

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THREE PREACHINGS

Robert Taylor

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The verses that I have read come from what are perhaps three of the most outstanding preachings in the course of time. They are not outstanding for their length, nor for the man who spoke them, because he is spoken of elsewhere as unlettered and uninstructed, nor are they remarkable for how much is in them in the way of teaching, although that may be the case, but they are remarkable in this, that God used them to demonstrate and to inaugurate a dispensation of blessing. The circumstances were that the people to whom Peter was speaking were perhaps more guilty than man had been at any time in history, and yet God opened the windows of heaven in these preachings to inaugurate a dispensation of blessing that has continued to this very day. Men, especially in official bodies, have great ceremonies at their inaugurations, great resources are spent in inaugurating new things; and many of them very soon run out of resources, they cannot maintain the glory of the inauguration. But, in the glad tidings, the resources of divine love are still as full today as they were when they were inaugurated. The windows of heaven are still open in blessing. God is still disposed in the riches of His grace to meet guilty man in all his need, as He demonstrated here.

In one of the preachings of which we read there were three thousand souls blessed at one time. What a demonstration of God's attitude and disposition towards His guilty creature that was. There are no questions raised. God did not interview each one of those three thousand and ask them what they had done. He did not go over the details of their history to find out how guilty, more or less, they were, but He was there disposed to come out in all the wealth of His house to meet every condition in every one of them, to their satisfaction and relief, but too to His eternal glory.

In the first preaching, Peter tells the people that they were guilty of having crucified the Lord of glory. That is a solemn thing - the Man who had been there among them, who had healed their sick and raised their dead, and fed them too. Oh the grace of Jesus, that when they were hungry He fed them, when they were blind He gave them sight, when they were in prison He released them, and yet they crucified Him! Peter brings that home to them, and no preaching of any worth would be right unless it brought home to the audience some sense that they were guilty in the sight of a holy God. You may say, Well I, am not guilty of having crucified Him. That may be. Peter was speaking to the audience here who were.

But then he says in the next preaching that "ye denied" Him. Perhaps you have denied Jesus. You may think you have not, but I say this in all sobriety and affection for you, that if you go out from a preaching of the Name of Jesus in the Spirit's grace without having confessed His Name, you are guilty of having denied the Saviour. You may think that is just a simple matter, that you could come to a preaching and leave it just as you please, but Peter says to these persons, "ye denied the holy and righteous one". So it may be that you have heard the preaching, have known something too of the prompting of the Spirit of God, and gone out unresponsive to those pipings of divine grace. It would mean what Peter says, that you have denied Him.

He says in the third section, that ye have rejected Him. That is even more solemn. But it brings every man into the presence of God. It is not only the Jew that stands guilty of having crucified Jesus, but the nations as well as Israel were gathered together at the cross of Jesus: The inscription on that cross was not only in Hebrew but also Greek and Roman when they crucified the Lord of glory. Peter brings that home to these persons, and while I would not dwell on it at the moment, it brings every man into a place of responsibility, every person who hears the glad tidings, man, woman, boy or girl, they stand in a place of responsibility in relation to God who has proclaimed a dispensation of blessing.

But Peter goes into much more. While he brings home to them their guilt, he brings home so beautifully the resources and wealth of a Saviour God who would have all men to be saved. You may have thought that there would have been a better three thousand persons to bless than those, but God took advantage of that most guilty audience to show the resources of His love and grace and the fulness of the delight that He had found in Jesus. That is what Peter brings out in these preachings, that the foundation of the whole dispensation of blessing rests on the fact that God has glorified His servant Jesus. That is why it continues until today. The guilt of man may well have caused God to close the books, He may well have said, One thousand years is enough, but here we have come to almost two thousand years and the books are still open, the offer of pardon and mercy is still flowing in all its fulness, because God has glorified His servant Jesus. What delight heaven has found in Christ. If man rejected Him, crucified and delivered Him up, heaven has found its full delight in a Man who here on earth glorified God.

