

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

FOOD

"BROUGHT TO GOD"

FOOD

Exodus 12: 1-11; 16: 13-18 Joshua 1: 10,11; 5: 10-12

R.T. I think the Lord would graciously give us some sense of what is typified in the food referred to in these passages, so that we may be strengthened to overcome in the exercises and practical matters that we have to face. In Exodus 12, they have the passover in view of leaving Egypt, and in chapter 16 they have the manna in view of being sustained in the wilderness; and then in Joshua they have the victuals in view of passing over into the land and in Gilgal they have afresh touch of the old corn of the land in view of living in the land. We may be helped to apply these experiences to the practical exercises of our lives and find the Lord and His grace sufficient for all that we each have to face. The food in each case is enough to sustain the people superior to the circumstances. The food in Exodus 12 gives us to see the lengths to which Christ has suffered on our account that we may not be engulfed and ensnared in the world's system. The passover was to be celebrated each year, whether it was the wilderness or the land; it was something that was to be ever in their minds, that the Lord's love and His divine grace had delivered them from Egypt. He has delivered us out of the present evil world (Gal 1: 4); He died on that account. As we think of Him like this, it would help us to see what love He has shown us. A world that is going on to judgment but the Lord in His grace and His love has served us to deliver us from it. I think that would be food for our souls to maintain us in a proper judgment of all that would ensnare and hold us in bondage.

L.McF. So the household is prominent in these scriptures - household responsibility. Develop that for us.

R.T. Many of us have grown up in this area of things, where we are protected from the world and its evil. But then there is the practice and the teaching in the household that would give us strength as we grow up to have a judgment of the world as nurtured in the love of

Jesus, who would have us to be free from it in appreciation of the love that went to this length to keep us apart from it.

J.A.P. You spoke in your opening prayer of the Spirit's service to us, individually and then collectively. Are both services seen here? The assembly is in view but my house is in view too. Would you say something about that?

R.T. I think that is a very fine thing to count on. I was impressed with it as we sang the hymn, that the Spirit has peculiar liberty in the circumstances of the Christian household, and as nurtured in that area of things the Spirit protects us. But then I think we are nourished too in the local assembly; the Spirit has greater liberty in the assembly than He has in the households and with us individually. The exercise would be that we are nourished to be able to stand against the influences of the world, through an appreciation of the love of Christ. The Spirit would make that very fresh and real to us individually and collectively. How near the Lord Jesus has come, even into circumstances where He would die for us. The love behind His stoop into manhood that led Him to go this way is to endear Him to us to build up strength in us as feeding on Him. What contradiction from sinners He endured! As contemplating Him it gives us strength to find our way through the influences that are all around us that would in many ways appeal to us, too.

C.F.D. So while the angel would see the blood, the household would be protected by it. Do you think that the blood on the door-posts and the lintel would be obvious and visible to all the members of the house, so that as they came in and went out everything would have to pass the death of Christ? You cannot but feel that the enemy would seek to invade our houses in one way or another through its occupants; therefore the constant reminder of the blood on the door-posts.

R.T. It was their salvation that that blood was there. So as you say each occupant would see it being done and would see that faith in that blood saved them from the judgment. But it is faith in the blood of that lamb that was there four days in the house, speaking of the

gracious movements of Jesus in His manhood here. It was the blood of that One that preserved them from the judgment that was coming on Egypt - and how severe the judgment was!

C.F.D. Each member appropriating the lamb according to the measure of his eating would show that even by the youngest of the family something should be imbibed and put into their souls as to what this all means. The death of Christ is being brought forward and presented to separate them from everything on the outside. That is where we are in danger, do you think, that things on the outside in some way or another might snare us?

R.T. Yes. I thought we should keep the individual side very much before us. There is the household, which protects us, but each individual had to eat this for themselves. It is something we all have to face. We are protected in the household and in the local company too, but there are exercises that come into our lives that we each have to face ourselves, by ourselves. We have help from others undoubtedly, but the eating, I thought, would give us to be strong enough in ourselves that the influences of the world do not overwhelm us. And they are very real today in many, many ways, not only in what is abroad - we would all have a judgment of the gross evil and immorality that is in the world - but there are the influences of the world that would bring us into bondage and hinder us from moving forward into the liberty that God has in mind for His people. I thought the contemplation of the sufferings and death of Christ would help us as to a true judgment, that the whole world in all its aspects lies under judgment.

A.S.H. I was thinking as to the neighbour - "and his neighbour next to him" - whether that would bring about unity? We would all be united as one as assembly persons.

