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Contents

"THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST"

FAITH

THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE GENERAL EPISTLES

"THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST"

1 John 1: 5-10; 1 Peter 1: 1,2; 1 Corinthians 1: 9; 10: 16 (first question)

D.A.B. It was in mind to look, with the Spirit's help, at these two references to the blood of Jesus Christ, and especially to consider how they enter into the basis of our fellowship together. It was not in mind to allocate any time specifically to the passages in Corinthians but rather to have them alongside us, because they confirm what is in mind and also remind us that these things work out not only in fellowship generally but also in the places where we live and break bread. When we come to the passage in Peter we may also look at the reference to obedience, which is understandably connected with the reference there to the blood. It is something which we especially need help about.

What was mainly in mind was verse 7 of chapter 1 in John's first epistle. It is a very well-known verse to us. We often use on its own the reference in it to the blood, and it is a true and precious statement in its own right, but it belongs in this verse. It is not simply that John puts it in here because it came to his mind, but it came to his mind because it belongs here. It is joined to the rest of the verse with the word "and". We often speak of the earlier part of the verse too as bearing on practical relationships with each other. References are made to the need for transparency and so on.

These are right up to a point, although there is a need to be balanced, but this verse is really about the height of our calling. We are called to "walk in the light as he is in the light". The light is that in which the truth can be seen, truth about God Himself and truth as to His will and His counsels. It stands over against what the Lord speaks of in the gospel as walking in darkness (see chap 12: 35) - indeed, John refers to that here in verse 6. God has called us to wonderful things, He has called us to Himself. If we all walk in that light, clearly we shall have fellowship together, because we walk in

the same light. That may enter into what was in mind in the word of teaching, that the truth is our bond: we walk in the same light.

We were speaking here the other day about how the height and preciousness of our privileges do not themselves preserve us from what is inconsistent with them. That could readily be shown from other scriptures - for example, the epistle to the Ephesians in which half is taken up with practical exhortations, some about things which we might be surprised to find mentioned there. So if we are to be preserved, and if the fellowship with one another is to be preserved, there needs to be something that will meet what may come in. We have to recognise that anything could come in. It might come in with me or it could come into the company generally. It might be something that never becomes public, but if we allow it, it will sooner or later affect our walk with one another. If, therefore, practical enjoyment is exposed (because of the condition in which we are) to every sin, we need something alongside our privilege that will cleanse from every sin. God has provided the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. It is interesting to see that Paul refers to "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" and John refers to "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son". There is that connection between the two passages; Paul on the one hand refers to the fellowship, and John refers to what preserves the fellowship - the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son. I do not know if that would help.

J.C.E. I am sure it will as it develops. The Scriptures give us things in the absolute way. It is for us to work them out according to the means given to us which is the Holy Spirit.

D.A.B. Yes, the Holy Spirit is vital to this. He is mentioned in the passage in Peter: "by sanctification of the Spirit". I think what is before us sheds light also on what we refer to as the moral basis of fellowship. Fellowship is not arrived at by a convergence of like-minded people or even an effort among them to maintain a kind of conformity. The true basis of fellowship - and the only one that will endure - is moral. On the one hand fellowship is what God has called us to; on the other hand it must involve what God has

provided to preserve us in the good of that to which He has called us.

D.J.H. Would it not make us value the fellowship if we realised that we could not be together as we are now apart from the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son?

D.A.B. Paul leaves the Ephesians with that, does he not? He refers to a purchase which would speak of value. He does not tell us what the value was because that could hardly be known, but the thought of it would help us practically. That is my concern, that we might examine what we are and what we do in the light of what God has provided to preserve us in the good of that to which He has called us.

H.A.H. Is this a step beyond what it says in the gospel: would: "he that practises the truth comes to the light", John 3: 21? This is walking in it which would mean continuance.

D.A.B. Yes, he "comes to the light, that his works may be manifested that they have been wrought in God". John is very practical. We must pay attention to what we do, must we not? The cleansing here is a present matter, is it not? As you say, the walking is a continuing thing, so then the need to be preserved continues as well.

H.A.H. So he uses the word "practise" in verse 6. He does elsewhere in the epistle too. While there is the abstract side that has been referred to, there is also this very practical matter of how we come up to it.

D.A.B. Yes. I was noticing the difference between this reference and what we often enjoy in Revelation. John refers there to the Lord's love as a present thing: He "loves us", but then He "has washed us" Rev 1: 5. That reference to washing goes back to the glory of His great work, but here John sees the need to make the cleansing present. Of course, the love is always present too, but we need the cleansing as a present matter.

H.A.H. And does the present tense mean that we continue in the abiding sense of it? Is that the bearing of it?

D.A.B. It reminds me of the remedy for leprosy. Would this cleansing refer back to that? It was the leper that was cleansed, but not just the leper: it might be his clothes or his house that had to be cleansed. Every time he went into his house he would remember that blood had been shed for him.

R.E.T. Is there a challenge here? The blood brings us into a relationship but the light would challenge us about whether we are walking in relation to God, would it not?

D.A.B. Yes. God has shone light on us, has He not? There is a question whether we walk in it suitably. Do we walk with one another in a way that is suitable to this light? Are our relationships governed by the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son? It is the only way fellowship with one another will ever be preserved.

E.C.B. Is there some distinction between the presentation of the blood in this scripture in John and the one in Peter? The blood here is for us. The sprinkling of the blood, as I understand it, is for God.

D.A.B. I was wondering about the sprinkling. It reminds me of Exodus 24 when the sprinkling of the blood was used to seal the covenant. It brought the people into relationship with God. Is that what you were thinking?

E.C.B. Yes, I think the sprinkling of the blood is connected with the burnt-offering and the peaceoffering and the sin-offering and probably the trespass-offering, but cleansing us is something that we need. Without going on to Peter, the sprinkling of the blood puts it before God and thus gives God, if I could put it this way, a basis for remaining in the light with us.

D.A.B. The "obedience and sprinkling of the blood" put together would remind us of the offerings, but I do not know what you think about the connection between the cleansing and the question of leprosy. The blood is not shed repeatedly but, because of the condition in which we are, we need to guard against leprosy all the

time, do we not? We need this in order that we might be suitable to God. The leper had to be outside. There was no fellowship for the leper.

E.C.B. I think the guard against leprosy is in the Holy Spirit, but I think it is right to connect the idea of cleansing us from all sin with the cleansing of the leper. In fact, broadly speaking, that is the scripture with which the idea of cleansing is most connected. It is interesting that the text has "all sin". We might think of that as the whole thing as we often speak of it. But in the footnote it has 'every sin' as if it might have been in John's mind - John is very embracing in what he says - that both the basic condition and the actual acts are covered by the blood.

