

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 295

October 1997

Contents

ATTACHMENT TO CHRIST

WHAT CHRIST MAKES

ATTACHMENT TO CHRIST

Hebrews 4: 14-16; 8: 1-3; 10: 5-10

D.R. I thought that the experience of the priesthood of Christ, as suggested in the first three verses read, would bring about in the believer's experience a knowledge of the indispensability of Christ and that that would lead to attachment to Christ. One would suggest that to know what it is to be attached to Christ is a need at the present moment. In chapter 8 we have the thought of the sanctuary, the Lord's service as "minister of the holy places". I believe that the experience of the sanctuary leads to an understanding of what is suitable to God, and that also, I believe, is a present need, that we as God's people, and especially persons who have some light as to the great truth of Christ and the assembly and its local bearing, might understand what is suitable to God. I thought in chapter 10 we have the greatness of the offering, the offering of Christ, and the contemplation and appropriation of it leads to an appreciation of the sanctified company. It says, "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It would very much bear on the truth that we have in 2 Timothy 2 as to "those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart", v 22. That is the feature, I think, of the sanctified company. I thought we might be able to help one another as to these three features. I feel particularly that the first, as to attachment to Christ, is very necessary. I think if the testimony in its final phases, and our part in it, is to be maintained in vitality, it must be as we are attached to Christ.

P.M. Is it your thought that it is only through attachment to Him that we can rightly function in the sanctuary and take up our part in the testimony?

D.R. I think that is so. If it is not, we will drop into formalism, and that is something to be feared. I think attachment to Christ involves that we are able to draw from Him and, as drawing from Him, that we reflect His character. I do not see anything more important than that.

P.M. Is that why "the disciple whom Jesus loved ... who also leaned at supper on his breast" is the one who goes right through? "If I will that he abide until I come...", John 21: 20, 22?

D.R. That is confirmatory. So the Lord arranges our circumstances, and He allows us to feel our weakness. The priest is not for sin. The priest is for weakness and I believe the Lord has arranged many of the circumstances of the saints so that we might feel our weakness, even our smallness numerically: but it is all to cast us upon the Priest, and to find the moral greatness of the Priest, to sustain us and, as He does so, I think He makes Himself indispensable to us. It is a simple but a needful thing that we come to the point that we cannot do without Christ.

L.W.B. You refer to weakness. Does it mean physical weakness or perhaps moral weakness, that I might be tempted in a certain way?

D.R. That would enter into it, but, think it is just our general state of weakness. It is the mortal condition we are in, our frailty. There are great structural lines running through this book. For instance, it deals with the Lord's ability. In chapter 2, He is "able to help us", v 18; in chapter 4, He is able to sympathise with us, v 15; in chapter 7, He is "able to save completely", v 25. You see how much we need the Priest. It is not a question of our sins because they have been dealt with in chapter 1. They have been purged: the death of Christ has seen to that.

L.W.B. The shedding of the precious blood of Jesus has met that, has it not, and we have purged consciences?

D.R. Just so. Here it is a question of our position as being weak. We have been affected by the word of God, as we have in the previous part of the chapter. We have been brought into the light of the revelation of God through the word. Now we need the Priest to sustain us in that.

L.W.B. Is it really as I feel my need that I get the help of the Priest?

D.R. That is most important. Laodicea feels no need and Laodicea is very near us: it is a moral state. We need to be delivered from any

sense of self-sufficiency and to be cast on the Priest and to find that we need the Lord Jesus, we need Christ.

J.R.W. In the verses which you have read, there are things which we have to do: "let us hold fast"; "let us approach".

D.R. The Priest is on our side, there to help us and enable us to approach. We need to keep in mind the structure of the book; it is an important book to understand. The rent veil in the gospels is God coming out to men; but through the veil in Hebrews is man going in to God. So that, as Mr Stoney helped the brethren greatly, the Lord serves us in our circumstances, but He has in mind in that service to take us into His own circumstances, so that approach to God is always in Christ's mind.

J.R.W. I am impressed with what you are saying as to our weakness and yet what is available to meet it. At the same time, it seems that there are things we have to do. I might feel too weak even to approach or to hold fast. How can we get help as to that?

D.R. That is where we practically need the Priest. We must lay hold of what is available in Him. I suppose our knees play a great part in it: give ourselves to prayer and in that way we put our selves in touch with the Priest and find He is available to us. It works out very simply but it is very real. The holding fast - "hold fast the confession" - is not just a partial confession, but it relates to the whole light as to the revelation of God, so the obligation that rests upon us as being brought through grace into the testimony is very great. and we need this help, the help of the Priest.

D.E.R. Confession not profession. The priesthood of Christ is to support us in the wilderness setting, but with a view to our being free to enter into what is beyond what is provisional; but to do that we need to experience the priesthood of Christ. As accepting His reproach, we shall confess His name, not just profess His name.

D.R. I think we need to strengthen one another to lay hold of what is available in Christ as Priest and be exercised as to it. What can we say about it from experience? What do we know as to the priesthood of Christ and how has it affected us?

L.W.B. I can prove that He is sympathetic with our infirmities.

D.R. It is a fine word that: "able to sympathise". He understands perfectly. It involves the perfect understanding of Christ, as Priest, of all that we are called to pass through in relation to the testimony.

D.J.H. He has been through the temptations - it says "tempted in all things in like manner sin apart". 'Sin apart' could be said only of Himself. It brings forward what is unique as to this Person in this position for which He is qualified absolutely.

D.R. That is very good, 'qualified'. He has been this way, as you say, "sin apart". It is remarkable that it should say He is "tempted in all things in like manner", but, as Mr Darby said, the Lord's temptations were outward, not inward. Ours, alas! are inward, because of what is in us. We need to be helped to judge that, but then the Lord being here and being "tempted ... in like manner, sin apart" has qualified Him, as you say, for this position of sympathy.

D.J.H. He could say, "the ruler of the world comes and in me he has nothing", John 14: 30. There was nothing there that he could touch.

B.E.S. We would be guarded in saying not inward? We know what is meant, but it is not as if the Lord did not feel the force inwardly of what came upon Him or what was put to Him.