R.T. That is a good suggestion because the people here were unified as never before. So we find that, if we all have the same judgment about the world, its attempts to ensnare us and hold us from moving into the great thoughts of God, we can help one another, to stand against the world. So while we have to feed

individually we can be feeding together, and that would be what we are seeking to do now, to feed together and encourage one another to feed increasingly on this precious food that would give us power to move forward.

L.D.P. It says in Matthew 26 that as they were eating Jesus gave them the Supper. How does that bear on us today?

R.T. I think there is a very direct connection with this. Matthew emphasises the need for eating. It is not light exactly, although light lies behind it, but eating involves appropriating. We do not get the good of the meetings by saying, It is a good meeting, and admiring the truth and reading it, but as you say, Matthew emphasises the eating. That means that something comes into us and makes us strong constitutionally in view of the exercises and the pressures that are presented to us.

J.A.P. The lamb reminds you of the will broken. That is the hard thing in our households, is it not? It is the will of another Man, the will of the Lord Jesus to come into my house.

R.T. John the baptist had a very strong impression of Jesus like this, did he not? How he appreciated and pointed Him out as "the Lamb of God". So here it is your lamb. You read the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, and you get some attractive impression of Jesus, how He conducted Himself in the midst of the Pharisees and these doctors of the law. You begin to take that to yourself. It is your lamb, and you see how that Man died to free me from all the influences that are around that would hinder us entering into the thoughts of divine love for us.

L.McF. So verse 11 says, "And thus shall ye eat it: your loins shall be girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is Jehovah's passover." The thought of movement is in mind here; they are not settling down, they are on the move and they are to eat it in haste. How do we apply that?

R.T. You can tell us.

L.McF. This is an urgent matter and we need to come to that. The blood distinguishes our households from the world when we are moving out of the world typically, do you think?

R.T. Yes. It says of John, "Looking at Jesus as he walked," John 1: 36. It was a sacrificial walk, the life of Jesus here, on the cross to free us from the system of bondage and the judgment under which the world lies. So as we look at the Man of the Gospels, we see the beauties and moral perfections of the details of His life, but that life had to be laid down to free us from the world. The world had no claim upon Him; He walked through it in perfect communion with His God and Father. He says, "the ruler of this world comes, and in me he has nothing;" John 14: 30, but He laid down that life to make a way out for us. The sense of that coming into our souls exposes the world to us but helps us to be in spirit, while we are still in it, free from its influences.

K.N.P. What do you say about it being roast with fire?

R.T. I think it is the cross. It says, "Ye shall eat none of it raw, nor boiled", He did not only suffer but He died and He was forsaken. The roasting would imply that the Man of the Gospels was forsaken on our account to help us to get clear of the world. We could never get clear of the world without feeding on the Christ who died.

K.N.P. They would see that too, would they not? I was thinking of contemplation of the Lord on the cross, something that is good for our contemplation; as the lamb was roasting they would be watching.

R.T. That is a great test, is it not? The One whom I follow has gone this way and if the world crucified my Saviour, can I find my life and my associations of life in that world? That is impossible as feeding on Him like this. So Paul brings the cross into Corinth. I think this passage would link with Corinthians. There they were, put up, so Paul brings in the cross. I think he brings in the lamb roast with fire to help them to be clear of the worldly influences coming into the assembly. They were having their parties and links that were out of keeping with a crucified Christ. He says in that epistle too that "our passover, Christ, has been sacrificed" 1 Cor 5: 7. It would connect

with this passage in applying it to the Christian's life, that the cross and the teaching of it helps us to grow not only in our judgment of the world but to grow in assembly circumstances.

C.F.D. I think bringing in the thought of the abandonment, the forsaking, helps us here. It shows the full extent of the fire, does it not? It is nothing mitigated. It is not like being boiled, but it is the full effect of the fire in which typically the Lord absorbed the whole matter including the forsaking. I think that helps, it helps me as you refer to that, to see the extent to which the Lord went. I think the appropriation of that would be salvation to us.

R.T. Yes, I think it would help us to maintain our judgment, that He had to go that far and bear that judgment that we may escape the judgment that is pending on the world. We have often remarked that it was a well-known Jesus who was forsaken on our account. And so it would endear Him to us that He has gone that length in His love to free us from the bondage that the world would hold us in. Because here they were held in slavery. They were not able to worship God, because they were held in bondage to the world. Now Christ died to break that bondage that we may be free to enter into the great realm of divine love and blessing.

A.S.H. I was looking at that earlier, "Ye shall eat none of it raw, nor boiled at all with water"; that side was eliminated and as you remarked the fire was direct on the lamb.