D.A.B. It reminds me of what Paul says in Timothy: "For the love of money is the root of every evil", 1 Tim 6: 10. That does not mean to say that every evil can be traced to the love of money, but that if we give way to it, who knows where it will end because of the condition in which we are, the sinful condition that marks our natural condition. We cannot imagine that there are things from which we are immune. If we allow them even privately, they interfere with fellowship. The Holy Spirit would help us to judge them. John speaks of "the Spirit, and the water, and the blood", 1 John 5: 8: we have a full provision that these things should not be allowed.

D.J.H. The blood is there all the time, is it not? There is no question of a further application or shedding of the blood again. The blood is there. That relates to "God is faithful"; He is faithful to what has been accomplished through the shedding of the blood of Jesus.

D.A.B. Yes; this reference to cleansing in the present does not mean that the blood is shed again, but the Spirit is present and He would bring the blood before us to keep us in the good of it.

P.M. Why does he say, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son"?

D.A.B. Let us think about this reference to Jesus Christ to start with. He is given that name to show that He is special to God; "his Son" underlines that. I was interested to see the same thought in Corinthians: "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord".

Where Paul, especially, uses the expression Christ Jesus, He has in view that there should be some moral correspondence in us to that One. But here, I think, we have more what is distinguished for God, do you think? What was in your mind?

P.M. Does it link with God being in the light? In the blood of Jesus Christ His Son there was the maintenance not only practically here of walking in the light but of the relationships that that light has introduced.

D.A.B. Yes, and it is true to say that the One in whom everything has been shown for what it is is the One who meets everything that it has exposed. The light is the light of Christ: it is the light of His Son. Is that what you were thinking?

P.M. I was thinking the light involved the outshining of God, which must be in His Son.

J.W. In thinking of His Son would we include the cost to God? Would it involve the affection God has for His Son?

D.A.B. Yes, "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son", Rom 8: 32. I feel for myself how easy it is almost to trivialise things; if we thought even daily about the blood it would remind us that nothing we have been called to has been given to us easily, any more than it is come into easily. There is no easy route into the enjoyment of these things.

J.M. Does not "his own Son" show the lengths to which God in His love is prepared to go that there should be no hindrance to fellowship with one another?

D.A.B. I have to say it contrasts often with my carelessness about that very thing. How we indulge ourselves and presume upon one another! But God has gone to the furthest length to provide practical fellowship here, in the condition in which we are, as a thing we can enjoy.

E.C.B. Is this reference in verse 7 connected back to verse 3: "and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ"? Then he says, "But if we walk in the light ... we have

fellowship with one another". He takes the great thought of fellowship with the Father and the Son into fellowship with one another. The same Persons govern the whole thing.

D.A.B. Yes, we see in that verse in Corinthians that fellowship rightly understood is a divine institution. It is therefore governed by divine principles and can only be rightly held at the divine level. We have to own that we are not always at that level. John then brings in here what is available, what God had provided at such cost, that it might be so.

E.C.B. That is as John puts it. The cost is there and we should always be reminded of it. I think the expression "called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" would bear very much further enquiry amongst us.

D.A.B. I was simply interested in the connection with this verse. We could not say that blood is the basis of fellowship to the exclusion of everything else, but it must enter into it.

R.W.F. In this connection, does the reference to "his Son" take our minds to the Father? There is reference to eternal life with the Father as well as fellowship with the Father earlier in the chapter. When here, Jesus was in constant communion with Him; His mind went to the Father; communion was enjoyed, save when He was forsaken. He ever pleased Him. He glorified Him. I wonder whether we could count it a great privilege that our minds are to be taken in that direction, the route that He Himself followed in His thoughts and affections.

D.A.B. We might have an experience of that this morning, communion with the Father. We do have it in such gatherings, especially when we are speaking about "his Son". He would give us the sense in such enquiry that we are communing with the Father about what is precious to Himself. But we all have to take it up, do we not, and be aware of what is inconsistent with it?

D.J.H. I wondered if the type in Genesis 22 would enlarge it for us: "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, Isaac" (v 2); "and they went both of them together" (v.6); and "My father! ... Here

am I, my son" (v 7). These references would enlarge the glory and beauty of this relationship that is simply referred to here.

D.A.B. And we have been called into this, have we not? I think if we knew the Father better, we would seek to walk in it more worthily.

D.E.R. Light both exposes and reveals. It exposes sin and it reveals what God is. Are we reminded in the expression, "Jesus Christ his Son", of the grace which has shone out? It meets the condition which the light exposes.

D.A.B. Yes; John is at pains to show, in the rest of the verses we read, that we ignore what it exposes at our cost. It is no good pretending it exposes nothing, is it? But why go on with what is exposed when God has provided something that meets it all? - "all unrighteousness", John says.

J.W. Does that bring up confession on our part? If we are exposed, we need to confess to get the gain of the provisions. From God's side there is a complete clearance in the work of Christ and the shedding of His blood, but for us to be in the liberty and gain of it, is confession needed?

D.A.B. Yes; we often used to have our attention drawn to that: "whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy", Prov 28: 13. It does not exactly say here confessing to one another, but let us own things as they really are in a specific way.

R.E.T. Do you have anything special in mind about walk being before preservation?

D.A.B. To put it very simply, as soon as you step out, you will find what you need. That is what I feel about it. If you do not want to take up this walk, you might not be aware of what you need.

D.E.R. Walk is practical. It is not what we hold in theory, nor what has been said by distinguished servants of the Lord, but it is what each one of us here do in practice - the truth as to separation for example, or whatever we might like to bring up. Whether that is practised is the great test.

D.A.B. That is what I felt, that the blood is so practical. It is something that John actually saw. At the beginning of John's gospel they saw Jesus walking, and at the end of the gospel, John saw the blood. I agree very much with what you say, that to make the blood simply a matter of abstract truth is to lose its value. The blood is for every sin. It is very practical.

R.T. Do you think the further we walk in the light, the more precious the blood becomes to us? It is able for the fullest light, to give us peace and happiness before God.

D.A.B. That is what I covet. There is nobody here who could not say something about what the blood means to them. Speak to an old person perhaps who has been in the path a long time, and see if they can remember the things that had made the blood more precious to them!

R.T. There is the meeting of the sin question, but it is much more than that. It brings me into a sense of peace. Enoch walked with God. Applying it to ourselves, what a sense and an appreciation he must have had of the blood that enabled him to have that communion.

D.A.B. When we speak of the blood, we speak of a basis of life. The blood itself speaks of One who died, but He died that we might live. It has that in view, does it not? That is why John brings it in in relation to walking. There are things we have to leave behind, of course, that His death has to say to, but the blood has life in view.