D.R. Yes, but there was no hidden motive in Christ, nothing in the way of inward lust. I think that is what is meant. His feelings, the depth of His inward feelings, have to be fed upon and appropriated, because these inward feelings were all perfect.

R.H.B. In chapter 7, His ability "to save completely those who approach by him to God" is linked with intercession on their behalf. Could you explain that? It says of Him as the Priest, "always living to intercede for them", as though that is the purpose of His risen life. I would like to understand what that means.

D.R. I think intercession there has in mind the whole extent of the inheritance. "Save completely", I think, involves the inheritance and that it is a reference to Israel. Salvation completely as far as Israel is concerned is that they are brought into the full possession of the

inheritance. Salvation for the believer is that we might be brought, not only into the full light of the inheritance, but into the full joy of it.

So we are "saved completely", not only saved from ourselves and from our sins, but saved from place. That is an important feature: it is really Ephesians. As understanding that, the intercession is a very great matter, because the enemies have all to be overcome but to be overcome in the light of the risen life of Christ. I think that is how salvation 'completely' is experienced. What would you say?

R.H.B. Ultimately, I suppose, in the literal translation of the saints to glory, there will appear a Saviour to take them to be with Himself, and only He could do that. Is that your thought - His indispensability to us?

D.R. I think we need to lay hold of that, that we need Christ. There is an idea with some that we reach Christ through the company, but we do not. We reach the company through Christ, and we need Christ. It is one's exercise at this time for young and old that we need to lay hold of the fact that Christ must be indispensable to us. I think that leads us to attachment: we are attached to that Person.

D.J.H. What is called attention to as to the intercession is very encouraging, is it not? He is not simply there waiting for us to approach Him in our needs, but He is active all the time on our behalf.

D.R. The reading of the scripture almost suggests that He is doing nothing else. He is "always living to intercede": that is what He is doing. What a strengthening thought!

V.E.W. Is it important to lay hold of the place where He is - "who has passed through the heavens"? I was thinking of the One who is in that uncreated sphere and yet so sympathetic with us in this created sphere where we are.

D.R. The way it puts it is very fine: "Having therefore a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God". So the Priest is a Man: He is on our side in that sense. But He is the Son of God. The glory of His Person is involved and, as you say, He

has "passed through the heavens". That is the position He has taken. It brings out His personal glory as well as His priestly glory.

L.W.B. If I appreciate the Lord Jesus as High Priest, is it to help me to be priestly too, and to pray for His people?

D.R. I think attachment to Christ leads to that.

G.N. I was thinking of Christ being appointed. He is the appointed way, but has He been appointed a place? Perhaps that does not relate to His priesthood.

D.R. That might bear more on the "minister of the holy places", that is, there is an appointed place and one in it who is equal to it and to securing what the affections of God require. I think the glory of the priesthood here is that it says, "who has passed through". It is the distinct glory that belongs to Him personally - "who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God". And yet while occupying such a position, He is available as the Great Priest.

K.J.S. What does that phrase mean, "passed through the heavens"?

D.R. I think it relates to an uncreated sphere and that it is in line with what we have in Ephesians chapter 4, "ascended up above all the heavens", v 10. It relates to the place that Christ has taken. It has not been given to Him in that sense: He has taken it. It brings out the glory of what He is and who He is personally. It is to bring a tremendous sense of assurance and confirmation into the soul as to the ability and the glory of the Person who is our Priest. He came into the created sphere, but He never formed part of creation. He has gone beyond it all. It is His own personal right. What more would you say about it?

K.J.S. Paul ascended to the third heaven. That would account for three, but we are to be attached to One who is in an uncreated sphere. Is that your thought?

D.R. It is to bring out the greatness of the One who is Priest. We can never go beyond what is created. We are creatures and always will be creatures, but the glory of the Priest is that He has passed through the heavens, and yet He is Jesus, the Son of God. The

thought of Jesus brings out the glory and the sympathy of His manhood. It is a man who is a Priest, and yet the glory of His Person is involved in it. There is mystery in it. It bows the soul in wonder.

D.E.B. Would you say something about grace in connection with what you are bringing before us? In Ephesians we have been given grace; here we have to find it. It seems here as though the one who approaches feels the lack of it: he has to find it. You referred in prayer, I think, to the present dispensation characterised by the Father. The Father in grace is the One who gives character to the dispensation: nevertheless grace has to be found.

D.R. I think the word "find" involves experience. It is not just something we are speaking about in a kind of objective, abstract way today. We have found it: we have proved this at particular times especially. We have proved what it is to find grace. We have known mercy too - that is more the side of relief - but grace, I think, is that we find sustenance. He does not exactly remove the circumstances but sustains us in them. I think that is grace. Circumstances arise and you find grace in the circumstance. You find it where it is needed. Is that how you feel about it?

D.E.B. And that in turn comes into expression. You have spoken about what is indispensable, but there are features of Christ which someone who has found grace will express.

D.R. That is good: it becomes evident that a person has found grace. The Lord did not remove the thorn from Paul. If He had removed it, that would have been mercy. He did not remove it, but He sustained Paul in it. That was grace. The Lord leaves certain things amongst us and in our circumstances and we have to accept that, but in accepting it, we find grace.

E.F.W. Does the throne of grace add a touch of dignity to it? We may belittle the idea of grace at times but it is a very dignified thought and the throne would carry authority with it, would it?

D.R. That is very good. I think grace is a regal thought. There is nothing weak about the thought of grace. It reigns through

righteousness. There is the throne: grace is on the throne. At one-point Mr Raven suggested that grace is almost synonymous with righteousness. You cannot think of grace as tolerance: grace is grace. We are not to be lacking in it according to this epistle, so how are we formed in it? I think it is as we find it. As was said, we find it and then we become expressive of it, and it says, "watching lest there be any one who lacks the grace of God", Heb 12: 15.

D.E.R. The Lord has been so near to mankind that He knows everything about our sorrows and our pressures and our weaknesses and our worries, and He is now in the place where there is every supply, every resource, and He would so fill our hearts in attachment to Himself that we might know that resource.