R.T. Well, going along with it, there is unleavened bread. He alone was forsaken on our account, but then, as we appreciate that, there is this unleavened bread that accompanies it. That means for us that we seek to be true. And that was what Paul was labouring at in Corinth that they might be true to the cross, they might accept and follow the crucified One to come into the liberty of assembly circumstances and assembly life.

J.A.P. The attack of the devil has been on the home; these marvellous inventions of men - these videos, internet, computers and television and so forth - the whole world can be piped into your home. You do not have to go out and get anything, it can just be

piped right in. And think of our dear children and grand-children in worldly homes: they are exposed to that kind of thing. What would you say? How should that be met?

R.T. I think, as you say, it is very insidious. We are still in the world and part of it and we have to find our way through it, but we will only rightly do that as we see that it lies under judgment and Christ had to die, in this world, in order that we may not be condemned along with it. Paul was anxious to get the Corinthians to have a right judgment. I think this is what the eating would help us to do, strengthen us to have a judgment that the world lies in the wicked one. Its influences as you say, come very near to us. He died here. So we should judge things in the light of the cross.

C.F.D. So if the Lord should tarry and we come up to the Supper tomorrow, I think what you have raised is very real, that is, our approach would be a real challenge. We are challenged as to whether we are true to Him. Are we true to the principles of the Lord's Supper? I think that would come home to us afresh. And if we are, it would liberate us in relation to the service of God that lies beyond, would it not?

R.T. I am sure of that. It would strengthen us. Paul writes, Let a man examine himself. I think the passover enters into that. Then Paul speaks about the cross, "through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world", Gal 6: 14. The cross of Jesus and His being forsaken helps us to have a judgment and compare things. Is it in keeping with the cross? So the Supper has a great regulating effect, that we are truly announcing His death. That would be as we come together, but it would also be in our lives, leading up to the Supper. The unleavened bread keeps us in accord with the sufferings. It says it was to be the beginning of the year for them. It was celebrated in the wilderness and in the land and you can see, in the history of the people of old, that when the passover was well kept there was a healthy condition among them. There was a long period of time when it was forgotten and the people fell into very bad habits. But you can see the reviving of the passover meant the reviving of spiritual life among the Israelites. So it would be for us, the

maintenance of it would keep us in spiritual life. These are very real exercises we have to face in our lives and we have to carry it with us that Christ died for us to deliver us out of the present evil world. Then we come into the wilderness in chapter 16, and we find that there is something else; there is a different kind of food that maintains them. I think the passover gives us a judgment, then it brings us into circumstances where they did not have the leeks and the garlic of Egypt. We say sometimes, What have we got? If the cross has divided and separated us from these things that you speak of, the radio and television, what have we got? We are apt to murmur and complain. That is what the people were doing here. God says, I will give you something else. And what He gave them brought them through the wilderness for forty years. I think it is an appreciation of Christ now that would strengthen us for the journey day by day. Through our lives in the wilderness circumstances we have what would make us content and appreciative of the grace that has come so near to us.

G.A. I was thinking of the Gospels, Matthew and Mark and the others, how the Lord brought the crowds together, made them sit down and fed them with a few loaves and the fishes and they went away satisfied. It says it was as the hoarfrost on the ground; they each ate according to their measure and went away satisfied. The Lord can do these things, would you say?

R.T. That is what we are looking for this morning, something that would satisfy us. As you say, the Lord, in His grace, would not send them away hungry. I think that would be the Lord ministering to us in these wilderness surroundings. What a rich ministry He has given over many years, what a compensation that is over against the literature of the world, and many other things like that. And then He would give us to be restful. There is something that is different. They say, "What is it?" A certain touch of admiration I think, as they saw something there so precious and different. It was nothing of Egypt. There was nothing of Egypt about it, but they ate of it and were satisfied.

C.F.D. Do you think we are challenged as to the matter of satisfaction to which you have just referred because really this is Christ once humbled, is it not? Are we satisfied with humble circumstances? Is this truly our outlook? If we are feeding on something else it will not be. But I think the appetite for, and, we may say, the diet of Christ once humbled helps us to walk here superior to all that is around us.

