures lead us to see that things are worked through in the warmth of family affections. Even in our natural settings, in our families, they teach us: "Does not even nature itself teach you ...?", 1 Cor 11: 14. It teaches you something that is far greater. I suppose in all our families we have problems to be worked through, and they are worked through in an atmosphere of affection and confidence and love.

A.P.D. So if we can maintain that atmosphere of confidence and affection, the truth will prevail.

B.M.D. I am sure of that. It is where distance comes in that problems become multiplied. They become far more than they need to. Love would keep things in perspective.

Ques. Is this going-down mind essential for that?

B.M.D. We understand that this chapter would solve every problem. There is only one mind, the mind which is in Christ Jesus. It is the goingdown mind. This chapter is like the central pillar of Christianity, the mind which is in Christ Jesus, those downward steps. It runs along with John 1 and 1 Timothy 3, "God ... manifested in flesh" (v 16). We need to dwell more and more in the area of the humanity of Jesus - feed there, live there. That mind which is in Christ Jesus is to be in us.

Rem. So often disunity comes in because human minds are at work and persons get entrenched in a certain line of thinking and will not give it up; that going-down mind is the answer to those kinds of things on the part of all of us.

B.M.D. That is right; they work on the human will, and naturally there are as many wills here as we are persons. There are as many wills in the world as the population of the world. Wherein lies the remedy? It is in the going-down mind. A moral glory attaches to that going-down mind.

Ques. Is what Paul refers to here as "thinking one thing" more than just unity in relation to doctrine? Immediately before, he speaks of "joined in soul". Does it not involve an inward affinity? It is not arrived at from what is outward. It relates to our bonds in nature to one another. Is that how it is brought about?

B.M.D. I think what you are saying is right It is the way we have been formed in the truth by the Spirit. We could just agree to the terms of the truth which would not go far enough. "Thinking one thing" is really an organic allusion to the working of the Spirit - a wonderful thing to arrive at and no doubt brings its challenge to us as we speak of it.

Rem. "Joined in soul" would involve our affections too, this inward bond with one another.

B.M.D. That is right; "joined in soul" is a very fine thing. We are all wrapped up together in the one "bundle of the living" (1 Sam 25: 29) and it leads to this finer point - if we can distinguish - of "thinking one thing". The "consolation of love"; and "fellowship of the Spirit" and "bowels and compassions" I think relate to the way we have been led in recent years from the depth of suffering and anguish that most of the beloved brethren have had to go through and are still going through. My feeling is the Lord has used that to bring about an inward tenderness in the way love is operating horizontally among the brethren.

T.E.D. I was wondering about that in relation to verse 29 of chapter 1: "because to you has been given, as regards Christ, not only the believing on him but the suffering for him also".

B.M.D. Yes, that is very affecting; "suffering for him also" is added. If we relate the pressures of the way to that level, we shall see the moral glory attaching to it and, more than that, it will help us to be overcomers in the pressure as suffering for Him also. There is nothing that you or I or any of us here are going through in which He Himself has not gone before.

W.M. It is regarded as a privilege: "to you has been given"; it is not given to everyone.

B.M.D. That is a challenge. Do we accept it as a privilege to suffer for Him?

W.M. It says that in the Acts: "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonoured for the name", chap 5: 41.

B.M.D. That is a wonderful level to arrive at. Whether we have done that would be a challenge to most of us.

T.E.D. That was the beginning at Philippi, the men rejoicing in the prison; suffering really precedes rejoicing.

B.M.D. Yes, and I think brings in a quality and a tenderness among those who are drawn together in the suffering. That must have been

a remarkable scene in that prison.

W.M. Should we think of the feelings of the Godhead? The Father has given the Son. What it has cost Him! What it has cost the Spirit in the place that He has taken!

B.M.D. The patience of God is a most affecting contemplation, is it not? "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son", Rom 8: 32. It is as if He weighed the whole matter and "has not spared his own Son". And, of course, the sufferings of Christ stand out in their uniqueness. We need to feed on them constantly. And then your allusion to the Spirit, also. Think of the patience of the Spirit! He has been here nigh two thousand years - and think of the public position! The groanings of the Spirit!

W.M. Restraining evil but going on with the insult of the clerical system and other things!

B.M.D. And yet thankful for those that might be available for the Spirit! Oh let us be among them! Let us humble ourselves more and more and be vessels available to the Spirit to bring out the finest thoughts, because I believe that something special awaits the closing moments of the testimony. And I think that may relate to eternal life.

E.F.C. Spiritual refinement, would you say, is one of the great objectives of divine Persons? That is how this letter is written - with spiritual refinement.

B.M.D. Paul personally has arrived at that. He does not know how things will go with him. It might be near the very end, but there is that refinement coming out which he is imparting to these beloved Philippian brethren who are bound up with him in his affections. Maybe he would not see them again, but they had revived their thinking of him, and there is a peculiar bond in maturity of love existing between the apostle and these beloved saints.