D.R. That is what I want to get through to the brethren, that the Lord knows it all, and He understands perfectly. We do not understand perfectly one another's sorrows. We enter into them and sympathise with one another, but we do not understand perfectly one another's sorrows, but the Lord Jesus does and, as you say, He is in the place of power now. The throne involves that: there is an illimitable supply and he is available to us that we might find that supply and as we find it, I think, He becomes indispensable to us. So our souls become attached to Him, like what it says in the Song, "I held him, and would not let him go" ch 3: 4. Is that current with each one of us, that we have really found this Person, that we have found His indispensability and that we are attached to Him? I think it is very much like what John speaks about, abiding in Christ.

R.E.T. Would priestliness help us in coming into the knowledge of God? Sensibility of that is through one channel and what Christ is doing is that God may be manifested and He is bringing the saints into relationship with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brought into the greatness of all that Christ has been brought into and He is going to share it with us.

D.R. What you say is most important because attachment to Christ, I think, would involve that we begin to understand Christ's feelings. Now, what can we say about attachment to Christ before we go on to

chapter 8? If we understood Christ's feelings, we would understand that they all relate to the pleasure of God and it would have a great delivering effect. I feel that there is a great need of deliverance among us, moral deliverance and actual deliverance, because there are many things that give concern as to certain activities. I do not want to touch them deeply or roughly, but there are events at times with an unhallowedness about them. The Lord does not get His place. Attachment to Christ would lead us away from that. One great feature of attachment to Christ is that we will not leave Christ. Jonathan appreciated the great victory that David had wrought. David had the head of the giant in his hand and had wrought a great victory: Jonathan appreciated that. He stripped himself and spoke about loving him as his own soul and so on, but he does not go with David: he is not attached to David. Now, are we attached to Christ? I think many of these activities would have no appeal to us if we were attached to Christ. That is the positive way to get clear of them. There is a great deliverance in it. I think a figure of one who is attached is Ruth. She says, "Do not intreat me to leave thee", chap 1: 16. There is a simple illustration of attachment. How many of us are really attached to Christ? My activities will show whether I am attached to Christ or not and if we are not attached to Christ, some day we may leave Him, as far as the testimony is concerned.

So the Lord says, "Will ye also go away? " John 6: 67. Are our hearts really attached to Christ, beloved brethren? Is He indispensable to us? If He is, it opens up what you are saying, that we are in the position where we can learn His sensibilities about things, how Christ feels about them. It is no longer a question of saying, Well, there is not too much harm in this or of applying natural reasonable ness. It is a question of how Christ feels about the thing. That is attachment to Christ.

R.E.T. It is the purpose of God that Christ is taking through.

D.R. Just so. So we have to cleave to the Lord. Persons are sometimes looking for help, coming amongst the brethren, and we try to help them by bringing forward the truth and the terms of the truth. What we really need to help souls to do is to cleave to the

Lord. If souls are cleaving to the Lord, their understanding will soon become enlightened and their moral sensibilities too.

G.C.B. It is also an exercise with us as to attraction to Christ. Would you say that if someone is not attracted, they will not be attached? Does that come back to the way the gospel is preached and received?

D.R. I think what you say is most important, attraction to Christ. We need to be prepared and exercised to preach the gospel, to preach the glad tidings. I think there is a moral obligation in every room where the Lord is remembered that there should be a good, sound preaching of the word of God, and that, if appropriated and received, leads to attraction. Then the further thing is attachment to Christ.

E.F.W. There is that final appeal, "Art thou attached to me?" Just before the Lord left this scene that was His great concern, that even Peter should be attached to Him.

D.R. That is very fine. There was a point when Peter went out and wept bitterly: at that point he was recovered in conscience. But in John 21 he was recovered in affection. That is the great need of the moment that we might be recovered in affection. The brethren will pardon my speaking of these needs, but I think we need to be able to assess the needs of the moment, and that attachment to Christ is a prime need; that involves our affections, recovered affections.

B.E.S. Would you say that what we are occupied with is another important element in it? I am thinking of Psalm 45, "I say what I have composed touching the king", v 1; the note says, "or 'my occupation' touching the king".

D.R. That is very fine, and healthful, is it not? - morally healthful, to be occupied with Christ and Christ's things. That really is the purpose of the Spirit being here, that He might announce the things of Christ and retain our interest in them and build us up. As we are occupied with these things, they become part of our constitution morally, do you not think?

B.E.S. Yes; I suppose we all feel at times how far short we fall in affection for Christ. We do not naturally find Him attractive, but if we set ourselves to be occupied with Him, the Spirit will use that to make Him attractive to us, as you are saying.

D.R. I think we need to set ourselves for it and to make time for it and, as we do so, we will find the Spirit is free to help us. I think that is how it works. So occupation with Christ is most important.

L.W.B. I identify myself with Christ's death - we show forth His death, do we not, until He come? - that is a most important part of the truth, Paul could say, "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me", Gal 2: 20. That is the true Christian position, is it not?

D.R. A feature that would mark a person who is attached to Christ is that he would appreciate the death of Christ, it would be appropriated, become part of your priestly constitution. Then it would become the barrier between you and the world, and the great means of approach to God.

L.W.B. In that connection, in Hebrews it is actually, "through the veil, that is, his flesh".

D.R. That is right: so to come back to our brother's remark as to sensibilities as to Christ, in attachment to Christ and in being near to Him, you learn His sensibilities, His feelings about things. I think that would help us as to chapter 8. There is the sanctuary: it is a question of what is inside: "We have such a one high priest who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens; minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not man". That all brings up sanctuary experience. What can we say about that? What does it lead to? I think it leads to the understanding of what suits God. If we are near to Christ, we will learn what suits God because that is what occupies Christ in His Manhood. So local assemblies should be places where there is understanding of what is suitable to God.

G.C.B. In all of this we are getting stronger, are we not? We spoke of our infirmities in the first passage, but if we follow this truly, we are

getting stronger, are we not, as to what is for God?