D.J.H. The word 'cleansing' is significant in regard to what was just said. It does not exactly say the blood of Jesus Christ enables our sins to be forgiven. It is not forgiveness here but cleansing. Every stain is removed; we are pure in that way in the sight of God and able to approach Him.

D.A.B. Why then does it not refer to the water?

D.J.H. I have been wondering that all along. We have been helped to see that the death of Christ is applied continually through the water, but it is not apart from the blood: "the Spirit, and the water,

and the blood" 1 John 5: 8. From His side came out blood and water. We cannot really separate the two, can we? One is there as the abiding basis before God of our forgiveness and cleansing, but the other is the way in which we can apply it to ourselves in the power of the Spirit.

D.A.B. Yes. The Lord Jesus in His life here was uniquely pure. There was that within that maintained an absolute purity. Now, if we are to be purified, He had to die. The water must flow. Purification is through death. Then the blood reminds us that life is through death as well. John here is concerned about living. He is not just referring to what is judged and left but what is living. I wondered if that was why the blood was brought forward here. He does not overlook the water, of course. We have that later.

D.J.H. That helps because cleansing is in view of living, in view of being before God in purity, is it not?

D.A.B. We must also remember that "without blood-shedding there is no remission", Heb 9: 22. So that, if we take a step without it, then we carry the stain with us. There is no other way of being free of these things.

E.C.B. Perhaps, in refining doctrine and teaching, we may tend to separate the blood and the water a little too much. The blood is basic and is the necessary sacrificial side. It reminds us of the cost to God of dealing with our sins, but it is intimately bound up for us with the water. The cleansing of the leper, indeed, involves washing with water. We seek to get at the truth from the Scriptures but sometimes we over-separate things which are bound together: "and immediately there came out blood and water", John 19: 34. It is as if it was one idea in John's observation.

D.J.H. Does that not distinguish the sacrifice of Jesus from every other sacrifice? There was no water in relation to any other, but the blood and water came from the side of Jesus.

E.C.B. You referred to His being intrinsically pure and, if one may use such an expression, the water that came out was intrinsically pure.

D.A.B. In our attempt to distinguish the death of Jesus from that of the offerings, we emphasise that it was once and for all and that it is a completed matter which, of course, it is. He has entered in in virtue of His own blood, but there is a present need for it. We cannot simply say we were washed, however long ago it was. We need the Holy Spirit to help us that we might be in the present cleansing power of it.

J.C.E. When we rightly speak of the blood as being precious, the precious blood, would that be to God Himself and to the believer as well?

D.A.B. You are thinking of Peter. He refers to a number of things as precious, does he not? He had a good sense of values. It must have been precious to God to start with because Peter refers to it as known before the foundation of the world, but then it had become precious to Peter.

R.W.F. Do you see in these verses John in his fatherly way recognising the need for us to grow in the appreciation of the light of the blood? We tend to think of what is said as absolute and, indeed, it is: "God is light and in him is no darkness at all"; "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin". But there is a message we are to hear in connection with the blood. As you said, we can step out. Do you think that John in his fatherly way would encourage us to move and to grow that these things might become greater to us and we might not be intimidated, as it were, at first by the vastness of them?

D.A.B. Yes, become in fact, any who have stepped out will find that the vastness increases. They do not ever become the master of everything they can see. Then it is very easy to acquire - and enjoy, indeed - a knowledge of the truth, but has the blood had a commensurate work in developing my affections and guiding my walk? I feel there is a bit of catching up to do.

R.E.T. We will not need the water in eternal conditions, will we?

D.A.B. My understanding of the water is that it has a certain finality about it. It is intended in that sense to make a permanent change.

Of course, we need it all the time; things keep arising.

R.E.T. I thought there was an emphasis here on eternal life.

D.A.B. Well, eternal life involves our relationships together, and we have to say practically that sin is a very pervasive contaminant of relations together. Even secret sins, things I may never have confessed, may nevertheless affect our relationships. We need to be sensitive about these things, much more sensitive, and allow the blood to do its work so that the basis of our relationship together can be a living one.

P.M. Have we not been taught that the blood involves judicial cleansing but the water moral cleansing? The blood involves that God has fully judged sin. In this section, I come to a judgment of it through the appreciation of the blood of Jesus, but the water involves moral cleansing, that my state is to be cleansed.

D.A.B. Moral cleansing involves judgment. It must do. Things that are going to be cleansed have to be judged, otherwise they are not cleansed really, are they, practically?

P.M. I wondered if that was important in the maintenance of what is due to the fellowship, the fellowship at its true level. Everything has to be judged according to the way God judges things.

D.A.B. Yes, that is why I referred earlier to the moral basis of fellowship. Conformity, if it does anything, which it may not, only touches the exterior. It has no moral effect. And we will find if we are on that line that there is nothing enduring about mere conformity. Conformity was pressed hard at one time but where did it end? It did not bring about the kind of unity and walk together that John had in mind here. The reason was that things that the blood has to say to were not judged.

S.D.K.R. Would you make clearer how the blood guides our walk?

D.A.B. Well, where was the leper anointed? Like the priest, he was anointed on his foot. Practically speaking, how much happier I would be, and how much healthier my soul would be, if I thought

about the blood more. We ought to think about it every day. It would have an influence then. The Spirit would help us in that.

S.D.K.R. The blood is the cost by which we have been redeemed and its value is to be maintained in our souls.

D.A.B. And it is the only basis on which we have life. If the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son had not been shed, then there would only be judgment, would there not? Existence might continue in some way, but life in the sense in which God intended it would be unknown to us if the blood had not been shed.

J.M. "He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins". That is walking in the light. The whole matter of sin was brought into the light and dealt with entirely to God's satisfaction. That is what the blood involves, is it not? As was said, what is judicial is dealt with to God's satisfaction.

D.A.B. It makes atonement for the soul; that is, the whole matter is covered. But then, why do I allow things? Paul puts it in the form of a question: "is it not the communion of the blood of the Christ?". There is only one answer to that, but, in practice, we attempt to give other answers sometimes.

E.C.B. Exodus 24, to which you referred before, may help with that question because Moses, with half the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said "Behold the blood of the covenant" (v 8). That was when they were about to embark on the wilderness. Everything they did after that, as persons sprinkled with the blood, was intended to remind them of the covenant they had with God. Therefore, the blood must affect our walk.

D.A.B. Yes; as far as I can see, the sprinkling was not repeated, and yet the blood was brought before them constantly. There was the morning lamb and the evening lamb and the different offerings that were made and the voluntary offerings. They were never far from the blood. There was not the moral effect in them that we were speaking of, but the Spirit would help us that there might be a moral effect. Do we walk here as those who are blood-bought?