Those precious words are uttered from His own lips, "I have glorified thee on the earth". Peter says here "God has glorified his servant Jesus". What better approbation could there be of the service of Jesus than that God has glorified Him. Think of God taking account of His servant Jesus before He was in public service. If it required God in His wisdom to bring men from the east to proclaim His incoming, He did that. Bringing out again the unresponsiveness of the Jew to the circumstances in which Christ came. These men proclaim to them that there was One who was born the king of the Jews. The angels could not contain themselves, as they saw for the first time on this sin-stained universe, one who was holy - "that holy thing born". Born, come into man's circumstances, how the whole heavenly host was vibrant as those heavenly praises were sung. Mr Darby says,

More just those acclamations
Than when the heavenly band
Chanted earth's deep foundations,
Just laid by God's right hand.

They sang when the earth was created, but how sweet the song, how rich the praise, when they saw the Lord of glory lying in a manger. They could not contain themselves. God's Servant. That was what He came to do, to serve God. You say, Did He not come to serve men? True He did. I may say that is the secondary side of His service. Many would think it was the primary point of His service that He came to heal, He came to bless - true - and how blessed that is from our side, but the primary point of His service was that He came to glorify God. He came here to lay a righteous basis for a dispensation of blessing. He was here in the lowly conditions of manhood, working as men worked, dressing as men dressed, feeling hunger as men felt it, touching humanity in all its facets, a man, truly a man, and yet He glorified God in the circumstances of humanity.

Oh how heaven took account of every moment of that pathway of Jesus, day and night. The angels too were full of wonderment, as they saw Him, tempted of Satan - what that must have been to heaven, a Man here, tempted of Satan, forty days and forty nights when Satan harnessed every resource and every armament in his armoury against God's servant Jesus, and he left Him. He had to go out. God was glorified there in a Man, in His pathway at every step, but He was glorified too in His death because He died:

Then onward to the cross,
Through toil and grief and loss,
The Man of sorrows wends His way,
To sheath the judgment sword.

He sheathed the judgment sword. There God was glorified, that the judgment was exhausted, the judgment that was due to those around, fell upon Jesus.

Peter brings that home to them. He says "ye delivered him up", "ye denied" Him in the presence of Pilate. How the guilt was heaped upon the race. It was not only that they denied and delivered Him up but the very man to whom they delivered Him up, Pilate, said "I find no fault whatever in him". O my friend, think of justice being miscarried as never before. They put Him up to the judge, but would they accept the judge's verdict? The verdict was 'I find no fault

whatever in Him'. Peter says he had judged that He should be let go. Yet the answer to those words of Pilate was "Crucify, crucify him". What a moment in the history of time when the very judge under God's hand says, I find no fault in Him whatever. Not from one examination. You may say there was another court of appeal and the verdict was the same. How thoroughly He was examined, Pilate, Herod, the priests, the Sadducees; just like the offerings, all laid bare and there the perfection coming out in every detail - I find no fault in Him whatever. That was the Man who bore the judgment sword. That was the Man who stood in your place and mine. Peter says to these persons "he stood in your place". You could have well understood it if God had come out in judgment in those days in Jerusalem. He had demonstrated His grace in the pathway of Jesus and man's answer was, crucify Him. How God would have been justified in coming out in judgment upon them. But no, Oh the marvel of His love! The triumph of His mercy, the judgment fell where it could be borne. Had it fallen upon man, it would have been the end of time. Had the judgment fallen upon those around, it would have been eternal damnation. God would have been denied, may I say respectfully, the opportunity of opening the windows of heaven, in a dispensation of blessing.

But the judgment fell where it could be borne, it fell upon Jesus, His holy servant, and there in His death, as never before, He glorified God, as He bore the judgment due to you and me and in the bearing of it, hear this cry - "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do". Words that have run through the history of time, words that have been heard and answered in heaven, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do". Here is the answer to that cry that God not only forgave them, but He demonstrated it in giving forgiveness to three thousand souls at one preaching. Oh the wonder of divine love! Oh the matchless superiority of divine grace, that the judgment having been borne, He has come out in blessing.

But how severe was that judgment! The depths that the Saviour tasted, the distance to which He went that that judgment should be thoroughly met. Peter speaks in this section about their sins being

blotted out. That is how God has come in in this dispensation of blessing, that He is prepared to blot out. Things blotted out are truly gone, you cannot see the marks, it is blotted out, removed for ever from His presence. God is prepared to blot them out. That is what Peter is saying in the preaching, but what a distance, what a work that involved for Jesus. It involved not only the cross, it involved that He died, it involved that He was buried.