D.R. That is helpful and good. I think there is something appearing now that can consider for God and minister to Him. What is your experience of the holiest?

G.C.B. I think our experience is rewarded, increased, as we go in for it. We think of Christ and what is for God, even while we are down here, not just on Lord's Day morning. We are not thinking about infirmities, are we?

D.R. Is the sanctuary contemplative?

G.C.B. Yes, I am sure.

D.R. What do you contemplate there?

G.C.B. It is Christ, and all that God has before Him is characterised by that Man.

D.R. What was in the holiest?

G.C.B. The ark and the mercy-seat.

D.R. That is it.

G.C.B. And the cherubim.

D.R. Christ's position before God. It is a wonderful thing to feed on that and feeding on it you begin to understand what is suitable to God. I think current and past exercises have proved that there has been a lack in understanding of what is suitable to God. We learn that, not by terms of ministry, but in the sanctuary, in the presence of God. One of the great features of Hebrews is that the way is opened into the immediate presence of God. God comes out in the gospel through the rent veil, but the believer goes in through the veil in Hebrews, right into the immediate presence of God. Mr Stoney said those who lead in Christendom have largely tried to stitch up the veil, that is, they have tried to make everything human; but the way in has been divinely made through Christ's death and His present life, and what can be experienced is the immediate presence of God and that must lead to a real appreciation of what suits God.

D.J.H. Is what you say confirmed by the fact that it says He "has sat down"; that is everything has been done in view of this operating? It is unusual. The priest sitting down is not known in the Old Testament (save for Eli in his weakness and failure) but this One sat down, as having accomplished everything, in order that the way might be clear for us to go into the sanctuary.

D.R. Just so. It gives you a sense of finality. Mr Raven loved to say, The Man has arrived and He is there and He is not to be removed. He is there in finality: He has set Himself down.

L.W.B. We go in all the worth of Christ into the holy presence of God too, do we not?

D.R. It is in Christ's beauty.

V.E.W. The experience of the sanctuary brings about stability with us. I was thinking of Asaph: he was all awry until he went into the sanctuary of God.

D.R. He then understood. The experience of the sanctuary settles a thousand questions. What we are having is very experimental, but the brethren, I am sure, have experienced this. We are not speaking to persons who have not experienced something of the value of going in and being in the presence of God, and learning there. I think it is contemplative and educative. There is a book by Mr Stoney called, "Lessons of the Sanctuary".

D.B.B. Do we often learn from those who have gone before? You referred to Ruth. She saw something in Naomi which was very precious, and in character she became a baptised person. Death was the end.

D.R. Just so, and that led to attachment, preparedness to go through. What would you say about the sanctuary?

P.M. I was just pondering the perfection of the One in whom every moral standard is established in the presence of God. That would help us coming out into the scene of testimony where everything is disturbed morally. The standard is established in one Man.

D.R. So you find in the presence of God that God has no more to ask. He is satisfied with Christ. You learn that everything suitable to God is in that Man, so that we become developed. There is a great need for development in the exercises that are promoted through the sanctuary. I think we know persons who frequent the sanctuary. It is not an air of superficial refinement there is a moral and spiritual quality about a person who frequents the presence of God. You can sense it, the saints of God, persons who frequent the presence of God.

J.R.W. Is that the thought of the throne of grace? In chapter 8 it is "the throne of the greatness in the heavens". Is there a progression in that?

D.R. I do not know if I could say much about that, but I think there is progression. It is "the right hand of the throne of the greatness". I suppose it is a place of supremacy, a place that cannot be usurped. The Lord here was subject to attack, and, of course, His person is still subject to attack, but where He is personally, there is no possibility of His being overthrown. I think what was said is important, He has taken this place and it is a final place. He "has sat down" or "set himself down". It is a position that cannot be altered.

J.R.W. Ruth started with attachment and she progressed, did she not, until Boaz was everything to her?

D.R. That is good. I think attachment leads you to a secure place. That is why I referred to certain activities, and I am sure many of the brethren are concerned about them. We do not want to start to name things because if you do that, you imply limit to them as if it is only those named. But there are many things, not only with young but with old, and we need to be concerned for one another's moral safety. David says, "Abide with me ... for with me thou art in safe keeping", 1 Sam 22: 23: that is typically attachment to Christ and it leads into a safe and holy area. You think of how Christ considered for God at the moment of His deepest sorrow, when He said, "And thou art holy, thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel", Ps 22: 3. Think of what we learn from Christ in the holiest in that sense, how

He is considering for God, and for the praise of God, and for the satisfaction of the heart of God. We learn everything from Christ. How indispensable He is to us!

P.M. Are our relations collectively to take character from what is within the sanctuary?

D.R. That is what one has in mind. It says, "For every high priest is constituted for the offering both of gifts and sacrifices; whence it is needful that this one also should have something which he may offer". What is it He has to offer? I think it is the new order of man. It may refer to Leviticus 23.

P.M. Is it not the effect of His having sat down that He has secured the company in relation to the sanctuary?

D.R. There is a company like Himself now. That is again part of the structure of the teaching of this book, particularly chapter 2: "For both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren", v 11. I think that is what He has to offer. Of course, we might say, He offered Himself: He had Himself to offer. But I think this goes beyond that. It involves His present position. He is a priest, and what has this High Priest to offer? There is the wave-sheaf which refers to Christ personally out of death and then there were the two wave-loaves and they were put into the hand of the priest to offer. I think that is what He has to offer. These are all part of the lessons of the sanctuary. We find that Christ has the wherewithal to minister to the pleasure of God.

R.E.T. Would this priestliness help us in regard to being sanctified persons? It is in relation to the body of Christ, and we are "washed as to our body with pure water" and the approach into which He has brought us that the greatness and assurance that what is of God will never fail.

D.R. I think when we come to the truth of the sanctified company, it is not a question of the holiest but of what is established for God down here in the presence of evil. That also opens up a line of exercise for us in the working out of our localities. Are they really marked by sanctified features? Ministry ought to have a sanctifying

effect or it is not ministry at all. It ought also to draw our hearts to Christ. I think the great effect of the offering of Christ is that it leads you to the truth of sanctification. There is the will of God, "by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all", Heb 10: 10.