Rem. "For let this mind be in you": the mind comes into the matter. Souls and affections have to be there, but the mind has to be inclined to do these things.

B.M.D. It is most important that our minds should be under control. That is often where the problems begin, our minds begin to work. Where was the mind which was in Christ Jesus? Everything relates itself to the humanity of that blessed Person. This is really the pillar of Christianity.

E.F.C. It does not mean that we give up the truth at all in proceeding in this way, does it? It means that we are getting at the truth in all its fulness and blessedness in a Man.

B.M.D. It would be impossible for such a person even to contemplate giving up the truth. The truth is in Jesus. It is in the Person we are attached to. It is in the Spirit; the Spirit is the truth.

Rem. What is particularly critical at the moment is not that we might have some different impressions of the truth, but the way in which the word goes out among the brethren.

B.M.D. I think so. We are in an atmosphere of brotherly affection and attachment.

Ques. And respect?

B.M.D. Exactly, confidence among brethren, the brotherly bond. We need to see to it that it is kept, that it is intact, not destroyed. We referred yesterday to Paul having to withstand Peter to the face, but it did not interfere with the brotherly bond. If it does, the basis of working the thing out is destroyed.

J.N.C. When Abigail went down she provided herself with loaves and wine and raisin-cakes, so the matter was arrived at with David in an atmosphere of rich provision, was it not?

B.M.D. That is very helpful. She is in keeping with this chapter, going down, and they met at the bottom, did they not? She had the wherewithal to meet a very delicate situation and really saved the situation. It is a wonderful thing to display that spirit in our local meeting.

W.M. She brought out that kind of spirit in David.

B.M.D. Exactly, and adjusted him, but she met it, in a sense, positively. That really is the principle: you overcome evil with good.

E.F.C. It is "the goodness of God" that "leads thee to repentance", Rom 2: 4. Did she display the "goodness of God" as well as His kindness? That disarmed David.

B.M.D. We need to retain those things and deepen in them in our own histories. "The goodness of God" that led each of us "to repentance" should be reflected in the way I work things out among my brethren.

J.N.C. She never forgot the great objective that God had before Him in relation to David for she said, "because my lord fights the battles of Jehovah", 1 Sam 25: 28. So the truth was maintained in her whole manner of approach.

B.M.D. And she had a judgment of the thing. She realised David could have gone too far, and she not only adjusts him but maintains, in some sense abstractly, his kingship. So, as our brother says, there is no question of giving up any feature of the truth. It is maintained in the spirit of the going-down mind.

W.M. And how wonderful to take account of the Lord Jesus here in humanity, how He maintained that "one mind". The enemy sought to move Him from it; he sought to encourage Him to exercise His powers as a divine Person, but He refused to leave the place of dependence.

B.M.D. That is right. The temptations bring that out. He could have made that stone become bread by one word, but He did not move from the sphere of dependent humanity. It is not so much going into the preciousness of these downward steps - I expect we have been over that many times and have never exhausted the wonderment of what was effected there - but I thought from verse 12 we would see the sequel of that: he says, "So that, my beloved". Think of the affectionate way He is addressing these brethren! He says, "even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling". That is a sequel to the previous section.

W.M. How do we work out our own salvation?

B.M.D. We work it out as maintaining the principles of God's house, in the atmosphere of the house, and that is love.

W.M. It speaks in verse 13 of God working; the Spirit would work it out.

B.M.D. That is right: "For it is God who works in you both the willing and the working according to his good pleasure". What a wonderful thing that the Spirit of God promotes a willingness, a willing spirit! We read of a "willing people", Song of Sol 6: 12. Thank God there is that spirit of willingness to work things out to a divine conclusion.

Ques. Had they to work out things in that locality, Philippi, on their own: "work out your own salvation"? We need help to work things out in our localities. We cannot depend on others outside, we need to work together.

B.M.D. It is a local responsibility. You may seek counsel - which would be right - but it is local responsibility and it has to be strengthened. You do not interfere with other meetings. Yet we carry exercises prayerfully in a priestly way so that unity universally is maintained. Is that right?

Rem. How important it is! I think the Lord generally gives us enough resources in the locality to work things out, and it is a very wonderful experience to have that, to work through matters together. We may not know the answer to every problem or to everything that may arise, but we can get help together.

B.M.D. And there is patience and forbearance. All these things come in. You are working to a conclusion, are you not? When we come to the Psalm, as we may, it comes right down to the hem of the garments. We want things completed, do we not? The Lord had to raise that in Sardis: "I have not found thy works complete", Rev 3: 2. So you are working to a conclusion. You are not accepting a lower ground at all. The ground reached is unity and completeness.

Rem. Paul was not going to be available any more; really, that is what he is saying.

B.M.D. That is his concern. He realises that he may not see them again, he may be gone, and they are to work things out, their own salvation. We have been left with a wonderful - might I say - fund of help in the ministry. All the principles are there, but where maybe the lack lies is, am I formed in those principles and able to apply them? Generally it is not the truth itself that would disturb us; it is in its application where we get into trouble. That is humbling and should not be. "One thing": the organic thing to be arrived at was to be of the same mind.