R.T. I think so. As we have said, these are practical things in our lives, that we do not have the things of the world. They did not have then and they harked back after Egypt. The Lord says, Well, there is something else. If you do not have what Egypt would have for your support, He says, I will give you something very fine, something very different. It is like what Paul brings into Philippians, "Let this mind be in you", Phil 2: 5. He took a bondman's form, He was found in the circumstances of men, humbled Himself, becoming obedient. I think this is like the food of Philippians 2 that the Lord would give us some impression of the grace of Christ that covers the wilderness. Think of them going out in the morning and what they saw was this thing, fine as hoarfrost, covering the ground. Well, we have to tread our way through the wilderness but it is fine to think of Christ known to us in those circumstances, another kind of man that would produce another character in us.

J.A.P. There is a very gracious touch in the sixteenth chapter, "Gather of it every man according to what he can eat". That would be skill in our houses - what we should bring in in the morning reading, or when we read. We are only able for so much, are we not? What would you say about that?

R.T. That is so. But I think this is personal as well as household, each for themselves. As we said earlier, each member has to eat. There may be light in the morning reading and light in the Scriptures, but unless I eat I am not going to have the grace and power to be different in this world. If we eat Egypt's food, we will be Egyptian but if we are eating the manna we will be coming out in the character of the Man of Philippians 2. So it says, "Gather of it every man according to what he can eat". You say, We are not able for much, but Paul was trying to get the Corinthians to eat more. I do not think

we eat enough. We may say we are not able for much and excuse ourselves, but as counting on the Spirit, He would expand our hearts to appreciate more this Man who was so different.

K.N.P. It did not matter - the ones that gathered much had nothing left over and the ones that gathered little were satisfied. Does that show the greatness of what God can do with what we gather?

R.T. The Lord knows the daily exercises of our lives whether it is at school or in the home or at work, and I think He would give us enough to meet that exercise with a fresh impression of the Man who was here and how He met things. So that we are able to meet things not as an Egyptian would in the fierceness of the sword but we are able to be in the conflict in a different character. I think it would be a suffering character. The manna would help us to be prepared to suffer and to accept reproach and to be in the Spirit of Christ, not complaining. We sometimes feel the burdens are more than we can bear; well, there is manna, as much as we need to help bear the burdens.

L.McF. It involved rising early before the sun came up. So it has to be an exercise in the household and it is daily.

R.T. I think that is important to emphasise, that it is daily. The Lord says, "Sufficient to the day is its own evil", Matt 6: 34. We sometimes project things a long way ahead and wonder how things are going to go, but it would be a feature of the wilderness pathway that it is day by day, and grace given for that day in view of strengthening us for the particular exercises of that day. We do not always know them, the enemy is very cunning and he brings things suddenly upon us. Things we did not expect come into our lives and sometimes from quarters that we did not expect, but the manna is there to give us the strength of character to be superior to these things. So Paul's word, "Let this mind be in you" - let it be. I think that is like gathering the manna, that we approach things on this level of admiration for the lowly grace of Christ. You can see as the people appreciated it, they were preserved. They began to despise it and they lost their taste and almost became ensnared in the

Egyptian customs, but we should be exercised to keep our taste for the manna.

J.A.P. What you remarked about the individual side - perhaps you have more to say - but I can see that the sisters must have their own links with the Lord. Our wives help us sometimes; they say I noticed this in the printed ministry or I noticed this in the Scripture. There is something coming in beside the family reading. Is that what you are pressing? And the children as they get older, some link with the Lord themselves.

R.T. I think so. There is light in the household, there is light in the local meeting, and in the Scriptures and in reading the ministry, but eating is something we can only do for ourselves. I think that is what helps us, because we are not always in the household, or with the brethren; we are alone at school, or at work, in circumstances where we are tested individually as to how much we appreciate and seek to take on the character of this Man who was here in lowly grace. The Lord Jesus, wherever He was - among Pharisees or Sadducees or in the temple or at His work - in every circumstance, He was there in divine grace filling it out to the Father's pleasure, even at twelve years of age. So it says, "This is the bread which Jehovah has given you to eat." Not just to say what is it and admire it - some men read the Scriptures just admiringly - but it is to be eaten, "This is the bread which Jehovah has given you to eat." They were to gather it and eat it. If they gathered it and did not eat it they did not get any gain from it; it was not lost exactly, but it was lost for them. So it says, they did so; a fine feature of obedience in us. I think that is a great feature of this feeding, both on the passover and on the manna; it produces a contented, obedient spirit in the saints that is leadable to go forward into the land.

C.F.D. I think what you said about things being thrust on us, unexpectedly it might be; they test us very much. You do not have time to think about what you are going to say. The appropriation of this at the beginning of the day - it says, "they had gathered every man according to the measure of his eating" - household prayer is good, but the individual side would provide for us when the enemy is

going to suddenly thrust something on us that we did not anticipate. This always proves to be a test, does it not?