Paul says it very briefly, "he died for our sins, and he was buried", and "he was raised". There is the gospel in a nutshell. But O what it meant for Jesus, the distance to which He went - that He died and He was buried. It is something that is unfathomable, the burial of Jesus. Why should He be there for three days and three nights. In three hours on the cross, from one point of view, He bore the judgment that was poured out. Yet, there He is three days and three nights. He felt it. You say He was dead - yes He was dead - but He felt the fact anticipatively, because He said "the Son of Man must be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth". He felt it at least anticipatively, that He was going into that distance, God's servant. What it must have been to heaven, after those thirty-three and a half years of life upon this earth, that there should then be three days and three nights, that He was in the distance.

That is how far He has gone. But He has been raised. That is what Peter brings home in these preachings, that He has been raised. Blessed be His Name, the work has been fully accomplished. The resurrection of Jesus is showing that God has been fully satisfied in His Holy Servant Jesus. He not only raised Him, in answer to the work that He took upon Him, but He has glorified Him. That is where the glad tidings is coming from tonight.

It is where the blessing is coming from for you tonight, from the glory, God has given Him a Name above every name. Peter says here, "there is no other name". There is a hymn that says:

Join all the glorious names,
Of wisdom, love and power
That mortals ever knew, that angels ever bore,
All are too mean to speak His worth

Too mean to set the Saviour forth.

He has a Name that is above every name. That is the Name that is proclaimed in the preaching.

Peter says - "God has made him both Lord and Christ". He has put Him in a position of supreme authority, but too in an unassailable position of blessing. For Christ is the great Blessor, the Christ is the One who is going to bring in a whole millennium of blessing for Israel and for men. He says "God has made him, whom ye have crucified" - there could be no greater contrasts. Men put Him on a cross, God has made Him Lord and Christ.

May I ask, is He Lord to you, has He become your Lord, is He the One to whom you have bowed the knee in full allegiance? Is He the One that you make the resource for the circumstances of your life? Peter does not leave them without a sense of guilt. But the preaching would not be a preaching if it did not bring home the infinite resources to bless; however great the guilt, the resources of divine love are more than equal to it.

It is a wonderful thing - two chapters at least in the Bible about this lame man being blessed. Not many persons have two chapters about them. He was an insignificant beggar, a man that was an outcast of society, but the Spirit of God takes these two chapters to demonstrate the resource of divine love to reach those outcasts. There are two very fine things said about him, it says "he was there in complete soundness", then it says too "he was sound in body". It is what the gospel would bring you into complete salvation - one day there begging alms at the gate of the temple, and perhaps just a few minutes after, he is walking and leaping and praising God. He confounds Jerusalem, really, the Pharisees, and the priests, those who looked after the temple and all its ordinances, they were confounded, that a man that had been lame for forty years, was there walking, leaping and praising God. Oh the power of the Name of Jesus available tonight to meet and to enter into the very recesses of the human heart, that men may be set up in complete soundness. Complete soundness would involve that not only your sins are

forgiven, but the man was not only made to walk, but he was leaping and praising God. So the gospel goes all the way. You may not embrace the fulness of it, you may not even be prepared to enter into the fulness of it, but God, from His side is coming out in His blessing, that you may come into the fulness of what the glad tidings would set you up in. The man is set up: as Peter says, "complete soundness in the presence of you all". But then he says more, he goes on to speak of Jesus being the corner stone - "Jesus the Nazaraean, whom ye have crucified, whom God has raised ... this man stands here before you sound in body". Some persons whom you meet are not just too sound. I would not say that they were not Christians exactly, but they have been brought up under a teaching that says they can be saved today and lost tomorrow; they are not completely sound. There are other persons whom I know who are undoubtedly Christians, and yet they would live their lives in things that are not pleasing to God; they are not completely sound. The gospel is coming out that you may be there completely sound, "sound in body". It is very fine to meet somebody who is sound. You speak to them, you get a good echo, you get a good response - others say We will try, I mean some day to give my life to Jesus, I know Him as my Saviour, I mean some day to be more committed. You meet these persons and most of us, may be all of us, are in that category in some way, but the gospel is preached to make us completely sound. That, my friend, comes about through coming to the Cornerstone. "He is the stone which has been set at nought by you" - he is not saying now that they have crucified Him, but he is saying that you did not appreciate Jesus. That is what he is coming down to in the preaching. Oh the grace of the preachings that it does not bring home the guilt that is beyond what is reasonable. He says - "He is the stone which has been set at nought". Who is there that has not set at nought the Lord Jesus? But he is saying that if you have done that, God has made Him the Comer-stone, and for this man, for Peter's audience, He is saying that He wants to be the corner-stone of your life. God has made Him the corner-stone. I do not know much about building, but the Comer-stone is there as a distinctive feature of the building; it gives it character and what