Ques. Why is "fear and trembling" necessary in working these things out?

B.M.D. . It keeps us humble; it keeps us dependent. You do not think you have all the answers. You feel your way with your local brethren, those available.

Rem. It is because of what we are, what the flesh is, that we go on in fear and trembling. The flesh is what disturbs all this.

B.M.D. That is exactly right.

A.P.D. In the light of the introduction of Paul, Peter says to Aeneas, "Jesus, the Christ, heals thee", which would be important, do you think, as well as, "rise up, and make thy couch for thyself", Acts 9: 34.

B.M.D. That would run along with this: "make thy couch for thyself".

A.P.D. But then healing is very much needed amongst us and we need to bring the Lord in, do you think?

B.M.D. It is important to bring this out because there are many beloved souls who are grappling with dreadful wounds; you feel for them and it is very difficult to get at the root of the problem. Those wounds are very deep but where does the healing come from? They must get it directly from the Lord. He is the great Healer. He is the Saviour. What would you say?

A.P.D. I am sure that is right. Jesus said in Luke 10: "Go, and do thou likewise" (v 37), as if they had the means in the local assembly

to bring in healing - the oil and the wine should be available, for instance.

B.M.D. He bound up those wounds. How tenderly he would do that! He would understand feelingly what that poor man was going through in his half-dead state. He would say there is some life there. He bound up those wounds and then, of course, he took him to the local meeting - suggested I suppose, in the inn: "Take care of him". This is greatly needed in our local meetings, and it is there. Thank God it is there. we are not just speaking abstractly. There is a great deal of affectionate care among the brethren.

Ques. Is that why Paul refers to Luke, because he was the beloved physician? He is like the Samaritan. And Timothy would "care with genuine feeling how ye get on".

B.M.D. How tenderly he would reflect that, how the saints were getting on. He was "like-minded" with Paul; he caught on to Paul's spirit. Timothy sets out the kind of maturity that will maintain the testimony to the end.

W.M. Do you think we can each be a Timothy? We cannot be Paul, but we can be a Timothy.

B.M.D. Let us seek the grace to be a Timothy. We cannot be Paul, but we can imitate him - "genuine feeling how ye get on".

Rem. Timothy's actions would speak louder than his words as he worked out the truth and displayed it among the brethren wherever he went. I understand that Paul sent him to four different places according to the epistles.

B.M.D. Well, one was Corinth. He sent Timothy there. I wonder how he got on.

E.F.C. We do not have his words. It says, he will "put you in mind of my ways as they are in Christ, according as I teach everywhere in every assembly", 1 Cor 4: 17.

B.M.D. I have a feeling that Timothy might have sat through the first few meetings and never said a word - for the simple reason that he was not given the opportunity. All these kings sitting there and ten

thousand instructors, the timid Timothy might not have got in. But he waited. And someone, maybe from the household of Chloe, would have said, That young brother is like Paul. Someone would begin to get the point, do you not think? He did not force himself. Now, that is the going-down mind.

E.F.C. My mind goes back to a reading we had years ago in Chicago with Mr H.F.Nunnerley - the older brethren will remember him. He took up those four aspects of Timothy's service among the various assemblies. I thought it was very touching.

B.M.D. Well, let us be imitators of Paul, even as he is of Christ (see 1 Cor 11: 1). That is how the testimony will continue in unity and power and affection until the Lord comes, in the face of "For all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ". But then we passed over an important word earlier where it speaks of "harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God". Now that is the family, the "children of God". There is a family circle here: "harmless and simple , irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation". That is a wonderful thing, that persons are so formed in the truth that they express features of the family of God. God is represented in His children.

E.F.C. Is that what you had in mind in the scripture in 1 John 3?

B.M.D. Yes, what we are leading into. It is a prime thought of God.

W.M. And it belongs to the present moment.

B.M.D. Yes, and it will go through into eternity: God will have a family. Scripture speaks of the house of God but also of "the household of God" (Eph 2: 19): that is the personnel. So he is addressing them here as "my beloved", but then he says, "harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God".

Ques. Is that really the product of what we have in the first eleven verses?

B.M.D. That is right. How attractive it is! Simple. Someone once said, when things get complicated, Stop! there is something wrong. Christianity is simple.

Rem. I was also thinking of the word "harmless", persons not able to hurt anyone. We will arrive at that by what the first eleven verses speak of.

B.M.D. That is a fine thing: you do not hurt anybody. "Harmless", not "grievous wolves" who would not spare the flock. Harmless, and yet they are not giving away anything as to the glory and honour of Christ. They maintain everything in the spirit, the going-down mind, of Christ. In a way it is disarming.

T.E.D. Is it the result of hearing His voice, as you mentioned to us last night? "Holding forth the word of life" would result from our being in company with the Lord and hearing what He would say.