S.D.K.R. In Exodus 24 it really gave them liberty in relation to the presence of God. They were terrified. The tabernacle had not moved from chapter 19 where they were so frightened. Now they had liberty: they saw God, and ate and drank" (v 11). Would that be right?

D.A.B. Would we not like to have liberty with God? Why should He admit me with stains when He has made provision that they might be met?

E.C. In thinking of the blood every day, are you suggesting that it might touch our hearts as well as our consciences? If we thought what it cost the Lord to shed that precious blood for us, in His love for us, should it not move our hearts to do more than conform? Conformity does not need affection, does it? But if we think of what it cost the Lord to shed His precious blood for us that we might live, it should touch our hearts and there would be a desire to keep His word. He says in John 14, "If any one love me, he will keep my word" (v 23). It is a question of love, is it not?

D.A.B. I am sure it is. Paul says, "Let all things ye do be done in love", 1 Cor 16: 14. I can hardly hold myself out as an example but I see the need of it. We are so casual about these things. When, in the beginning of Genesis, God sought a basis of communion with man, that was a heart-to-heart matter. God is looking for that quickened state in our affections with which He can commune.

D.E.R. Do we need to remember that the standard for this is not our apprehension of the light or our estimate of what is right and pure but it is "as he" - God - "is in the light"? It must be at that standard. It is a very high standard.

D.A.B. That is right. That is what I had in mind when I referred to how this passage is sometimes used to advocate transparency. I am not advocating opacity in our relations together, but we tend to make a human standard - what will pass with one another maybe - whereas we have to see that God is in the light, He is in the light now in a sense in which He has not always been. He has come into the light. As you say, it sets a divine standard.

D.E.R. He is light and there is no opaqueness with Him; therefore we should not allow opaqueness with ourselves.

D.A.B. No. On the other hand, and without taking away from that, there is a place for confidence and, dare I say, there is a place for privacy? These things preserve the level of fellowship with one another, but there should be a common equal sharing in relation to our enjoyment of God's things.

E.C.B. Perhaps the thought of Peter as to "obedience and sprinkling" helps in regard to the practice and walk because it is the obedience of Jesus Christ and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

D.A.B. I wondered if we might speak about that. It reminds us of the offerings. I suppose in the Old Testament every offering submitted, every bull and goat that was offered, but none of that compares with the intelligent, willing submission of Jesus Christ. He "gave himself over", it says, "into the hands of him who judges righteously", 1 Pet 2: 23. When I thought about this passage, and its connection with the one in John, I asked myself, what room does that leave for my will? And then I asked, practically speaking and without any malice or forethought and without any insincere motive, how readily my will enters into the fellowship and undermines it.

J.M. The blood witnesses that that precious life in which obedience was set out so beautifully has been laid down. The blood is the witness to a life laid down.

D.A.B. The life was in the blood. It was the blood of such a One. Every moment of that life was marked by obedience. He says, "I do not seek my will, but the will of him that has sent me" John 5: 30.

J.M. Even the laying down of His life was in obedience, was it not? He says, "I have received this commandment of my Father", John 10: 18. So the sprinkling of the blood should produce that moral quality in us.

D.A.B. Yes. The people assembling themselves for the sprinkling said they would obey. Of course, they had no power to do so and

we know they did not. What made them disobedient makes me disobedient. I have to own that, but I thought it was helpful that obedience connects with the fellowship of Jesus Christ. That is, what we are called to has its association with One who obeyed. Obedience, therefore, should be characteristic of our walk in fellowship, submission to Him, Jesus Christ our Lord.

D.J.H. Does this help in relation to the burnt offering? It says as to it that "it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him", Lev 1: 4. We speak of John's gospel peculiarly as connected with the burnt-offering. I have often wondered about the burnt-offering accepted for an atonement. It is not exactly like the sin-offering or the trespass-offering. It is John's gospel, which presents the burnt-offering in the antitype, which brings in the blood.

D.A.B. Yes; it is good to see what God saw in the offerings, what He looked forward to. Paul refers in Romans to "the obedience of the one", Rom 5: 19. It is a rare quality.

R.T. There is a suggestion that we are identified with the divine system. The same blood that was carried into God was sprinkled on the people. They are identified with this system. It is one of the things we have come to in Hebrews the "blood of sprinkling", chap 12: 24.

D.A.B. I was thinking of that: we have come to "the blood of sprinkling, speaking better than Abel". It is better because it is the blood of a better covenant. Perhaps you could say more about that. In what respect is the sprinkled blood better than Abel?

R.T. We have a far better standing than he had, have we not, because of the efficacy and power of it? Do you think this being sprinkled on the people brings us into a holy environment? We have a place in it and peace in it before God.

D.A.B. That is what I need to be much more sensitive about. Peter speaks here of "sanctification of the Spirit", that is, that there is a setting apart from what is common. Paul has to speak very solemnly in Hebrews of those who have made the blood of the covenant

common. They had not given it its true value. It is a very practical thing.

M.A.J.T. Would the thought of perseverance come in? Some of us might think we cannot live up to these high thoughts like thinking of the blood every day; but the early disciples were told to persevere: "and they persevered in the ... fellowship", Acts 2: 42. We must not give up but keep persevering.

D.A.B. It is a mistake to think that the path is easy. It is also a mistake to think that a few easily-formed phrases can in any way give us the kernel of it. It does require perseverance; but thinking of the blood of Jesus Christ every day is surely not a difficult matter for those who love Him. God thinks of it every day, does He not?

J.M. You referred to Exodus 24, where the people said, "All that Jehovah has said will we do" (v 7), but they had no power to do it. That is the essential difference in this dispensation, that we have the power of the Holy Spirit to meet every obligation, so that we are able to take this on that it might become formative in us.

D.A.B. So in Peter we have the Spirit first and, indeed, in John's epistle, we have the Spirit first. How much influence does He have in shedding abroad the love of God in my heart? Does the effect of that spread out into my members and affect the way I walk?

J.W. Does this scripture present things from God's side? It speaks of those who are "elect according to the foreknowledge", and the whole Trinity is involved in the way that God has effected that. Is that to be a powerful lever in our souls? We are to make our "calling and election sure" (2 Pet 1: 10), are we not?

D.A.B. I was thinking of what Paul says about that: "And these things were some of you; but ye have been washed", 1 Cor 6: 11. That is our side, that we have to come into what God's thought for us is.

J.W. The thought of election is that there are people here for God's pleasure. This is what God has done from His side, but we have to appropriate and be in the gain of it.

D.A.B. So that he also says: "But whom he has predestinated, these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified", Rom 8: 20. We cannot just rest on election, can we? We must, as you say, be in the good of it.