character Christ has given to this whole dispensation! Peter is appealing that you who have gone on perhaps up until today without giving Him His true place that you make Him the Corner-stone of your life. You the builders, He has become the Comer-stone. Peter makes a good deal more of that when He writes to, perhaps, some of these same persons later on, he makes a good deal of the building and the Corner stone. The corner-stone is something to attract your heart that it may become the dominant feature in your life. Most of us spend a good deal of time when we are not regulated by the Cornerstone, but the appeal would be to make Him the Corner-stone, the pivotal feature of your life, that like the man here we may be fully in the testimony of our Lord in complete soundness, for our own joy and blessing but too for God's praise and glory.

BIRMINGHAM

9 November 1997

"JESUS KNOWING"

Jim Marshall

John 13: 1-5; 18: 4-11

I just feel impressed with two words, "Jesus knowing." It comes twice in chapter 13 and once in chapter 18. Generally speaking, men - we ourselves - do not know what is in front of us. As the scripture says, "thou knowest not what a day may bring forth", and in a certain sense it is perhaps well that it is that way, that we do not know. I remember a dear sister saying that she did not know what the future holds, but she knew the One that held the future. I think that is a fine thing to be able to say. It brings in comfort, but that was not so with the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus knew what was before Him. It says "knowing that his hour had come". I do not think that anybody else could speak like that; He is speaking of His departure, "knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world to the Father". He knew that His time of departure was near. He also knew that He was going to the Father. I wonder how many of us are conscious that the time of departure is near. I think it is something that should have an effect upon us, that we are not here for ever.

There is a time of departure, individually and collectively. It is something that should lay hold of us. It would loosen our grip on what is temporal and tighten our grip on what is eternal. Here is the Lord Jesus, "knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end". Our brother has referred to touches of His love and I think it is a fine thing to get touches of His love. You can experience them privately, you can experience them collectively, householdly too, what it is to get a touch of His love. Here it is not only that He knew that the time of His departure was near, but it says also "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and was going to God, rises from supper and lays aside his garments". Then he "began to wash the feet of the disciples". I did not read it all, but I think it is a wonderful expression of His love, and I think he established

something here, something that I feel was in His mind that it should continue. It was not just one isolated example, but He does it as an example that it may continue. What it is to wash one another's feet! It says in verse 12 "When therefore he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, having sat down again, he said to them, Do ye know what I have done to you?". That is a challenge, as to how much we know what the Lord has done. Here He has washed the feet of His disciples, and He means it to continue because it says, "Jesus answered him, Unless I wash thee, thou hast not part with me" (v 8). I think we are touching what is vital in regard to the testimonial setting and the service of God. It is a vital thing that this goes on, "unless I wash thee", as though He had in mind that He would continue to do it.

We have resources to do it, because we know what it is to have the water. I do not think we could wash one another's feet unless we did it in the power of the Spirit of God. That would be essential. Here is the Lord Jesus setting on this great matter of washing one another's feet. I suppose it would all be in view of the Lord going to the Father, that we might have part with Him in the Father's presence. It would also be in view of the testimonial setting so that we are speaking about something that is vital, something that the Lord set on and something that He means to continue. It is a wonderful thing that the One who was greatest among them washed their feet. There was no one greater than Jesus, and yet He washed their feet. He even washed Judas's feet. I think we need to know what it is to be intelligent in regard to footwashing. It is based on love, you cannot wash a brother or sister's feet if you do not love them.

The Lord says "a new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another as I have loved you". I think that Paul in Corinth was one who sought to wash the feet of the saints. Amidst all their loftiness, he still sought to wash their feet. He took a low place amongst them, he speaks of being "less than the least of all the saints". That is the kind of man that would wash the saints' feet.