I think the offering of Christ has brought to light the purpose of the will of God and its effectiveness. The will of God is the principle on which God secures the material for the new system, in contrast to the old system. The will of man has been set aside completely in the death of Christ. The will of God has been effected. It sets aside the rebellion of man, his importance, his reasoning; everything is clearly based on the will of God. It becomes the principle of God's operation and that leads, I think, to the understanding of what the sanctified company is.

R.E.T. It would help us in relation to the Supper. It has been said that we are only three days away from the Supper and if we can carry the impressions we get at the Supper in reality, we would be kept in the sanctified condition of things into which the Supper would bring us.

D.R. I am sure that is right. I think we need to come to God's valuation of the sanctified company. That was seen in the sons of Zadok. God says of them, "But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok ... kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me", Ezek 44: 15. We are in the day when Israel is going astray from God, morally speaking: Christendom is all awry. What professes God's name has little thought for God. There is a great need for sanctified condition, a sanctified company. It is brought about through the sufferings and death of Christ. I think that is what we get here in chapter 10.

D.H. I wondered whether the latter part of verse 9 is most important. Is it something that runs through scripture? We see time and again that which would appeal to us as being agreeable, or in which we might find delight, but it says here, "He takes away the first that he

may establish the second". Would it help us if we really understood that?

D.R. That is very fine and I would appeal affectionately to my younger brethren that they might bear that in mind. There are certain things from which we need to be delivered. We need to be attached to Christ, to learn that Christ is our life. A sceptic said to an old brother, What would you do if one morning you woke up and you found that Christ did not really exist? He said, I would fall to pieces: that Man is my life. How many of us feel like that? Is Christ really our life? That is attachment to Christ, and then to begin to consider for God. As we appropriate these things, I think the moral effect is delivering, and we find then that we have our part in this sanctified company in the presence of evil. It is a great moral triumph for God that there should be such a company of persons in the presence of evil at a time when Israel is going astray from God.

D.J.H. It is clear from this that there is no connection between the first and the second: the first is taken away; the second is established. I was just thinking of your exercise -which many of us share - as to things which have come in among us, a social order of things to which the fellowship and our links in it perhaps degenerate at times. They would all be in the first that has been taken away.

D.R. Just so, and if these things are allowed, they will ruin the fellowship. They would bring in a line that is lower than the purpose of God. We might be said to be fine Christians and all friends and all the rest of it, but that is not the standard. The standard for God is in Christ and we find that in the holiest, and it is maintained vitally as we are attached to Christ.

D.J.H. And secured at such a cost: "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ".

D.R. That very much affects me. Say more please.

D.J.H. It is a scripture which I have always wanted to understand more. It does not refer to the bloodshedding and atonement and that side of things, but "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ", I should like to understand.

D.R. I suppose the body of Christ was the vehicle in which Christ expressed the will of God. It speaks about 'a body prepared'. We are touching a very holy matter. Somebody referred to the "holy thing" in Luke's gospel and here it is the body. Nothing derived from Mary morally in that body: it was divinely prepared: "thou hast prepared me a body". It became the vehicle of the divine will and it was that which was offered for our sanctification.

D.J.H. Is the answer to it on our side Romans 12, the offering of our bodies? Proving the will of God is brought in there. The body of the believer in that way becomes a vehicle in which the will of God is expressed. What a moral triumph that is! Think of the woman in John 4. What a body she had and what corruption she had proved but she becomes a vessel of light, a vehicle which became usable in the testimony. It is the sanctified idea, the sanctified company.

D.E.R. We have been sanctified: it is absolute. But that raises the question whether we are practically in the gain of what is predicated of us.

D.R. It is good to make that clear. There is no progression in that sense in the work of sanctification, but there is progression in the way that we come into it.

D.E.B. May I ask you to be more specific as to the sanctified company? Does it exist, or is it just an idea, or is it the persons I sit down with tomorrow morning? What is the sanctified company?

D.R. I would like to think it is the persons with whom you sit down tomorrow morning, but that is the moral challenge for me. I do not press it on anyone else, but it is a moral challenge to me. Am I really part, practically, of the sanctified company? I have no doubt Mr Raven would say, We are it if we are it. The work has been accomplished: there is no disparity in the work. It needs to be taken up practically. Practical separation would maintain us in it, so that not only are we morally separate but we learn too that we must not physically touch certain things. Separation is not only moral; it is physical. It is, "Touch not".

P.W. Is it not true to say that separation comes from sanctification, not the other way round?

D.R. That is helpful. You mean, as we take up the truth of the work of Christ in sanctification, it is that that gives the moral spring to separation?

P.W. It is not by being practically separate that we become sanctified, but, as sanctified, we become separate.

D.R. The truth would be that being not practically separate, we become unsanctified, unholy. We have to learn not to touch certain things, not just to have a moral judgment about them, not only to say, we know it is wrong (that might be clear enough in our minds), but to be actually separate, separate from the world. I think that increases our appreciation of the grace that has given us part in this sanctified company. Sanctification in our practical path is formed as we appreciate the depths of the sufferings and the importance of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

P.M. Is it not affecting in this section that it seems that His taking up a body was in view of setting aside the first and establishing the second, and sanctifying that company apart from the world altogether? It touches our affections that He came in in view of that.

D.R. Just so: "Lo, I come", He says. What a word it is: "Lo, I come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do, O God, thy will". This is the purpose of His coming, an act of His own, involving His own volition. It was not imposed upon Him by any other. He came in relation to the will of God: for the purpose of securing the sanctified company.

P.M. If it laid hold of me that He stooped into manhood and came here and suffered and died in view of that, I would want nothing practically to do with the world, because He came in to sanctify us in relation to all that is in the purpose of God.

D.R. I think it must be related in that way to the appreciation we have of the sufferings and death of Christ. How deep is my appreciation of it?

R.E.T. Would Paul help us in regard to his expression in Galatians, "but in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", Gal 2: 20. He had taken account of the life that he had lived, but he says, "but in that I now live".