B.M.D. I am sure: the words of the Lord Jesus. Paul brings that in in Acts 20: "the words of the Lord Jesus" (v 35). He is reflecting this harmless spirit among the brethren, but he is warning them there of what would come in after his departure; but along with that it is love's chapter - in the beginning, in the middle and in the end, as has been pointed out. We work things out in an atmosphere of affection and thank God it is among the brethren. It is! We rejoice in it!

W.M. And yet how wonderful that God has put light here "in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation". What there is, and God is fully represented by it.

B.M.D. "Holding forth the word of life" means how the truth is held in the vitality of life, not in the letter. It would be fatal to approach the truth in a legal sense. We must approach it in the vitality of life. That is why John's writings are really the complement to Paul.

W.M. That is the result of the Holy Spirit being here.

B.M.D. It is the result of the indwelling Spirit. This is "life on account of righteousness", Rom 8: 10. There would be a link, as our brother has alluded to John, in the children of God: "Beloved, now are we children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is". That is a very wonderful statement.

J.M.B. It is a wonderful thing - what it will be! How do you think it comes about? It says, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is".

B.M.D. I think it comes about in our knowledge of the Father's love. He is the origin of all: "See what love the Father has given to us". "For the Father himself has affection for you", the Lord says, "because ye have had affection for me", John 16: 27. The Father is the origin of it all, the Father of all.

J.M.B. Seeing Him as He is would involve not just seeing Him with our eyes, but it is "as he is". It would involve the moral glories of the Person in expression.

B.M.D. It is still a time of faith; we have not seen the Lord actually yet, but we shall presently. It is not 'as He was' - we had that yesterday, what they handled, what their eyes saw: they literally saw Jesus. But now it is "as he is": "we shall see him as he is".

Rem. It is not what He was during the forty days.

B.M.D. No, it is His present condition and position.

Rem. And it has not been revealed yet.

B.M.D. He has been received up in glory; we are told that. Again it is an area where we are governed by what Scripture tells us and we cannot go beyond that. Yet we know Him there by faith and by the Spirit's power. I am quoting again: We need to know Him where He is to be like Him where He was.

A.P.D. What does it mean, "what we shall be has not yet been manifested"?

B.M.D. I suppose it awaits the change: "has not yet been manifested".

A.P.D. There is much that we do know, but does this mean that it will be even more wonderful than anything we realise?

B.M.D. I believe that. I do not think we are yet in the condition to understand or to enable the Spirit to disclose what we shall be. It is

mystery. We await it, but the hope of it and the joy of it should fill our souls. One thing we know: we are going to be like Him.

'Like Jesus in that place' (Hymn 64)

That should quicken every heart to be engaged with Him there where He is.

W.M. It is beyond the resurrection: it is when He is manifested.

B.M.D. Well, you would have your body of glory. We cannot say too much as to that. There was His body in resurrection. He ate and drank before them and apparently the marks of His sufferings were in that body. He assembled with them after He had suffered. Not much is told us about the forty days. Much more must have happened than is recorded, but sufficient is recorded to engage us with a Man out of death.

J.N.C. Would "as he is" involve His glory? He says, "As I also have overcome, and have sat, down with my Father in his throne", Rev 3: 21. There is a certain glory attaching to the Lord Jesus as risen and ascended into heaven. God has made Him "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2: 36); that seemed to come forcibly before Peter. So there is a certain glory of His present position; we look forward to the ability to appreciate that.

B.M.D. I think so. It is very remarkable that what you quote is to the overcomer in Laodicea: "as I also have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in his throne". Is there not a tenderness in that, as if He is saying, I have had to overcome too! Not what we have had to overcome! "I also": what a peculiar tenderness of an appeal to an overcomer in Laodicea.

J.N.C. After having been outside and knocking at the door.

B.M.D. And "with my Father in his throne" is the very essence of the divine nature, is it not? It is where the whole matter has come from, and He is inviting in some sense to enter feelingly into that atmosphere.

E.F.C. Could you help us as to verse 3 of chapter 3 of 1 John: "And every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is

pure".

B.M.D. Do you not think it bears on the practical effect the things we are speaking of should have on each of us?

E.F.C. This hope we have is a living and abiding hope. It cannot be taken from us.

B.M.D. So what we have is the practice of the truth. We are engaged with wonderful things, in some sense too great fully to engage our understanding, but there is something in it that stimulates a desire, so "he purifies himself, even as he" - that is Christ - "is pure". It is a longing to be more like Him.

E.F.C. So to contemplate Christ is the safest activity that we can be engaged in, just to look at Him, and the formation takes place.

B.M.D. "We see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour", Heb 2: 9. We see Jesus up there by faith, but we see Him down here. We see Him in one another today. We see Jesus here, do we not, in the brethren? So "we see Jesus"; that is the "me"; it is Christ here.

E.F.C. Then practically we are to be as lights "in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation". That would be the reflection of Christ amongst men.