In John 18 we have this expression again, "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon him". This was immeasurable pressure that was coming upon Him, pressure that you and I will never understand; it was so great. "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon him". Think of what came upon Jesus; let your mind think what came upon Him. I think Peter had some understanding of it, because he says "who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree". That is what came upon Jesus, One who was able to bear such a matter as the whole question of sin between God and man. It is something like what John says, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". What a bearer He is, what a sufferer He is. It does not only say "knowing all things that were coming upon him", but He "went forth". I wonder if we know something of what it is to go forth, that we are not lackadaisical in our movements, there is a steadfastness in our movements, we do not just drag our feet when we are coming to the meetings. There is a going forth to Him "outside the camp", for instance. How do we regard these movements of ours, to what has been established outside the camp? Do we go forth to Him, or do we just come to the meeting? See that it is to Him, go forth to Him, that you do not come to the meeting in an apologetic kind of way, but that you are conscious that you are going to Him, as Peter says, "to whom coming". Peter says "to whom shall we go?". And so it says, "knowing all things that were coming upon him, went forth and said to them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus the Nazaraean. Jesus says to them, I am he". Judas was there. When He said "I am he", they went away backward" and fell to the ground". They could not stand in the presence of Jesus, the great I Am. That is the One who washed the disciples' feet, as a man. They could not stand in His presence, they fell away backward to the ground. It is interesting to notice persons who fall in the presence of Jesus. Saul of Tarsus fell to the ground. I think you have a sense in your mind and in your heart of the majesty of the One who is before you, and you just fall down because of His greatness.

Peter does not shine in John 13, he does not shine here either, he drew a sword. Do you know why Peter was marked with such failure? It is because he did not know what it was to have the Spirit of God, but when Peter was filled with the Spirit, he was a different man. He spoke differently, he acted differently, he looked different; he could say on one occasion "look on us", a man filled with the Spirit of God. Peter in John 13 speaks wrongly, in John 18 he acts wrongly, but we are often reminded that in Luke's gospel the Lord Jesus healed the bondman's ear, and then he says to Peter "put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?". Here is perfect suffering, perfect obedience, perfect submission to the Father's will. Every Lord's Day morning we drink a cup of blessing, but this cup which the Lord Jesus took from the Father - "shall I not drink it?", - was perfect submission in going through with everything that was involved in the will of God. I just pass on these simple impressions in regard to Jesus knowing. That is what is impressing me, Jesus knowing - He went forth knowing that His hour of departure had come, and then He washed the disciples' feet.

May the Lord just bless these few simple remarks.

EDINBURGH

October 1997

"THE LORD KNOWS THOSE THAT ARE HIS"

Jim Gray

2 Timothy 2: 16-22

I had a thought about this scripture, about what our brother has been referring to, what the Lord knows. That comes into this passage, "The Lord knows those that are his". That is a great comfort, He knows everyone, He knows each of us here tonight, He knows whether we belong to Him or not. I think everyone here does belong to the Lord, but the Lord knows that, He knows everyone, everyone who has trusted in His precious blood, who has had their sins washed away, He knows them. Wherever they are, in whatever country they are, whatever colour, or race, He knows them, they belong to Himself. They come into a wonderful category. Verse 9 of the first chapter brings that in - "according to the power of God; who has saved us, and has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time". That is the company to which we belong, everyone who knows Christ. It is wonderful the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, He knows them.

Paul is comforted by that, comforted in a day when he himself cannot be sure even as to those who were in fellowship at that time, whether they were Christ's or not. I understand that "Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who as to the truth have gone astray", as far as it was concerned at that time, were still in fellowship. But they had gone astray as to the truth and were leading others to be uncertain as to their salvation. It says they "overthrow the faith of some". But such conditions amongst the brethren at the time gave rise to Paul commenting as he does, under the Spirit of God's inditing, this passage of scripture for which we are ever thankful. I was thinking when reading the Acts recently of Paul's imprisonment, and his going to Jerusalem, where he really placed himself in relation to God's government, that out of it all, God used it to give us a word for the last days. If he had been a free man, it may have been that evil

would have been restricted in his presence, as moving amongst the brethren, but God removed him from the scene in His own way. He was still there in the prison, he could still write his letters, but his personal influence in the assemblies was to some extent weakened and it gave rise to things coming out, that the Lord used to give us this scripture. It may not have been acted on much in the early days, we do not know, but it surely is a word for the last days.