E.C.B. In regard to practice, we might ask ourselves what effect did the sprinkling of the blood have on Israel for the ensuing year? Did they think, if we sin, we will clear it all up again next year, or did they really appreciate that the day of atonement was not intended to deal only with their history and activities then but also to provide a basis of their continuing walk?

D.A.B. I find it easy to shake my head over Israel and say, What a bad lot they were and how openly the flesh manifested itself in them, but my flesh is the same. The blood is to be before us constantly. Is it? Walking in the light does not mean that we know the truth only but that it is in some way expressed in us. So as Paul says, the light has "shone in our hearts for the shining forth " (2 Cor 4: 6), not only by reflection but by some substantial result.

J.S.G. In these verses in John's epistle, one verse says, "If we say", and then the next verse says, "if we walk". Does that bring out the contrast you mentioned?

D.A.B. How easy it is simply to speak of things that I appear to know! Someone who is really experienced will be able to tell if I am only superficial about it.

P.M. Does not obedience involve practice? - "he learned obedience from the things which he suffered", Heb 5: 8. Is that not intended to draw out our affections to the One who obeyed, that "he learned obedience from the things which he suffered"?

D.A.B. Yes, and that was not because He was disobedient. We see in the life of Jesus that the path of obedience is costly and involves suffering. Perhaps that is what we are not ready for. We talk about practice but practice will bring suffering, will it not?

S.D.K.R. I was thinking of sanctification, set apart for holy purposes. It is something continual. The sprinkling of the blood was connected

with consecration, was it not? We are priests in that way but we would continually remember the cost by which we have been secured. Is that what you have in mind?

D.A.B. I trust we will be stimulated in speaking about it to remember it more. I feel I often forget the price by which I have been secured.

D.E.R. Is the Supper week by week calculated to stimulate us in the way you are speaking of? We are reminded of the blood in the cup, are we not?

D.A.B. That is why I read the verse in chapter 10 of Corinthians. Perhaps it would be good to ask ourselves when we sit down and look at the cup: "is it not the communion of the blood of the Christ?" And we look round upon one another. Mercifully we are as free at the Supper as we ever are from things that interfere with our relationships together and we can look at one another and have some impression of the price at which that privilege has been afforded to us. It is such an immense privilege to take the Supper. You are in a small meeting. It would not have to be much smaller, speaking practically, to be hardly possible. God has preserved the means for it because He values your entering into that privilege.

D.E.R. That would stimulate practical fellowship for the rest of the week to be in accordance with the fellowship of which the Supper speaks.

D.A.B. The emblems are to help our minds but not just in a transient way. We talk about impressions, but my understanding of an impression is that it is something that remains after the experience is over. It remains effective, or should do.

H.A.H. I think it has been said that this is the nearest Peter comes to referring to the Supper: "the obedience and sprinkling of the blood". The obedience was in His body, was it not? Then His blood was shed.

D.A.B. I like that. He offered Himself, Peter says. There has been misplaced obedience among us, obedience that was hardly merited, but God may have honoured the obedience because it is such a rare

thing. Where there is obedience, where there is a readiness to forego the exercise of my own will and my own pride, God sees something that He saw in His Son, do you think?

H.A.H. Yes. I was thinking too of the passover lamb. It was in the house four days. Is that a little like John 1, what they contemplated?

D.A.B. Yes, and it had to be offered. That would have been a real thing, to make that offering in the house.

H.A.H. That is what I thought. It would have become attractive and an object of affection to them.

D.A.B. Of course, they were just about to leave their houses, but perhaps that is something that we need to think about more in our houses. Does the blood have its way in the house? Could everything in the house be anointed with blood? That is a question, is it not?

D.E.B. Is it to be noted that blessing is in view in all this? The passage in Peter goes on to "Blessed be the God and Father". In your scripture in 1 Corinthians 10 it is "the cup of blessing which we bless". We are brought into a system and relationship of blessing from God, to God, and to one another.

D.A.B. Yes, and in John's epistle he says, "And these things write we to you that your joy may be full", 1 John 1: 4. Who wants to mingle anything with the joy there is among the saints when there is the means of having it cleansed?

J.S.G. In that connection it is interesting that he says at the close of the paragraph: "Grace to you and peace be multiplied", not 'added' but "multiplied", as if there is every stimulation to go in for enjoyment of fellowship with God and with one another in the appreciation of this precious blood because there are great advantages and blessings through it.

D.A.B. We do not perhaps appreciate sufficiently the potential that there is for expansion in divine things. Of course, we start from a very small base in our own experience, but coming into this blessing is something that very quickly increases. One would like to reach

that critical point at which we would not give it up, where it is valued sufficiently that we would not have it interfered with by what so easily comes in.

P.M. Are the questions related to the Lord's table and the Lord's supper in 1 Corinthians all in view of maintaining the standard of the fellowship of His Son in which Christ gives character to everything? The fellowship is practically known where everything speaks of Christ. Nothing is out of accord with Him.

D.A.B. Yes. Paul refers to proving ourselves. What standard are we using? I was very drawn up by something in a tract: if we are using our own standard, we are rejoicing in iniquity. We do not easily condemn anything we ourselves would like to allow. We referred to the emblems relating to "the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ". That is the standard. We are actually going to confront that standard when we go to the Supper.

R.E.T. Would the emphasis on the blood help us in relation to the knowledge of God?

D.A.B. It is the way into communion. We were talking about walk. It speaks of Enoch and others walking with God. That was a heart-to-heart thing. God would speak to us about what is in His heart what moves His affections.

J.W. Would the communion here be in a scene where Christ died?

D.A.B. Very good. That is something else that we have to remember. The blood puts a judgment over the whole world's system. It was so in Egypt.

J.M. The communion of His blood sets us practically apart from it all.

D.A.B. It should, shall we say?

J.M. It is intended to do so.

D.A.B. I was sorry to be negative - why should it not?

J.M. I think if we were consciously in the joy of the communion of His blood it would.

D.A.B. What appeals to me about this is that God has something which is within the reach of the simplest. There may be some here who feel that a lot of the teaching is beyond them, but everyone's affections can answer to the blood and everyone's walk can be governed by it.

R.T. A few verses later it is called the cup of the Lord, but this is like in a love setting, is it not, "the cup of blessing which we bless"? As that is enjoyed, we are faithful to the fellowship and the cup of the Lord, do you think?

D.A.B. Yes, I remember hearing a preacher saying that we speak about the cross as settling the sin question, but he said it settled the love question. The love of God is expressed in this, and it is marked by deep longings for communion. Do you have more in mind?

R.T. Drinking into the fulness of this, the cup of blessing is at such cost, indeed. That helps us to be faithful. We "cannot drink the Lord's cup" - it is the same cup, - "and the cup of demons" (v 21). I think the enjoyment of the blessing helps us to be faithful in the responsible sphere.