R.T. Yes, I think so. As eating the passover we come into the wilderness and we find there that the same grace is serving us to find our way. If the world has its resources for us, there are resources in the manna and it is gathered in the morning and it is enough for the whole day. I do not suppose they ate it all in the morning; there is enough there to see us through until the next time.

When we come to Joshua it may be a very big exercise in our lives. It was not just something that was at hand for them exactly. In chapter 1 it says, "Prepare yourselves victuals, for in three days ye shall pass over this Jordan". The lamb was provided and the manna was there in abundance to be gathered, but here now they are facing something else. He says, "Prepare yourselves victuals, for in three days ye shall pass over this Jordan". We all come to certain testing exercises in our lives and without belittling the manna, there is more than that needed. The manna gives us grace in the wilderness but certain crucial exercises come into all our lives. How are we going to meet them? We may not have family or friends to help us - thank God when in our exercises, we can count on the brethren - but he says, "Prepare yourselves victuals," something they had to do for themselves. So what is our resource going to be when we have a difficult exercise? The Lord would give us some fresh food as we seek it, and wisdom and power to meet these crucial matters.

C.F.D. Does prayer come into all this? There is much said about the eating and the appropriating, which really give us a constitution to face things, but I wondered if prayer comes into this which would be the secret of our dependence on God.

R.T. Yes, I am sure it would. It says, "Prepare yourselves victuals, for in three days ye shall pass over this Jordan"; it was a way they had not gone before. We come to that in our lives, may be more than once, but at times exercises come that we have not gone this way before'. Now as you say, What is our resource? I think it would be in prayer; "Our Father who art in the heavens," Matt 6: 9. He

says that our very hairs are numbered. He comes down to the details of our lives to gain our confidence. When a difficult exercise comes where do we turn? We turn to our Father and His precious care and interest in us, do you think?

L.D.P. I was wondering whether in 2 Timothy 4 Paul had that in mind. He says, "At my first defence no man stood with me, but all deserted me. May it not be imputed to them. But the Lord stood with me, and gave me power" v.16, 17.

R.T. That is a very fine scripture, "the Lord stood with me". Well, when we come to these exercises, do we put ourselves in a position where the Lord can stand with us or do we court worldly resources and the Lord cannot stand with us. But as you say, Paul prepared himself for the circumstances, and the Lord stood with him and gave him power.

L.McF. The footnote to 'victuals' is venison, which is strong meat. How do we apply that please?

R.T. I think it is a deeper appreciation of Christ, that we see and appropriate Him as one who in His personal glories was able for everything. It connects with Colossians because they were to have their eye on the ark, as well as preparing these victuals. In Colossians we have this word, "have your mind on the things that are above," Col 3: 2. It is looking at the Lord and seeing Him as One who has been through the circumstances of death, and it was death that was in mind here. But it would apply to deep exercises in our lives, I think, that the Lord personally has met them. Preparing ourselves involves fixing our minds on Him to acquire grace and strength for the difficulties that face us. Do you think?

L.McF. Yes, that is very helpful.

R.T. So he says in Colossians, "have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth". In these exercises the earthly things are not going to help us, but "Prepare yourselves" - you feed on the Lord Jesus and His personal, glorious worth. It is a bit like what the Lord said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life:" John 11: 25. That was a great exercise in

their lives, their brother had died; He says, "Believest thou this? " They had light; she said, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection": the Lord says, "I am the resurrection and the life". They were there feeding on the victuals.

A.S.H. It says, "for in three days ye shall pass over this Jordan". What is your thought as to the three days? Christ was in the heart of the earth three days and three nights, does that have any bearing on this?

R.T. Yes, it is a complete period. I was only applying it to our exercises that there is a big matter before us. And these things have entered into our lives; these exercises of divisions among the brethren as well as critical times in our lives. Three days is a protracted exercise and I think there is a particular need for apprehending Christ in His glorious greatness as the Victor over death and everything else in view that we may be strong enough to go through the exercise in triumph.

K.N.P. The thought of being buried together with Him and then raised together with Him (Col 2: 12) - is that the idea, "pass over this Jordan"? That is our death with Him, is it not?

R.T. That is a very good touch. That is Colossians, identification with Him, and seeing how He went through the Jordan. What happened as He went, the power of Jordan was completely broken. We need help in these very difficult matters that we have to go through, to see how Christ has taken the power out of the enemy's hand and He is above. So, as preparing ourselves, we are in touch with what is above that we may go through in triumph.