D.R. That is good.

L.W.B. Those that minister have a grave responsibility. I was thinking of Paul. He speaks of his service, "that the offering up of the nations might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit", Rom 15: 16. What a wonderful man he was really and the suffering that he went through for God's people.

D.R. I thought of that in the scripture in Hebrews 8, where it says, "that this one also should have something which he may offer". In that way the Lord was using Paul to provide the "something". I looked at Romans 15 earlier this morning and thought it was linked with that, an offering in that sacrificial spirit with the sure knowledge that there would be something that was pleasing to the heart of God.

D.J.H. The reference to the body - "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ" - again would bring before us His sufferings. It was in His body He suffered. Is that also stressed there?

D.R. "This is my body which is given for you." I sometimes challenge my own heart, and I am sure you do, as to how deeply that affects me. We will come to that tomorrow morning again in the Lord's will and we will hear that voice: "This is my body which is given for you." What an appeal! And the, "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22: 19). I think the appeal of it would lead to self-surrender. Many things appeal to us, especially to our younger brethren, but we have to learn to surrender. Certain things appealed to me when I was a young man: football was one of them. What helped me to give that up was affection for Christ. God passes us through certain exercises that prove Christ's indispensability. We need to learn to cut these things off. People say, Well, they will drop off. That is not Christianity; that is legalism. Christianity is that you cut it off in the power of the Spirit because it is a positive thing you

are doing because you love Christ. May we all learn to love Christ in incorruption, love Him for His own sake!

G.N. And to prove His sufficiency.

D.R. That is very good: He is all-sufficient.

COLCHESTER

19 April 1997

Key to initials

D.B.Bodman, Birmingham; D.E.Burr, Redbridge; G.D.Bywater, Buckhurst Hill; L.W.Burton, Merton; R.H.Brown, East Finchley; D.Hawgood, Bexley; D.J.Hutson, London; P.Martin, Colchester; G.Napthine, Colchester; D.B.Robertson, Cumnock; D.E.Remmington, St Albans; B.E.Surtees, Felixtowe; K.J.Samways, Buckhurst Hill; R.E.Turner, Bexley; E.F.Woodford, Dorking; J.R.Walkinshaw, Bexley; V.E.Wraighte, Gillingham

WHAT CHRIST MAKES

David Robertson

Song of Songs 3: 9-11; 1 Chronicles 23: 1-5

I was thinking of these references to what is made and to what Christ is making. It is a very elevated thought, as we have in 1 Corinthians 8: "yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom all things ... and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things", v 6. We would recognise, of course, that Christ is the Maker of the universe, a wonderful matter, involving His glory and His power - not only the Maker of it, but the Upholder of it. Then it comes to what we are as formed morally and spiritually and, in that sense, we can view our selves as being made by Christ, by none less than Him. It brings a great sense of elevation and dignity into the making of the believer.

What one has principally in mind in this passage in the Song of Songs is to call attention to the movements of Christ in the

testimony. I feel that there is in the spiritual sensibilities of many of the brethren the certainty that we are in the closing days, the days of the testimony in the dispensation, almost completed. I believe the concern should be that we ourselves, as having been secured through divine grace, should have a vital part in it in such days. We live in a day when the love of the most has grown cold, and the public profession has become a great sphere of indifference to the rights of Christ and to any thought as to the testimony being in movement. It is not only worldly things that occupy so many believers, but the things of earth. They are making their own claim and dulling the sensibilities spiritually and morally of the believer as to the movements of the testimony, that is, there is a preparedness to settle down here in relation to earthly matters. I believe the Lord would stir us up, and one would trust that among the beloved brethren, myself included, there might be a deeper sense of a moral obligation coming to fill out our part faithfully in the days that remain and to have part vitally in the movements of Christ in the testimony. It is a glorious movement towards completion of the great work of the dispensation and the crown is about to be put on that work.

One thing that affected me in suggesting this scripture is that, in the type, the Lord Jesus is not moving independently of His saints. It says here that "King Solomon made himself a palanquin", something He has done for Himself. The palanquin is not like a chariot, it has no wheels. It has to be carried, and that is the thought of the believer having part in the carrying forward of the testimony of Christ. It says he made it "Of the wood of Lebanon". There is nothing undignified about what Christ does. He uses the best materials. The wood of Lebanon would be secured from the heights. It is not a type of the man of the world, however refined he might appear to be. I think it would refer to a man in Christ, what the believer is in Christ. Paul refers to two men in Romans 16 whom he says were "in Christ before me". Paul recognised that. That is the kind of material with which Christ forms this palanquin: it is "of the wood of Lebanon". It is not the free-thinkers of this world; not the power of man's thought, or of man's reasoning, his ability to argue. It

is "of the wood of Lebanon". I think it points to the great position that God has given us in Christ. It is significant that it is in Corinthians that Paul says, "I know a man in Christ ", 2 Cor 12: 2. When I was a young believer, I thought "a man in Christ" must be the man for heaven, and then one day I read in the good teaching that "the man in Christ" is the man for conflict. He is the man for testimony, the kind of material Christ makes in view of the carrying forward the testimony. Dignified matter!

Then it says, "Its pillars he made of silver." I believe that persons who have a vital part in these great movements of Christ in testimony are persons who have a deep appreciation of the value of the redemptive work of Christ. Generally speaking in our thoughts we think of the redemptive work of Christ as applying to man's needs, but that was incidental. The redemptive work of Christ had in mind the securing of man in movement Godward. I want to speak to the young men and women. Is your pathway really set in motion Godward? Are you living for God because, make no mistake, these great movements of Christ in the testimony have in mind that persons should be set in motion Godward in their lives. What are you set in relation to? What are you moving towards? Is it the world of sport or the world in any of its features, or are you really understanding what this means, "Its pillars he made of silver"? Is your life really supported, we may say, by the great quality of the redemptive work of Christ and you are moving positively in relation to God, that is, you are living for God? It says in Revelation that He has redeemed us to God. I would make that appeal, especially to my younger brethren, that it might become apparent in your lives that you are living for God. I would make the same appeal to the older brethren because it may be that some of us have become a little deadened in our affections and things have become rather formal with us. What a basis for recovery and what an appeal to our affections lies in the glory and the value of the redemptive work of Christ!