B.M.D. What crookedness has come in in the outward profession! What challenges have been raised as to our Lord's resurrection and the sanctity of His birth! There would be a holy resentment of such persons by those who are pursuing with a pure mind devotedness to Christ; and we should feel the dreadful error, the apostasy, that is sweeping in. It should bring out an inward resentment in a true lover of Christ.

W.M. I suppose nothing can affect what is eternal; it is fixed. The enemy cannot do anything against what we are going to be, but he can affect us in what we are now.

B.M.D. He cannot touch Christ up there, but he does attack Christ down here. Well, we will just spend a moment on the Psalm, well known to us. Someone said yesterday how many upward steps there were. Is it not the upward way here?

E.F.C. Fifteen: this is the fourteenth step on the ladder.

B.M.D. Let us get caught up on the upward way, and "how good and how pleasant" - notice that, "good" and "pleasant". "Happy are thy men! happy are these thy servants", 1 Kings 10: 8. It is the spirit of rejoicing enthused by the apostle to these beloved saints. Let us catch it on!

W.M. "For these hath Jehovah commanded the blessing." It is moral conditions that God can work in and promote the blessing.

B.M.D. "Dwell together": those two words. "Dwell together in unity"! It is more than just formal; it is more than just a congregation of units; "dwell together" is a moral oneness.

Ques. Do you think that, where there is real unity, there can be real fellowship, and where there is real fellowship there can be real progress amongst the saints?

B.M.D. I am sure. We grow in that atmosphere of real fellowship, do we not? Fellowship means a good deal.

Rem. The Lord has set us here to enrich one another, and disunity prevents the flow and exchange of impressions of Christ that He has in mind in true fellowship.

B.M.D. So the thing builds up in an atmosphere of brethren dwelling together. It is how a meeting proceeds, is it not? It is right, I suppose, to set on some kind of lead, but it is the mutual way that things are working out that the Spirit is developing. I do not know how you feel, but we need to get away as much as possible from anything at all that savours of officialdom. I know in these meetings we cannot avoid a bit of it, but I wish we could. We are just here as brethren.

Rem. I think too that we should have an impression of what can be achieved in conditions of true fellowship. As the Spirit is leading, what can be achieved amongst the saints is very significant.

B.M.D. Well, you are thinking of it: it can be done. We are not speaking of something that is beyond us. It can be, to use your word, achieved, but only in the power of the Spirit. That is what

comes in here: it is "Like the precious oil"; it is pervading the whole position. This is the tabernacle; the whole system was anointed. That would be dignity, but its inward working would be in the bond of affection.

W.M. So that the flow of the oil and the descent of the dew all speak of the way that the Spirit would come into this matter.

B.M.D. I think so, the dew particularly emphasising freshness and the inward vitality of living conditions.

Ques. Is the inward side referred to in "that ye may think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul"?

B.M.D. That is the inwards of a person, the depth of his feelings, the soul, "joined in soul", joined in the depths of our inwards. It is not just a superficial thing. That is very helpful.

E.F.C. So we had the "fellowship of the Spirit" in Philippians 2 and Paul refers to "the communion of the Holy Spirit", 2 Cor 13: 14. Now we have here the brethren dwelling together in unity. Would that be the side we have in Ephesians 4: "using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" (v 3)?

B.M.D. I would like to suggest that this is the practice and enjoyment of the way those precious features have been formed in brethren dwelling together.

E.F.C. So our relations with the Spirit are very important, are they not?

B.M.D. The Psalms are experience. They are the practice of the very things we are speaking about; otherwise they are just help as terms. That is not enough. The thing is seen in practical, happy enjoyment among the brethren; and the whole position dignified, I suppose, would be alluded to in that "precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, upon Aaron's beard". It is the dignity of the whole position.

W.M. And the headship of Christ - the oil upon the head.

B.M.D. Exactly. It is pervading the whole position, and it comes right down to the hem of his garments. What is that?

W.M. That is the saints.

B.M.D. No loose edges, no frayed edges, nothing incomplete. It is perfect; and the assembly will be perfect.

WM. The border of blue would be there.

B.M.D. The heavenly touch - exactly.

Ques. Does the Lord have this in mind when He says, "for one is your instructor, and all ye are brethren", Matt 23: 8? Would you say more about getting away from what is official.

B.M.D. Well, let us do it, as much as we can. I think there may be a way we can get away from what is official and share things. I think these readings help in the mutuality that enters into them and maybe that needs to be promoted a little more. There are quite a few brothers we have not heard from yet, but you do not get at it that way. Paul is enthusing this spirit of happy, mutual liberty and rejoicing among the brethren. So you come in without really thinking you are doing it. You are drawn into the current, as in your family. You do not stand on ceremony in your family, do you? Not many of us did.

Rem. I was wondering if it is like the Spirit: "Or, what woman having ten drachmas, if she lose one drachma, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek carefully till she find it?", Luke 15: 8. The Spirit is trying to bring it into circulation.