J.A.P. The reference you made in John 11 is very helpful, that He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life". It is not the Lord Jesus as Saviour now but His Person. That is a great lesson how great the Person is who has gone through death; "I am" He says.

R.T. And He says to her, "Believest thou this?" That is a word for us. Do we believe it? He is greater than the exercise because He has dealt with the enemy in his own domain, and now here He is above to be food for our souls in the way He dealt with the exercise

that we may be identified with Him in view of passing over. When they did pass over in chapter 5 what they found was another food, the old corn of the land. These things were there together, the passover and the manna and then there is the old corn of the land. We find not only that He has been enough to get us through the exercise but that He is there to sustain us in a heavenly environment in the glory of His Person.

J.A.P. It is the old corn of the land - they were not to store up the manna but the old corn of the land seems to have something further. Maybe you could help us?

R.T. The manna was provisional in that sense. We are not always in the wilderness. The Lord helps us through it but He gives us another food, to be at home in heavenly circumstances. It is fine to get through your day's work and the day's exercises, to be in the atmosphere of a Christian home and the local company. The old corn of the land is enjoyed in the local meeting where you get a touch of Christ as the One who is glorified, the risen, ascended One, leading on to "My Father and your Father, and my God and your God", John 20: 17. So it is fine to go from Egypt, to be delivered from the bondage of the world to be in the liberty of enjoying, "My Father and your Father", is it not? And in every detail of our lives Christ is enough. What grace that He comes down to the details and the sorrows and the exercises to bring us to feed on the old corn of the land. We did not prepare it, but it gives us strength to enjoy the fruit, the pomegranates and the grapes, and these houses that we did not build, the old corn of the land gives us strength to enjoy our heavenly portion. These different foods show how Christ in His grace would sustain us that we may be brought into our true place and at liberty in it.

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Key to initials

G.Ashby (New York); C.F.Dadd (Plainfield); A.S.Hinkson (New York);
L.McFarlane (New York); J.A.Petersen (Plainfield); K.N.Pye (New
York); L.D.Phillips (New York); R.Taylor (Kirkcaldy)

"BROUGHT TO GOD"

Robert Taylor

Exodus 19: 3-6; 21: 5, 6; 1 Peter 2: 9, 10

In Exodus 19, God says, I have brought you to Myself; from all that we were as once far off to Himself. It was all His own activities. He took up the children of Israel as slaves in Egypt, to be His own possession. He says, all the earth is Mine, and yet He chose them as He has chosen us. What barriers there were in the way. He says, I have borne you on eagles' wings. What divine power has been exercised on our behalf by God to bring us to Himself. Peter tells us that the Lord Jesus once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God (1 Peter 3: 18). He has cleared the ground righteously to bring us to Himself. There is not a power in the universe that can challenge the fact that God has exercised His rights in sovereign mercy to bring us to Himself. It all has found its origin in His own heart of love - there was nothing in us. The Egyptians were, I suppose, in many ways, more wealthy, but God passed over them and chose the Israelites as He has chosen you and me, not only to forgive us our sins - what a wonderful matter that is on the way, bringing out the strength of His love for us, but the great end is to bring us to Himself. I wonder if we have come all the way, dear brethren, to Himself. We appreciate what He has done for us, that our sins are gone, and gone ever more, never to be raised again. That was all part of God bearing them on eagles' wings. Pharaoh pursued them but he could not touch them. There is much in our own hearts that may hinder us and condemn us. John says, "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart", 1 John 3: 20. There are those eagles' wings that He has used in power to rise and soar above all the circumstances here. Nothing could hinder those activities of divine mercy and grace to bring us to Himself. All Satan's forces were harnessed against Christ at the cross. Every power and resource that the devil could muster, political power and every other force was there against Christ; the stone rolled against the tomb, sealed with the Roman seal, they were all humiliated by

divine power in raising Christ from among the dead, that our faith and hope might be in God. That was how God acted in the superiority of divine power to liberate us, from all that we were in our sins, and from the surroundings of bondage. We would all have some sense of how God has acted for us in simple details of life. I wonder if we appreciate that the heart of God brings us all the way, not only to be forgiven, wonderful fact that it is to be forgiven for our sins; John says that to the little children, "your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake" 1 John 2: 12. That Name and its authority silences every challenge to the fact that your sins, through faith in Christ and His precious, finished work, are forgiven for His name's sake.