I was thinking in speaking about this how we found the Lord and how we found one another. That is really what was on my heart. When you are brought up in fellowship you commit yourself, speaking personally, in relation to what you have been instructed in, many of us from our parents. We loved the Lord Jesus, we trusted the Lord as our Saviour, we desired to commit ourselves to the remembrance of Him in the breaking of bread. That was fine, the Lord would honour that. But then the time comes when you have to assess the matters for yourself. The time comes to exercise discretion. Maturity comes in the life of every one of us - why am I here? It says there is "a great house". Paul says "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity. But in a great house". What is the great house? One did not have much idea what the great house was when one broke bread, but the time comes in your history when you wonder, you not only wonder, you enquire into what is the great house? As we have been instructed, it is all who profess to know Christ. It is every person who takes the name of being a Christian. There are persons who belong to other religions in the world, Muslim, Buddhist, they do not belong to the great house. The great house is everyone who says that they are a Christian. But, the Lord knows those that are His, those who are true to Christ, they belong to His body, the body of Christ. That is intact and goes through, despite all that has come in in Christendom; the body of Christ remains true to Himself, as linked with Himself by the Spirit: every true believer.

Then there is another thought of the house in scripture, God's house. Ephesians 2 speaks of a holy temple in the Lord. That is the true thing. Man has nothing to do with that. Then in Peter's epistle

the spiritual house, that is the true thing. It is the house in testimony that is in mind there. What man has done has made Christianity into what Paul calls "a great house", and we can never get out of that.

We are still part of Christendom. The Lord does not differentiate between companies publicly, He does not put a hallmark on any, to say that He is committed to any, He does not put a hallmark on any one publicly. We all belong to the great house. But then as we name the name of the Lord we have to withdraw from iniquity. There is a way of escape. In the town in which we lived there was a Roman church, there was a church of Scotland, there was the 'open' fellowship and then there were the brethren with whom we walked.

That was the public situation and you have to find your way through. It is incumbent on all of us, the younger brethren in this city too, to come to it, why they are here, how we have found one another. We might take it that we have found one another because we have been brought up in fellowship and we have come into fellowship and we find one another that way, but that is not what is in mind. Everyone has to come the moral road, the moral road with intelligence. Paul speaks in Corinthians, "I speak as to intelligent persons" (see chapter 10). So intelligence comes into it, as to where I am. There is a need to understand the issues of the truth so that we find one another.

It says "purified himself", he takes a step alone. Follow through in your mind what it would be to take a step alone. Some brethren here may have taken that step alone, feeling what was inconsistent with Christ's name, walk out of it, seeking the Lord's guidance. That is the moral road, where they would find company that was suited to the Master, "serviceable to the Master". "Shall be a vessel to honour", that is the first thing. The person becomes a vessel to honour. We all have to come that way, we become a vessel to honour "sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work. But youthful lusts flee, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". We find one another that way. That gives us a bond together. When you have found each other "with those" - and I do

not think it is a local "those", Paul has in mind the general situation - such a company can be found. The Lord would direct us to that company, it is not what man would do. It involves exercise. I think there is a need in our souls to go through these things with the Lord as to finding one another and then you find the "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". What is their outlook? Affection for Christ and the truth. It is affection for Christ, it is "with those that call upon the Lord". It is His name, name the name of the Lord", it is His Name, His honour. There is much in Christendom at the present which is inconsistent with His honour, in the establishment, in the national churches, things in the great system of Rome too that the believer who is taught in the Scriptures would not be free to go on with. All this enters into your path, where would you go. Then the history amongst brethren too would come into our minds. How do we find one another? We find one another "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". Christ's honour, Christ's glory, is the outlook, the desire of the heart. What a thing to find one another, find another brother who is seeking to call "on the Lord out of a pure heart". What a thing to find a brother, a sister. That is what we have found, we have found one another, finding a brother, finding a sister, whose desire is to call on the Lord out of a pure heart. That is how they found one another in the 1820s, found persons dissatisfied with what was then available to them, and they found one another, and they sought the Lord's guidance as to how to move. That is the way to come. If we have not come that way, there is a lack in our foundation. It makes each one precious to us. What a thing it is to find one another, find a person who is prepared for this path, with its suffering and sorrow. We find one another in a broken-hearted manner. Most of us have come through divisions, and it has broken our hearts. One man said, he was a brokenhearted churchman, but I think there is more than one man could say that here. A brother in this city used to say to some of us, 'The coast is strewn with wrecks of better men than ourselves'. That is true, some of us have known men better than ourselves, wrecks in the testimony. But we have found one another, we have found one another and we are precious to one another.