B.M.D. Bring the silver piece into circulation. What is the use of it in a corner covered with dust? This is divine Persons working. That is the theme: "till she find it" and then, "Rejoice with me". It is a direct link with the Philippian epistle, is it not? ·

W.M. And they are working together.

B.M.D. Surely. Why should one piece of money be out of circulation?

W.M. The shepherd was seeking the sheep; the woman was sweeping for the piece of silver; and the father is running to embrace his returning son.

B.M.D. It is God moving from His side.

Ques. Is David pointing out the glory of the Holy Spirit? Not only is the working of it being seen, but the fact that he gives two verses to, you might say, the Holy Spirit, is giving credit to Him, but it is pointing out the glory there. Is that right?

B.M.D. So he uses an adjective - 'precious' oil. It is as if, from the suggestion of the Spirit, He has become endeared to us in His personality, and He is precious - "precious oil". We speak of the precious Saviour and of precious blood; in a way you can attach 'precious' to each of the Persons of the Godhead, but not just doctrinally, it is what you have found Them out to be for yourself.

T.E.D. Is that the experience of those we spoke of yesterday? It says, "a possession among the brethren of our father" (Num 27: 4) bringing in the brotherly side of things.

B.M.D. In which side of the Jordan do you think they would have found their inheritance?

T.E.D. The heavenly side.

B.M.D. But they had to face division in Manasseh. Half of the tribe did not go all the way. I think the daughters of Zelophehad went all the way; do you not think so?

T.E.D. Sure, it leads right into Ephesians, does it not? It is God's inheritance in the saints. They begin to feed in a wholly new environment.

B.M.D. Those beloved sisters were not satisfied until they had an inheritance on the other side of the Jordan. Oh let us be like that! Let us reach Christ where He is! It means my death with Him. That is the Jordan: our death with Christ, but to reach Him in a deathless scene where the shadow of death can never come - that is the experience of eternal life.

W.M. You do not need a witness if that is true.

B.M.D. You prove it yourself. You prove the blessedness of it. This Psalm is experience. I think there is a lot in what our brother is saying about these daughters of Zelophehad. They speak right and are not content until they go all the way and secure the inheritance in the land. What a land it is! I wonder if we have touched much of it yet.

T.E.D. You say they are content. The other side is that they are not contentious. I hesitate to bring that in and yet in all the sorrows of the testimony there is a danger of being contentious, but if we speak right and come into the enjoyment and are content, that has its own expression in this "life for evermore".

B.M.D. That is very interesting because Moses took the matter before Jehovah to get the answer, and it is the word that came from God: "The daughters of Zelophehad speak right". Moses was not too sure how to handle the situation, so we have to come over to the divine side and be with God in what we are doing.

E.F.C. And the brethren came round to it too. In the last chapter of Numbers their brethren confirmed that they should have their inheritance.

B.M.D. And it became a statute in Israel, and that still obtains. So let our committal be to this, to go all the way into the fulness of the joy of eternal life.

MINISTRY IN LONDON (1)

J.C.Evershed

Luke 22: 1,2,7-9,14-16

I have been feeling somewhat lately, dear brethren, the need of being nearer to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. When I was quite young it was often said, Keep close to the cross. One would have done better to have taken more heed to it. There is need to be near the sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

It is a vast subject and much has been written about it and I do not pretend to be able to expound it, but we have here what must have touched the Lord's heart as the time went on. First of all the scripture speaks of "the feast of unleavened bread" (v 1), and then "the day of unleavened bread" (v.7), and then "when the hour was come" (v 14). It is not that one wanted to limit the side of enjoyment of Christianity, but I believe it leaves with us just that need of being nearer to His sorrows.

The feast of unleavened bread would for us be an exercise, as it was when it was convened, that they had to exclude all that was in the way of what would puff up. The way was made for the people to have occasion to learn the truth and consider its bearing as it is now. We have it in the Scriptures. "The passover drew nigh" - what must the Lord have felt as the passover time came. He would not feel in any way limited in His affections for His own, but rather did He look to them for consolation in the midst of His sorrows. I am sure they meant very much to the Lord Jesus. If we are faithful where we need to suffer on account of limitations, we would regard it as the Lord being pleased and He would promote it.

Then it comes to "the day of unleavened bread" when the passover was to be killed. No-one would know the Lord's mind fully as to that. They would be considering things but the Lord would have in mind that He was going to suffer Himself. And then "when the hour was come, he placed himself at table". The Lord was going to feed them well, one might say, and what a feast it was, dear

brethren! - the word as to "His own" and what He would have Himself in the time of the kingdom and then what He would have in the saints of this dispensation in the Supper being instituted in order that the counsels of God may be furthered; and the Lord would suffer for it. Of course, there are actual sufferings later in this chapter, and in the following chapters there are many ways in which the Lord suffered. It would often solve some of our problems, I feel, if one were closer to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. In His Name.