Well, that is on the way, as I have said. God would have much more than that, He wants to bring us to Himself, not only to know what He has done for us "the things that God has prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor 2: 9). Peter, again says, "the time past is sufficient", 1 Peter 4: 3 - that would be like the "And now " of this section - for the rest of time to be to God's will. So He says, "If ye will hearken to my voice". You know He has a lot more to say to us; not only that thy sins are forgiven for Christ's Name's sake, blessed relief, but God has a lot more to say to us as we come to Himself. He wants to speak about His dwelling among them in the tabernacle, the great system of which the ark is to be the centre. Not only that Christ once died for our sins, but He lives in relation to a system of praise and blessing where God is served. So He wants to bring us into the divine service; He says, "And now, if ye will hearken to my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then shall ye be my own possession out of all the peoples". What a blessed proposal, "ye shall be my own possession". That is what the Lord would give us a sense of as we appreciate these eagles' wings, that we belong to Him, we are His possession. And then He brings us into this great system functioning Godward. He has put substance in our souls as we have traced His ways of mercy and wisdom. Paul speaks about that, "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways!" Rom

11: 33. So God would have us to commit ourselves. That is what this section brings in - are we going to commit ourselves to the God who has brought us this way? We stand here now in this moment, "And now", God says, I have done all this, what is your reaction? I think the reaction is in the Hebrew bondman. He says, "I love my master, my wife, and my children". Are we going to be like this Hebrew bondman and say distinctly, "I love my master, my wife, and my children", to be committed to the circumstances into which divine grace has brought us? He says, I love, I will not go free. How many have gone free; they have accepted the blessings of Christianity, the forgiveness of sins and maybe even have come to know the gift of the Spirit, and yet living to themselves, not having understood what it is to be brought to Myself. They have appreciated the relief without coming into the fulness of what divine love has purposed. This man evidently came into the gain and the blessedness of the grace of the divine proposals and those eagles' wings, and when the opportunity came he says, "I will not go free": He wanted to live in the realm of divine blessing. The forgiveness of sins, justification by faith, these things, may I say, stand at the threshold of coming to God. God in justifying us and even in bringing in reconciliation is only preparing us for the house. When the younger son came back to his father, there were those activities outside the house. The father brought out the robe, and the ring and the shoes, and that would be like this; the father brings it out, and the younger son says, I will go in. There he is in the robe and the ring and the shoes, experiencing what the eagles' wings have done in view of knowing the father's heart inside. And that is what this man is saying distinctly, I love, I will not go free; he says, I do not want to live to myself in my own circumstances, my own surroundings, but I want to live in the wealth of what divine love has proposed - "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." This man comes into the gain of the great system of the priesthood and into the great environment of serving God in the tabernacle system. It is fine to go in, not only to see the offerings in the court and appreciate the laver - divine provision for us on account of our state and our condition - but to know something of the inside position; the fragrant incense of the golden altar. This man comes into it all through

committing himself. He says, I love, I will not go free. I not only appreciate what you have done for me, I want to be near you, your household. God has a household here in the local meeting and He would encourage us to say we are not going to go free. In exercises that come up we are not pleasing ourselves but we are accepting divine regulation in the circumstances and we want to be part of them. That is what this man wanted to do. He could have gone free and had reminiscences about the time and all that the master had done for him, but he would be outside the house. You may say, he committed himself to the fellowship of His Son. The responsibilities of the fellowship he accepted in having his ear bored through with the awl, and the privileges of the fellowship he came into as he says, I will not go free. We have not been called into a formal system of priesthood but we have been called into the fellowship of His Son and we come into the joys and blessedness of it through saying distinctly, I will not go free. How wonderful to appreciate the Master, that we want to be in the circumstances that He has ordered for us in His house. So that man with his ear bored through; wherever he went you would see that he belonged to another. He would demonstrate in the way he lived, where he went, how he did things in his business, and in the home, that he was not pleasing himself. But his circumstances were regulated in relation to the master's house and the laws of that house, because there are certain laws attached to the house of God. Jacob came to a point where he learned that it was best to live in the house of God, not in his own arrangements where he had experienced both prosperity and disappointments, but when Joseph was born, Jacob got a view of another kind of man typically and he says, I have to readjust my life. In principle, Jacob came to have his ear bored through with the awl when Joseph came into his life and he says, I will have to leave these circumstances that I am in. I cannot live here, in the distance, I want to live in the environment and the area of the fellowship in the circumstances that God has ordained. So Jacob arose and took his journey to Bethel, the house of God. What wonderful blessing he came into, though not without exercises, but he came to live in the house of God where the laws of the house regulate his circumstances, not the other way