D.A.B. Mephibosheth is an example of that. He had eaten at the king's table and he really let everything go when David was not there. In his absence there was nothing for Mephibosheth really, was there?

D.E.R. Fellowship practically involves anything which is of a social character between two persons. You cannot have communion with someone and have the communion of the blood of the Christ at the same time unless that other person is also in accordance with the blood of the Christ.

D.A.B. Perhaps we should value the communion that we have with God Himself. That sets things on a high level. I suppose it boils down to a question of what we have in common. These things are practical, are they not? How much do we have in common? Do we have the blood of Jesus Christ in common?

E.C.B. The communion of the blood of the Christ is looking inward towards the holiest. It is put over against idolatry. It is not exactly presented as dealing with our sins, but it is the basis on which we may enjoy the fact that God is in the light.

D.A.B. Yes, the blood is not only sprinkled outside but it is inside. It is before God. It is really the whole basis of our approach, is it not? You cannot take on the inward side if you have passed by the moral aspect of it, but God intends us to make that transition so that we can enter freely into what the blood has secured for Himself.

E.C.B. It may be sometimes that God would use things that He has introduced so as to keep our minds clear of moral questions so that we might be there only for multiplication of enjoyment. Moral questions must be there because of what we are because of what God is, but there is a sphere of enjoyment where these things do not have to be prominent in your mind.

D.A.B. Yes; in Matthew's gospel we have in relation to the Supper, the remission of sins. We are exposed to them but they can be sent away. We can have experience free of them.

R.W.F. Does the communion of the blood of the Christ run on to our becoming "nigh by the blood of the Christ", Eph 2: 13? I was thinking of it by way of contrast as much as anything, that there is that from which we have to be apart here which has rejected Christ, but the corollary to it - one might say the compensation - is that we are become nigh. There is that into which we can enter in nearness.

D.A.B. I am glad you refer to that. That really expresses God's desire. We were speaking about the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. The spring and source of all we are speaking of was in God Himself and the longing that we should be near.

LONDON

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Key to initials

(London unless otherwise stated)

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FAITH

Andrew Burr

Luke 18: 1-8

We were remarking in the reading that Peter, from whom we read, had a good value for what was precious. I do not know if everyone can remember all the things that Peter says are precious. We recalled in the reading his reference to the "precious blood", chap 1: 19. He also calls the One whose blood it is the precious corner stone: "cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious", 1 Pet 2: 4. He refers also to "the greatest and precious promises", 2 Pet 1: 4. How wonderful to think that the God we have come to know has committed Himself to giving us things, certain great things He has promised. As Paul says of Sarah, "she counted

him faithful who promised", Heb 11: 11. Peter also refers twice to "precious faith". He speaks of those who "have received like precious faith with us", 2 Pet 1: 1. He then speaks of the proving of your faith "much more precious than of gold which perishes, though it be proved by fire", 1 Pet. 1: 7. Faith for Peter was not merely an abstract thing, but he could identify people who had it. Their faith, he says, was "much more precious". I ask myself, where do I rank my faith alongside the various other things that I have, material things and so on? Is it "much more precious"? There are some who do not have material things. James speaks of those who are "poor as to the world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised", chap 2: 5. So whether we have a lot or little materially, we can still have something that is "more precious".

I was thinking of this question that the Lord Jesus asks. I want to say a word about the widow but I will keep that to the end. I wanted to bring among us this question that the Lord Jesus asks: "But when the Son of man comes, shall he indeed find faith on the earth?" Probably this passage relates to the Jewish remnant and the coming might immediately relate to the Lord's appearing. At the same time, as the Lord said elsewhere about this time in His teaching, He may come in the second watch and in the third watch. I do not think there is a matter that arises in the life of any one of us (and certainly not in our fellowship together in relation to the Lord's interests) into which the Lord does not come, at a time of His own choosing. In any matter there is a day when the Lord Jesus comes in relation to it. It is a searching question, would He indeed find faith? He is not then looking for faith in heaven but here on earth where the troubles are. He is not looking for faith in the world; I do not think one would find it in the world system but He looks to find faith in those who have a relationship with God. He is not just looking for some abstract quality but He is looking to see whether we are marked by faith. It is not a matter of being an ingredient in our lives only but whether it is the principle on which we live. Paul says, "for we walk by faith, not by sight", 2 Cor 5: 7. As we said in our reading, walk is a practical, day-to-day matter. It is not enough to

bring faith into our walk, but do we walk by faith? Paul says that he lived by faith: "but in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith", Gal 2: 30. We may see that there is truly no other way in which we can live. I feel reproached sometimes when I reflect on the way I react to things that arise. How easy it is, with the best of intentions, to react in a human and natural way. I have to ask myself: Am I really living by faith? Do I live as if I saw what God sees? We referred to what is moral and it is a similar idea because morally is a question of how things really are in the sight of God. Faith is the means of seeing how things are, how they seem to God. I am not saying that it is something we get in a flash: that is why we have to pray. It is as well to pray first before we do anything else.

I thought to go back to the beginning and look a little at why faith is so important, and why we have to be so careful to make way for it. We were speaking in the reading about the basis of communion with God and, as was remarked, for communion there must be compatibility. There must also be a basis for communion and we spoke of that. Now God created Adam in a condition in which He and Adam could have communion. God sought that communion but He did not find it because Adam listened to the temptation and had fallen into sin. I wonder if we always realise what the effect of that fall was. It broke the basis of Adam's moral and spiritual link with God. When God said to Adam that, in the day that he ate of that tree he would surely die, what He said was true. Satan, I think, could only make it appear that it was not true. It was not simply that by eating he fell under the sentence of death, but, so far as his life depended upon his communion with God, it was dead. Our life is more than existence: life for man was conceived by God to include as its main enjoyment communion with Himself. God did not make man to be at a distance from Himself. He breathed into man the breath of life. There was to be that wonderful basis on which God could in liberty commune with Adam, and the advent of sin made that an impossibility. There was no longer that basis for communion and therefore there was no basis for the true knowledge of God.

Now, man away from God has taken that further. Paul says that "they did not think good to have God in their knowledge", Rom 1: 28. There was a time when that choice was made. Paul then says that, because they did not desire, they did not choose, to retain God in their knowledge, "God gave them up to a reprobate mind". And so where the temptation had appeared to open up a whole new avenue of knowledge independently of God, the very faculty through which that knowledge was to be imbibed became corrupted and degenerated. The world is a testimony to where that has led. There are whole civilisations in this world from which the knowledge of the true God is absent. What a remarkable thing that God has made man and there are civilisations in which the knowledge of the true God is absent. They speak a lot about their culture and their tradition but there is no knowledge of God in it. They worship the creature, as Paul says, because the God whose creature it is is not known to them.