MINISTRY IN LONDON (2)

David Hutson

Genesis 1: 26,27; 2: 7; 1 Peter 1: 18-21; Revelation 21: 3,4

We sang, beloved, of the counsels of God in relation to the making of man (hymn 61). I noticed that our brother in what he has said to us, which I am sure I feel the need of for myself as to keeping near to the sufferings of Christ, referred to the counsels of God. Another has said it was in counsel that Jesus became a Man and died; no doubt that is confirmed in the scripture that I read in 1 Peter. But what was affecting me regarding the making of man, referred to in the hymn, was the peculiar place that man has in the creation of God. That may be obvious, but I believe it is good to see the distinctive place that man has even in the record of creation. There are the days which preceded, the first five days, when God, by the divine fiat, brought much about: "Let there be light ... Let there be expanse ... Let the waters under the heavens be gathered", and so on. But there seems to be this peculiar - may I say carefully - deliberation on the part of God in relation to man: "Let us make man in our image". It does not say, Let us make light, or any of the other things, but "Let us make man". There seems to be that peculiar place which man has in the counsels of God before us in those words. And then "God created Man in his image", and so on. Then the detail of it in chapter 2: "And Jehovah Elohim formed Man, dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and Man became a living soul".

But God was not taken unawares by the incoming of sin. The history in chapter 3 is well known to us. How soon God ceased to find His pleasure in man we do not know. When Eve was deceived by the craft of the devil and man came under the power of Satan and sin, how soon it was we do not know, but we know something of the feelings of God and as we sometimes sing:

Soon as the reign of sin began,
The light of mercy dawned on man,

When God announced the blessed news,
The woman's Seed thy head shall bruise.

(Hymn 366)

So we see in Peter, what we are often reminded of, that the second Man was in the purpose of God before the first man failed in responsibility. But what is so striking is that it says as to this matter, involving the sufferings of Christ which our beloved brother has referred to: "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world". It struck me in a reference in ministry recently that these things in relation to man, and in relation to God finally securing man for His pleasure and glory, were in the counsels and purpose of God even before the material was created of which man was made. That is why I read in Genesis that He "formed Man, dust of the ground". But before even there was any ground, before there was anything, before God created the heavens and the earth, before there was any material out of which man could be formed, yet the counsels of God go right back. And even then there was every provision for all that would come in in time, all that would come in in that creation, before its purpose was finished and new heavens and a new earth introduced. But even before it was created, everything was there in the mind of God, in the counsels of God and the purpose of God, and it all related to man and to that blessed One who would come into manhood Himself in order that all the purpose of God should be secured by those sufferings of which our brother has spoken to us so feelingly. I am sure that we should have these things more in our minds, the great place that man has and, may I say, the longterm view which God has taken, right from before creation, in view of securing man for His pleasure at such cost, as He knew it would be, for it speaks here of being "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world". How we should value the word: "who has been manifested at the end of times for your sakes, who by him do believe on God, who has raised him from among the dead and given him glory, that your faith and hope should be in God" - that is, that we should be brought into a living relationship to the blessed God Himself who has had all this in His heart from before time was. We

are given in Genesis God's first handiwork, for there is what He brings about by His power, as I said - "Let there be light" and so on - but there is divine handiwork in making man. He formed man and He built the woman.

In Revelation, I believe I am right in saying, it is the last activity of God which is recorded in relation to man: "And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes". How wonderful it is to think of the blessed God Himself at such a time, in view of every trace of the pathway of sorrow and suffering being removed, Himself personally wiping away every tear from their eyes. I feel there is no need for me to enlarge upon it but just to draw attention to it. What struck me was the activities of the hand of God forming man at the beginning, and then finally the last reference to His handiwork wiping away every tear from their eyes in view of their entrance into that eternal day of which it says that "they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God".

May the contemplation of these things enhance to us the greatness of the thoughts of God in relation to man and enhance to us, too, the wonder of those sufferings to which our brother has drawn our attention that we might keep near to them. How needful they were and yet there in the mind of God before even time was in order that we might be blessed and brought in to the gain and present enjoyment of His eternal purpose and eventually secured for that eternal day. In the Name of the Lord Jesus.

MINISTRY IN LONDON (3)

Eric Burr

Isaiah 53: 11; Ephesians 1: 18

These two verses have been in my mind a little recently and I am moved to refer to the first of them by what our beloved brother has said to us in relation to our keeping near to the sufferings of Jesus - a most profound subject! The range of those sufferings I doubt whether we shall ever fully compass. We know what we speak of as the atoning sufferings by their result: we do not know the detail of them ourselves. There were other sufferings, sufferings in relation to Israel, with which this chapter is actually occupied; sufferings from man; sufferings in His spirit (as we have been often reminded, He felt in His spirit all that He removed by His power) and suffering of which most of us know very little - what it is in holiness to move through a world of sin. All these things, I believe, enter into "the travail of his soul". There is ministry on the sufferings of Christ which can rightly be described as classical. How much of it we understand I am not sure: I am sure there are others who understand more than I do, but the subject is vast. Let us keep near to them! "He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his soul" - how blessed that is! Everything does not end in the sufferings: there is fruit. He will see Israel restored. He will see the nations under Him. He will see sin taken away from the world. These things are future. But does He not see "the fruit of the travail of his soul" now? What is it? Is it some abstract idea? Is it just something - I speak respectfully - that we read about in ministry? Beloved, "the fruit of the travail of his soul" is you. It is every believer on the Lord Jesus. "The fruit of the travail of his soul" is you . Do you realise that? We use the word 'appropriate', but do you appropriate it? Somebody asked Mr Raven what he meant by 'appropriate' and he said, you assimilate it into the life of your being. Have you done that? In the present time "the fruit of the travail of his soul" is you.