round, but the principles of the fellowship become regulating to him. Think of the Father's pleasure in all who commit themselves to the fellowship of His Son, as well as the joy of the brethren. We are all tested in our lives, in different circumstances. Most of the time I believe we are being tested and we do not know it. The bondman was tested and he knew it and he rose to the test. But there are many circumstances in simple things that come up in our lives that test us and the Father appreciates when we answer to the test. Some of these tests are very severe; the Lord tests His own work and He finds great pleasure in seeing persons rising to the test, not doing it just because the brethren think it is the right thing to do, but He finds great pleasure in hearing a person rising to the test saying, I love, I love my Master and I accept that the arrangements that You have made are the best arrangements for me, and I want to live in them. Peter seeking to encourage the suffering saints in testing circumstances reminds them of what they are. He says, "ye are a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation". God has exercised the prerogatives of His love to enrich us and He would have us to rise to some sense of how He has brought us to Himself as enriched. It says He is bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2: 10), not sinners saved by grace only, precious beginning, but it says He is bringing sons to glory. You can visualise this letter coming into their hands as they were persecuted; some had lost their possessions, separated from their families, mourning the sorrows of the present time as they must have been. Peter says, "Ye are a chosen race". He would lift us above the confusion to have God's thoughts about ourselves. The Holy Spirit would give us this in a real way today, "a chosen race". It is not one company, it is all the redeemed; all the redeemed are chosen, chosen in Him before the world's foundation (Eph 1: 4). How blessed to get some sense of that in your soul. Maybe you are in a day when you feel the sufferings of the present time, the persecutions at work, of men who would ridicule persons who confess the name of Jesus; then the Spirit will give you a sense you are one of a chosen race. God sees these activities of men against the saints and in His own time He will intervene in favour of His elect and He will judge the ungodly. We can leave that to Him as we have

a sense of His love as bearing us on eagles' wings and bringing us to Himself. So He would give us amidst these rebuffs to have some sense that we are a chosen race and then a kingly priesthood. He would have us in the midst of all the confusion to put on the festival robes, to enjoy the wealth of His purposes in relation to us - "a people for a possession". How beautiful that is, that God wants to live among His people. That is why He has called us out of Egypt, into the fellowship of His Son, that He might enjoy His saints as enriched and clothed with divine thoughts. So Peter writes that we may enjoy these heavenly things; he says, "that ye might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light; who once were not a people, but now God's people; who were not enjoying mercy, but now have found mercy." The Lord would just help us that in all the sorrows, and the confusion of breakdown, there is to be some testimony among the saints, but it would go out too to others 'that ye might set forth the excellencies of him". That is not only praising the Lord Jesus for forgiving us our sins but I think it is appreciating the great wealth and depth of His love - "set forth the excellencies". The people here are in wonderful triumph, great overcomers. They are not only able for the breakdown; they are to be a testimony in their way of life and are able to fill out the service of God; "set forth the excellencies of him who has called you". What a tribute there is in the praises of the saints to the excellencies of Him who has called us. Tomorrow morning, if the Lord will, we will have a fine opportunity for the expression of the excellencies of divine grace and divine love - the excellencies of it. But then it is not only to be in word, it is to be in our lives, I think. There is a certain triumph in the believer that he owes nothing to this world, but in this very world of darkness, strife and confusion he is setting forth the true grace of God. He is setting forth the features of another Man, the Man Christ Jesus. I believe our hearts would be exercised to be setting forth the excellencies, not living in poverty but we are living in the royal apartments, where there is that heavenly food and those heavenly clothes that we are able to come out as princes, here amidst the darkness and the confusion, belonging to the royal household and setting forth the

excellencies of Him who has called you. Well, to set forth the excellencies of the royal household we must live in the royal household, we must live in that realm and we must maintain the dignity of what belongs to that household. There is a certain dignity that belongs to persons who are of the household of God. Jacob came to see that and he had his name changed as he was coming to live in the circumstances of the house of God. God passed him through an experience and He says, You are no longer Jacob but you are Israel, a prince of God. So God would enrich us as we come into the house, as we come into the area of the fellowship of His Son. In our manners, our ways, our habits of life there is a tribute and a testimony to the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness. The features of darkness no longer apply to saints but they are vessels of light. They are here in the midst of this generation as lights in the world, setting forth His excellencies. They are a tribute to another Man, and to the fact that there is another world with wonderful resources to maintain us here in the joy of our heavenly calling.

May we be encouraged to live in it, to come in as committed in our affections to the Master to prove the wealth and the joy of all that is pervading in the house that we may be here in faith and in the joy of our heavenly calling. For Christ's Name's sake.

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