"Its pillars he made of silver, its support of gold." I think the gold really refers to the work of new creation, to what is of God in the

believer. The Lord Jesus is not working with ordinary materials: He is working with superlative quality. It says, "we are his workmanship", Ephes 2: 10, not merely His work, but "we are his workmanship". That is, if I may speak very reverently, there is something in the believer that God delights in. Everything the Holy Spirit does in the believer is patterned after new creation. He does not form anything of this world in the believer. He delivers from the world and from its features. There is nothing in this world that could add anything to the believer. The believer is dignified as being of God. It says "of him are ye in Christ Jesus", 1 Cor 1: 30: that is the gold. It is all according, as I have said, to the pattern of new creation. I trust that we have some impression of new creation. Do not think it is some ethereal thing away in the distance! New creation is the substantial work of the Holy Spirit in the believer. It is subjective, and it is of God, "its support of gold".

Then "Its seat of purple": to me that speaks of the authority of Christ. If we are going to have part in this great and dignified movement of Christ in the testimony, we must be under authority. The Lord speaks about making disciples, making them. He made a palanquin. Disciples are made. Mr Taylor said most attractively that Christ makes men like Himself. Disciples are made: that is that persons are made as being subject to the Lord. Are you subject to the Lord? Paul had to say of some, "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?", 1 Cor 10: 22. Could it be that there is someone here on a course that is provoking the Lord to jealousy? You are Christ's, you are the Lord 's and yet you are not available to Him. You are on a course that is unseemly. You are not having vital part in these great movements of Christ in the testimony. Why do you provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are you stronger than He? You certainly are not stronger than He! Its seat, he made, of purple, I think speaks of the authority of Christ.

Then it says, "The midst thereof was paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem." What a fine touch that is! Here are persons who are prepared at all costs to take on the most menial tasks, to do anything that might be required in order that these great movements

of Christ in the testimony be facilitated. I think it links with what we have in Matthew 21 where it says some "strewed their own garments on the way", v 8. Then it says, "and others kept cutting down branches." It is the principle of self-surrender, the surrender of what may suit you and your tastes, what would provide for your own comfort and your own satisfaction. You are prepared to sacrifice that what is the way of Christ, the movements of Christ in testimony, might be facilitated. Oh, may these features mark us in these final days, beloved brethren! As I have said, they are days of great solemnity. The end is nigh. Peter says, "But the end of all things is drawn nigh: be sober therefore", 1 Pet 4: 7. Let us realise that! May the Holy Spirit use this simple word to face us with the fact that the end of the dispensation is nigh. There is something to be filled out, and what is to be filled out? - it is the movements of Christ in testimony. It is not the importance of my life. It is not exactly the importance of your career - one is not in any way diminishing the need for responsibility as to our responsible lives: we have to fill it out - but the imperative thing is our place in the movements of Christ in testimony. So it says, "The midst thereof was paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem", not the daughters of the wilderness, not the daughters of this world, the daughters of Jerusalem: I believe persons who are formed in some measure in the light of the assembly. These are the kind of persons who value their part in facilitating these great movements.

Then he says, "Go forth" - not now daughters of Jerusalem - "daughters of Zion." I believe that, as we take this way, we touch what we are according to divine purpose. "Daughters of Zion": persons who are formed subjectively in the light of divine purpose, the glory of divine purpose: it has laid hold of the soul. I think I can understand a little better than I used to what Mr Darby meant when he appealed to the brethren to cleave to the purpose of God. If you do that, it has a subjective effect on your soul. "Go forth, daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon." "Behold king Solomon" - think of that "with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals." It is not the time of marriage yet. That day is coming,

the marriage of the Lamb. What a day it will be! What a time of triumph it will be! But it is "the day of his espousals" when Christ is securing affection for Himself from His saints. Paul says, "I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ", 2 Cor 11: 2. I think that is a priestly matter. These few verses in Corinthians suggests Paul the priest and he is espousing the saints as a chaste virgin to Christ.

It says, "In the day of his espousals, And in the day of the gladness of his heart." There is the solemn obligation of having part in these glorious movements, the sense that Christ has secured us to have our part in it, and has made us. One would like to convey that touch to the brethren: he "made himself a palanquin". Christ has done it. He has made us and fitted us to have our part in this glorious movement. What we carry in our souls is that all is in relation to the pleasure of His own heart. We need to carry with us constantly that the work of the Spirit in the dispensation is to secure a bride for Christ. What a work it is! That work is perfect! We need to have faith in the work of the Spirit. The work of Christ is perfect and, equally so, the work of the Spirit is perfect. There is no disparity between the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit: "In the day of his espousals, And in the day of the gladness of his heart". These great movements of the testimony are not merely to secure man and man's relief, but to establish all that is according to the purpose of God, and especially that which relates, we may say, to the needs of the heart of Christ.

Well, one would commend that thought to the brethren. I can see the importance of it and I believe that basic to our part in these great movements of Christ in testimony is the need to be attached to Christ. I believe it is the need of this day, that we might be attached to Christ. If you are not, dear young believing friend, I trust that God will pass you through some way - it may be discipline (I speak feelingly) - that will lead you to be attached to Christ so that you might be able to say, "When I found him ... I held him, and would not let him go", Song 3: 4. What a thing that is! When I was a young man, I heard Mr Lyon speak of Mary of Magdala in John 20 as 'a

spiritual limpet, clinging to the rock'. Are you like that? Have you ever tried to prise a limpet from the rock? It is almost impossible.

Oh that we might be like that, clinging tenaciously to Christ, that we might be truly attached to Him!