God has not been willing to leave man in that condition but there needs to be some gift from God to provide means whereby the knowledge of God can be received. God has made that precious gift. The gift is faith. God would give it to each of us so that we might have the knowledge of God. It says that "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Heb 11: 6) - not nearly impossible, it is impossible to please Him. Cain thought he was acting in a very worthy way. He thought God would be pleased. He gave some of what he had produced to God. It was not on the principle of faith. Abel on the other hand made a more excellent offering than Cain because he recognised that approach to God must be, as we had in our reading, in virtue of a life given up, and that not his own. He saw things as God sees them. Cain did not. God did not look at Cain's offering. He did not look and look away: no, He did not even look at it. "But without faith it is impossible to please him". More than that, whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom 14: 23). That is a very severe thing to learn because the condition in which we are is sin, but let us analyse how we operate, what governs what we do. If it is not faith it is sin. There is a sharp distinction, and what is of sin is condemned.

God will not recognise it and cannot use it. It will bring no blessing, and among God's people it will do no good. However well meant it may have been, if it is not faith, God cannot use it. This is proved by the incoming of Jesus. God had retreated to a distance from Adam because of the condition into which he had fallen. Adam could not trade on the way in which he had known God before. He might retain knowledge of God in some sense but not as a spring and source of life. Now when we come to the incoming of Jesus we find that He was unrecognised. As Mr Darby remarks: 'there was not, even in His own, faith or capacity to make use of the resources of grace and power which were in Him'. Religious people who had the oracles of God and had enjoyed the ministry of angels for hundreds of years proved, when Jesus was presented to them, that it availed them nothing. Only those to whom God gave faith received Him. That is a striking background and anything that might be called pedigree or genealogy avails nothing. We depend wholly upon God's precious gift of faith.

Well, if the religious mind is without, what about the educated mind? I suppose philosophy has never reached the height it reached in classical Greece, and they had an altar to the unknown God. The mind of man was as advanced philosophically as it has ever been. If it was possible by searching to find out God, ancient Greece would have done it. They knew there was a God but to them He was unknown; Paul discovers in their midst a monument to the unknown God. Their system of worship was as primitive and degraded as you could possibly imagine. There was nothing at all like the worship of the true God in their paganism. It was an unhappy contrast to their philosophy. Paul says, God "has made of one blood every nation of men to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, having determined ordained times and the boundaries of their dwelling, that they may seek God; if indeed they might feel after him and find him", Acts 17: 26,27. It is as if he is saying to them in the nicest possible way that the savages were at no disadvantage to them and that their knowledge availed nothing. The mind of man cannot compass the knowledge of God. Philosophy is perhaps not

so much to the fore these days, so what about science? After all, as Paul says, God has left Himself a witness in the creation to His eternal power and divinity (see Rom 1: 20). Perhaps through that witness and the scientific enquiry made nowadays in such detail something of God will be discovered. What does Paul say? "By faith we apprehend that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that which is seen should not take its origin from things which appear", Heb 11: 3. The whole scientific edifice falls over because it is based on deductions from what appears, and God in perfect wisdom has chosen to conceal the origin of things so that it cannot be discovered from the way things appear. Is that not interesting? God has put the knowledge of Himself beyond scientists. There is a lesson here for us: we do judge things by appearances. just like Eve did. If we judge from appearances we may say, I am not going to do that because if I do, that will leave room for this person to do something which I would not like him to do. We may also say, If that is how things are now, they must have begun like this. But you cannot judge the origin of anything from the way it appears. The only way you can judge origins is by faith. The counterpart of that is that you cannot judge how something will end by how it appears. If you cannot judge how it has begun, how can you say how it is going to end? Things may appear very unpropitious but they may end in glory when the Lord comes into them. Remember, when He comes, beloved, He will look for faith. Does any of us wish to be reproached about being occupied by appearances when the Lord comes into any matter, or do we seek to be marked by the principle of faith? It is so very important. I may say, I cannot see how this thing is going ever to come right. Faith never says that. Faith trusts in God that it will come right. We look at matters and we try and get the facts and this kind of thing, and we go back and search around, and we think we have identified the origin of the matter; but it does not take its origin from what appears, nor does it take its conclusion from what appears. The conclusion of any matter, beloved, arises when the Lord comes into it. Faith waits only for that. I do not have any particular matter in mind, but matters do arise with these lessons. We do judge things by how they appear. Like the scientists we have

implicit confidence in an ability to judge things from how they appear. God has set aside that whole principle; He cannot be known in that way.

The gift of faith is that it relates to election. If you have faith, beloved, it shows that God has chosen you. Scripture refers to "the faith of God's elect", Tit 1: 1. Others do not have it: "faith is not the portion of all", 2 Thess 3: 2. All do not have the knowledge of God. Faith is therefore something to be prized. I wonder, beloved, if all of us prize the faith that we have. We sang in our hymn about

"The precious Saviour, and the power
That makes Him precious too." (No.1)

There is nothing for fallen man in Jesus. "We esteemed him not", they said, Isa 53: 3. "There is no beauty that we should desire him", Isa 53: 2. Do you love the Lord Jesus? Beloved, God has made a precious gift to you if you do. Esteem it above everything that you have and let it be in exercise. Do not let the Lord have to say to you, "how is it ye have not faith?" Mark 4: 40. May we not be reproached for having little faith. He has "dealt to each a measure of faith", Rom 12: 3. He knows exactly what you will need. What you will need, you have, but you may not have used it. Let it be in exercise more among us. Let us also recall what Jude says about faith. He speaks of "most holy faith" (v 20). That brought me up the other day when I thought about it because we are accustomed to thinking that was a special kind of faith. What other kind of faith is there? Faith excludes the operation and working of sin; it is "most holy". The Holy Spirit would help us to remember that.