That is what was on my heart, to draw out the preciousness of each one. One goes astray and another turns back; we feel it. We are all tested by this, "pursue". It is not something one does for once when one seeks to remember the Lord Jesus: it is a constant thing.

May we rejoice in the constancy of pursuing righteousness; faith, love and peace with those, the appreciation with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. When one draws back, discontinues, fails to pursue, it is a sorrow. It is a sorrow, because once they were pursuing. Pursuing involves the expression of fellowship in the Lord's Supper - pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, would include the Lord's Supper, because the Lord's Supper is the expression of fellowship. Let us continue in the pursuit, be a comfort to one another. When we find one another we are comforted, persons who have come a moral road, come a road through Christendom to where we are. You may say, what about other believers? The Lord would guide, we are confident in that, the Lord would guide an enquiring soul as to where he would find Himself. The desire is to find Christ, affection for Christ, an unofficial position, an informal position. But to find Christ, the reality of it, in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we pursue! The Spirit of God's power would be in that, meekness, lowliness, the desire for Christ and Christ alone, the desire for the truth. If we desire Christ, we desire the truth. Christ and the truth are not to be parted. The Lord is the truth, "I am the way, the truth and the life". If we seek Christ we seek the truth. And so we continue. I say again, when one departs from pursuing, it brings sorrow into the heart, because once they were bright. Let us continue as pursuing, let us appreciate one another as those who have come this way. You might say, it has not been straightforward altogether for some of us, but it is straightforward if you follow the Scripture. But experience shows how far led we can become through influence, many influences that influence the believer, yet with that one desire to please the Lord. That is Philadelphia, "I have set before thee an opened door". We have taken advantage of the opened door, we have found Christ through that opened door.

May the Lord help us, for His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

October 1997

THE THINGS THAT ARE MORE EXCELLENT

John Gaskin

Philippians 1: 10

The apostle was anxious that the saints in Philippi should be occupied with the things that are more excellent and to use their spiritual judgment so as to approve of such things. The whole epistle was written to this end and in it the excellent things are brought out.

Paul is concerned as to the glad tidings. It seems that the prison circumstances in which he was were giving him an opportunity to announce the glad tidings to members of the Imperial guard themselves, which he was quick to grasp, and that his imprisonment was encouraging the brethren to preach the word of God fearlessly and for which he is set as a defence. As the apostle thinks of the saints as in the fellowship of the Spirit, he desires that we should know what it is to esteem each other as more excellent than ourselves, regarding not each his own qualities, but each those of others also. In this way we would have a more exalted view of the saints as those for whom He was prepared to go into death.

Paul can recount the things that as a Jew he could boast in in the flesh, but all these things he could count loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. As an athlete he was stretching out towards the calling on high in Christ Jesus. Finally he is engaged with the things that are more excellent, whatsoever things are true, are noble, whatsoever things are just, pure and amiable, things of good report, virtue and praise, think on these things.

In Hebrews the writer speaks of a name more excellent than that of angels. It is a name which Christ inherits, the name of the Son. It is uniquely His - the person of the Son, the effulgence of God's glory and the expression of His substance; no one else but He could sustain all those divine glories. Mr McCallum's hymn beautifully expresses it as he says:

Thou art the Son, O Lord.

It involved His coming down from glory and being in manhood's form, "Sonship in conscious nature". Mr Darby speaks of Him thus as the "Man of Sorrows".

In Chapter 8 the writer speaks of a more excellent ministry, that of the new covenant. He speaks of Christ as the mediator of a better covenant, no longer demanding but in grace supplying from God's side. In 1 Corinthians 16 Paul is engaged in what love can do. He speaks of a way of more surpassing excellence. He recounts seventeen matters that love does and finally says that love never fails. It is indeed a way of more surpassing excellence, a way the Lord Jesus was prepared to go for us when He went through the terrible suffering of the cross that we might be redeemed through His blood.

May we be able to approve the things that are more excellent and to enjoy all these more excellent things which resulted from the precious work of our Lord Jesus and for His glory.

ABERDEEN

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