I just say a brief word about 1 Chronicles 23. Here it is, in type, not exactly what Christ has made for Himself, but the instruments which Christ has made for the service of God. I trust we are all able to regard ourselves as such, that we are persons who have come under the hand of Christ to be formed as vessels for the praise, for the service of God. What a dignified matter! You think of these things and sometimes you feel almost overwhelmed with a sense of divine mercy, the divine grace that has entered into our lives, for such an exalted purpose, not merely to save us from our sins - thank God for that! - but, as I said, that is incidental - we might say, gloriously incidental. The great secret of having been secured through divine grace is that we are secured as vessels for the pleasure of God. When the vessels were recovered from Babylon in Ezra and Nehemiah's day, it said, "And Cyrus king of Persia brought them forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer", Ezra 1: 8. That is, they were brought forth into the hand of one who valued them. I believe that refers typically to what we are in local assemblies. How we are to have a valuation of these vessels of God, vessels of Jehovah! We cannot treat the brethren roughly, or speak disrespectfully of them. We cannot summarily dismiss persons without valid reason. I think we need the feature of the treasurer in our local assemblies so that the work of God is valued for what it has been secured for, that is, for the pleasure of God.

The next thing is that the treasurer counts them into the hand of the prince of Judah, so that in our exercises with one another, we should always have the service of God in mind. If a brother or a sister needs adjustment, let us adjust one another in relation to the service of God! Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah would speak of that. That is, the praise of God is in mind, the vessel secured for that. These vessels that have come under the hand of Christ, divinely constituted and divinely formed, are all in view of the

pleasure of God and, therefore, I think, in our relationships together, we should always have in our minds the pleasure of God. I do not think the work of the priest is merely to correct persons: it is to adjust persons. If you correct somebody, all you have done is to remove the error. If you adjust somebody, through grace, under the hand of Christ, you have secured a vessel again for the pleasure of God. Oh that we might deal tenderly with one another, respectfully with one another, maybe firmly! If somebody is walking disorderly, they need to be spoken to firmly, but all the time what is in mind is that there is one who can be secured vitally to have part in the service of God.

So, as I say, it is a great dignified order that we have been brought into. I have been somewhat diverted, but I think it is an important thing. Later on these very same vessels are not only counted but they are weighed, so things are growing in value. What a fine thing it is to see a recovered person, and their part in the service of God is increasing in spiritual value all the time. What a triumph for God! Let us value one another as vessels for the pleasure of God!

David is old here and full of days and he has made Solomon his son king over Israel. Then there is this gathering. The Levites are numbered from thirty years old and upward. It is full maturity, and if ever there was a day when maturity was needed, it is today. Childish things need to be left behind, need to be judged; they only disturb the brethren and the peace of Jerusalem. Let us depart from them, beloved brethren! It says, "And the Levites were numbered from thirty years old and upward; and their number, by their polls, man by man..." What a thing that is! There is one man - a certain glory attached to him as a man. Here is another man and a glory attached to him: he is a man! They are all reflecting something of the glory of Christ, each reflecting the glory in substantiality of the work of the Holy Spirit, "man by man": thirty-eight thousand. And then it says, "Of these, twenty-four thousand were to preside over the work of the house of Jehovah." That work must go on, the work of the house of Jehovah. I believe it relates principally to the ability to maintain the principles of God's house. There is a need amongst

the saints - there has always been a need amongst the saints - today, and there is a danger of a generation growing up that do not understand the principles of the house of God. Young men, apply yourselves to it! Set yourselves for it! We are in the final days and there is need for it. We look round here: many of the older brethren who were able to help have now gone and some will soon go if the Lord does not come. And what then? Who is going to look after the principles of the house of God? Will it be you? These principles morally flow out of the revelation of God. That is, they exist because of what God is in revelation. If God is known, the house of God where God dwells must be governed by what God is.

Then it says, "six thousand were officers and judges." That applies to us all. We have all to be officers and judges. We have to learn how to control ourselves. Self-control is one of the features of the fruit of the Spirit. Mr Darby says you do not need to judge your sins - Christ has borne the judgment for your sins - but you need to learn to judge yourself. There is a goodly number here, six thousand persons who were able to rule themselves, they are able to bring the element of rule into the house of God, into the local assembly so that things are done in order. That is what Paul exhorts Timothy, that we might learn how to conduct ourselves in the house of God.

Then "four thousand were doorkeepers." That is also a great need; it shuts out sentimentality, shuts out our ability naturally, shuts out how the natural man would try to do things. It says in John 20 that the doors were shut through fear of the Jews. It shuts out the man that could never please God. I believe the doorkeepers operate in the light of the cross of Christ. The first man has been superseded, by the second Man. The old man has been crucified with Christ. That is, as we have been taught, the man under judgment has gone in judgment, and he is not to be allowed to have part or to enter into the assembly. The doorkeeper is needed. I believe many assembly sorrows, and perhaps some in recent days, have been caused because of faulty door keeping. We must learn to keep the door but if we have to keep the door, we may say, of the local assembly, we must learn first of all to keep our own doors, learn

what it is to shut out evil, shut out human sentiment, shut out anything that cannot have part in the service of God. Finally there is this fine touch. It is what I wanted to speak of and end with: "and four thousand praised Jehovah with the instruments which I made." How beautiful that is! It is a wonderful privilege - something that we may take for granted, almost as a formality, that we know that the service of praise flows out of the Supper, but it is wonderful light and many of our brethren in Christendom do not have the light. But we have the light and the danger is that it might just become formal or a kind of religious code with us. Flowing out of the Supper is the service of praise and what is set on by the One who has made us for it: "the instruments which I made." Think of that! Think of having come under the hand of Christ and being secured and made as a vessel fitted to have part in the praise of God!

May we go in for these things vitally! May we go in for them as persons who owe their all to Christ! You cannot tell me of one blessing you have from God that you do not owe to Christ. He has died that that blessing might be yours. He has suffered. And not only that, but you have come under His hand and you are being made. No doubt He uses discipline, He uses many ways. The power of the Spirit is involved in it too, the work of the Spirit. The brethren would understand that. But we are being made and made by Christ, first of all to have our part in the movement of the testimony in holy dignity, and then to be maintained as persons who are vessels for the pleasure of God. May the Lord bless the word!

COLCHESTER

19 April 1997