Now, perhaps someone is wondering about the word of teaching, that we have nothing by faith. I did know that has been said. I did not bring it in at the beginning because I wanted to emphasise the importance of faith over against sin and over against sight. Paul says, "for we walk by faith, not by sight", 2 Cor 5: 7. Now, it is very clear, is it not, that there is no power in the fallen condition to live on the principle of faith? If we are going to live on the principle of faith, God must give us the power. It is interesting

that, when Paul speaks about faith in Hebrews chapter 11, he draws on people in the Old Testament. He could have drawn upon people that the Hebrews knew; no doubt he could, but he draws upon people among their ancestors who lived in another day. I do not know if we can say that the dispensation of faith is just the present day, although in the present day faith has a special character to which I will come. In a sense the whole basis of God's dealings is faith, and in order that that faith might be good and effective, He gives power. So Paul could say as to Abraham and Sarah that they "found strength in faith", Rom 4: 20. Who did that? Did they summon the energy? No, Paul says that they were dead. Imagine that someone of ninety-nine should have a child! It is quite impossible. It is outside the expectations of nature, but God has done it: He has given the strength for it. It says about others that are not named that they became strong out of weakness", Heb 11: 34. They overcame kingdoms: think of that! It says, "who by faith overcame kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped lions' mouths, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, became strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, made the armies of strangers give way. Women received their dead again by resurrection; and others were tortured, not having accepted deliverance, that they might get a better resurrection; and others underwent trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, and of bonds and imprisonment", Heb 11: 33-36. Everyone of them, beloved, had the strength needed to exercise the faith that God had given them. If God has given you faith, He has given you also power in which that faith can be exercised.

Besides this, beloved, He has given you an object for that faith. I think this is what is special about the day in which we live. Jesus is "the leader and completer of faith", Heb 12: 2. He is set before you as a blessed object for your mind and affections. How much we need something outside of ourselves and the condition in which we are! God has given that to us. He has given us His Son. Think of Jesus enthroned as an object for the faith of our hearts, and the Holy Spirit here to keep our eye upon Him and to exercise the faith we

have in Him. Here we have, dare I call it, a complete recipe for life in the scene of trial? May all of us exercise it and exercise it more! But there is more. Paul says, "If I have all faith" - who would like to have all faith? - "if I have all faith ... but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13: 2) - nothing! You say, there must be something! No, he says, "If I have all faith ... but have not love, I am nothing". As we remarked in the reading, a heart set in relation to God is the secret of everything: it is where the Holy Spirit takes up His residence - in the heart. He sheds abroad the love of God in the heart. God has given us an object for our faith who is most attractive. Jesus evokes our affections. He draws them out to Himself. The love that the Spirit produces in us for God and for His Son is the warmth that is imparted to the life of faith. So the secret of all these things is very simple, beloved: it is love for Christ. "And to all these add love", Paul says, "which is the bond of perfectness", Col 3: 14. How much we settle for what is imperfect! Let us follow this path! Paul says that faith works through love (see Gal 5: 6). We need the Holy Spirit for it, of course we do. God sees we need Him. We have in the Holy Spirit One who is able to engage Himself to the faith that God has given us and bring us livingly into the path to which God has called us.

I have quoted a letter of Mr Darby's just now which I find one of the best tonics in the books. The substance of it is in this remark: 'To walk in Christian life, we must *be* what we admire'. What a searching thing that is! Is Jesus the object of my admiration, beloved? Do I love Him enough to want to be like Him? Do I love Him enough to live as He lived? O to live here on the principle of faith with my vision opened to the world of life where He is, and the world of death in which I live eclipsed and put in its place! Faith and the Spirit and life: what wonderful things they are to find together.

I promised to say a word about this widow. I do not think we could exactly say that the church is a widow. She feels the absence of Christ but she knows that He is living. At the same time the spirit of the widow, I think, might mark us all. Paul tells us what a "widow indeed" is and God has been pleased - Mr Gardiner used to remark

on this - to leave widows among us. I say that feelingly. "Now she who is a widow indeed, and is left alone, has put her hope in God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day", 1 Tim 5: 5. She has before her that the day is coming. It may be night now, but the day is coming. It does not say 'day and night' there, but "night and day". That is the spirit of the widow. We find one here, a widow indeed. She had no resource. Someone had evidently unjustly taken what was hers - perhaps it was her husband - and the one to whom she might have turned for help was unjust, but she had recourse to God like the widow indeed. The widow indeed is "shut up to faith". Does Paul not use that expression somewhere? - "shut up to faith", Gal 3: 23.

I want to make it perfectly clear that I do not have any particular matter in mind, but let me say something to the young people. Unjust things do happen; people do suffer injustice - God knows - and they suffer injustice that they can do nothing about. These things happen. I suppose every young person here knows what it is to be treated unfairly by someone against whom they have no remedy. What a thing it is to take up such matters in faith. You see, God is able where you are not able: He is able to do extraordinary things. He is able to come in for you in spite of whoever may be responsible for the injustice. He did not take this judge away, but He made him act in spite of himself. You might say the outcome was not very satisfactory; it was done in bad grace. Yes, but this widow had what she wanted. God had seen to that. The judge was not changed, but God was able to make that judge do what he did not want to do and God's elect was avenged. You do not have to tell God what to do: you simply have to tell God what you need. He will do it. He can do things that you would not think He could do. He can do them in a way that you would not have thought of; He overwhelms this unjust judge and the widow is avenged. It says "his elect" - that is those who have faith - "cry to him day and night" - it is a Jewish reference - "and he bears long as to them". You say, I have prayed about this matter for so long. It says here that God will avenge them speedily, and I am almost giving up. But "the Lord

does not delay his promise, as some account of delay, but is longsuffering towards you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance", 2 Pet 3: 9. It is *towards* you. Have your misfortunes happened to you for nothing? Are they not an opportunity to learn God better? Perhaps there is something there that we need to repent of in order that we might be pleasing to God. God waits until every aspect of the matter can be met in salvation and then He comes in. "He will avenge them speedily". Paul says, "He that comes will come, and will not delay", Heb 10: 37. What a precious thing that is! "But the just", it says, "shall live by faith" (v.38).

I trust the brethren will think about the practical side of what I have said. I could go on but time does not allow to speak next of patience. Paul says to Titus: "in faith, in love, in patience", chap 2: 2. Perhaps the only thing there is time to say is that there is a crying need for it! May God bless the word!

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THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE GENERAL EPISTLES

In *Romans* Christ is the mercy seat; the point with God being to declare His righteousness.

In *1 Corinthians* He is the wisdom of God and the power of God; the purpose of God being by Christ to overthrow all that existed and to establish what was of Himself.

In *2 Corinthians* He is the "yea, and ... amen"; that is, the confirmation of the promises of God.

In *Galatians* He is the vehicle of Abraham's blessing to the Gentiles.

In *Ephesians* He is the One who has ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.

In *Philippians* He is the life and the aim of the Christian.

In *Colossians* He is the Head, in whom the reconciliation of all things comes to pass.

In *1 Thessalonians* He is the Deliverer from the wrath to come.

In *2 Thessalonians* He is the Destroyer of Antichrist.

In *Hebrews* He is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.

In *James* He is the Lord of glory.

In *1 Peter* He is the Living Stone.

In *2 Peter* He is the Day Star in the heart of the Christian.

In *1 John* He is the true God and eternal life.

F.E.Raven