It seems to me that that has the effect of setting up one another in our minds: we look at one another and we do not say, Well, there is this, that and the other about them, negative things. We look at one another and say, It is the fruit of the travail of the soul of Jesus. Does it not set the brethren up? Does it not set other believers up in your mind? When we read about "the fruit of the travail of his soul" our minds tend to go quickly to the assembly, but there would be no assembly if it were not for the individuals. What I am impressed with this evening, and have been in reflecting on in this scripture, is the greatness of that fruit of the travail of His soul that I can see. If I look at you, I can see it. Why? Because you have believed in Him: "who by him do believe on God" (1 Pet 1: 21) as our beloved brother has just referred to. What an elevating thing it is! There is a hymn that says:

And, oh, that He revealed might see
The travail of His soul in me
And with my life contented be
As I with my dear Saviour.

Beloved, we are one and another "the fruit of the travail of His soul"!

Ephesians 1 refers to the same thing, only it puts it not so much in relation to Jesus Himself, but in relation to God: "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints". You will not find that by looking at the map or by turning up ministry. You will find it by looking round on believers, looking round on one another. How great these things are! How they elevate our view of one another. You look at another believer and you see there God's inheritance. It is not here God's inheritance in the assembly - that thought is not found in Scripture - it is God's inheritance in the saints, individuals whom He has secured through the work of Christ and, indeed, whom the Father gave to Christ. You look round on those available to you. You try to take a wider view and think of others - the blessedness of meeting another believer is almost incomparable even if you are not able to walk with them - and you see there "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints".

This inheritance is rich and it is glorious. Do we look at one another like that? A good deal of our conversation about one another is biased towards the negative. Let it end! (I sometimes think it would be a good thing if we had one day a week when we said nothing critical about anybody. Would that not be interesting?) You look round the meeting and say, This is God's inheritance; it is in these people here; these are some of the saints. We tend to appropriate the word "saints" to ourselves, those we are in fellowship with, but all those who belong to Christ and have the Spirit are the saints. "Apprehend with all the saints" (Eph 3: 18) is, not just the brethren available to you; it is "with all the saints" - God's "inheritance in the saints" - and you look at it and find that, just as Christ sees "of the fruit of the travail of his soul" and is satisfied, so God looks now, not at some narrow part of the earth - that little part of the eastern Mediterranean - but He looks down and He sees with pleasure the result of the work of Christ. How great it is! He sees it, He looks here, and He sees it, and if you are alone and you belong to Him, He sees it still: "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints", and He sees what He is looking forward to coming into fully in another day, and as I say again, God's inheritance is rich and glorious.

If you want to know what God's inheritance in the saints is, discover the work of God in someone else. If Christ looks at it, it is "the fruit of the travail of his soul"; if God looks at it (as our beloved brother has been saying, Why did God create man?) it is in His view in relation to all, because He "desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth", 1 Tim 2: 4. It is in order that in those who in purpose He has given to Christ He might, even tonight, see His inheritance in the saints. We have obtained an inheritance; we have obtained it in Christ - "in him, in whom we have also obtained an inheritance", Eph 1: 11. But God has an inheritance: He has it in believers.

How great these things are! What a glory there is about a Christian - "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints". As I say, if Christ looks at it, He sees "the fruit of the travail of his

soul"; if God looks at it, He says, this is why I created man, in order that I might have something rich and glorious and have it for ever.

May we be encouraged for the Lord's sake!

3 February 1992

PEACEFUL CHILDREN

Few, if any, persons would remember the herald and town-criers of yesteryear who, as their names imply, carried the latest news to the Court and to the people. Some such ancient customs have been maintained by way of local interest and I remember a town-crier at Aldeburgh with his hand-bell and loud voice crying 'Oyez,' - listen.

How rather should we be ready to hear the great news proclaimed, that the Lord Jesus has by His death and resurrection secured peace, first to us Gentiles but also to the Jews.

Each writer in the New Testament mentions peace as one of the believer's greatest blessings. In fact, the epistle to a mother and her children tells them that peace comes from the Father and the Son. Also, of the Lord Jesus, it is written that "He is our peace" and is therefore peace personified. Children may have to suffer for the Lord's sake and, may be, for wrong things done or thought. But the preaching and the preaching of Jesus as Saviour are full of help and peace. Is He so to you?

J.C.Evershed