

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 325

April 2000

Contents

SERVICEABILITY

GIVING

SERVICEABILITY

Exodus 21: 2-6; 2 Timothy 2: 3,4; 1 Chronicles 11: 13,14; Matthew 25: 14-24; 1 Peter 4: 10, 11

J.T.B. We were affected a little this week by the expression in Timothy, “he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Tim 2: 21): that is, a state of readiness to do whatever the Lord might bid us do and a preparedness, too, as proving the grace of God and the help of divine Persons, to ensure that we are equipped for the work. These scriptures might bring out certain features involving serviceability and what we might contribute each of us, in our measure, to the strengthening of the testimony and the enrichment of what is for God. There is the affecting reference in the Epistle to the Philippians that “... all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ”, Phil 2: 21. That would be the position generally in Christendom, but there is a peculiar appeal to each of us today in these words, “serviceable to the Master”. The feature was seen pre-eminently in the Lord Jesus Himself. That is why I read from Exodus. What an example Jesus is, as doing all things well! It will be noticed that in these other scriptures read the particular services is preceded by the adjective “good”. So the Lord Jesus would have us not only undertake a service but exercise us to do it well. Thus there is the reference to the “good and faithful bondman” and finally the “good stewards”, all culminating in glory to God, “that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ”. I wondered if we might get some gain from these things.

M.J.W. What did you think of the wife and children in the first scripture? Obviously the master is, as you have suggested, the primary thing, but what about the wife and children?

J.T.B. They are the motive for his continuing service in love. As you implied the Master typically would involve His Father’s will, but the allusion to the wife brings out the depth of His love for the assembly. “Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it”, Eph 5: 25. Then the children would convey the

love of Jesus for each one of us as brought into a relationship with Him through redemption. I was struck by the references to the daughter and the child in Luke chapter 8. The woman with the flux of blood was at an extremity, but she comes and touches the hem of the Lord's garment and He says to her, "Be of good courage, daughter; thy faith has healed thee; go in peace" (v 48). It is a fine thing to come into relationship with the Lord Jesus in that way and to know His love as equal to every exigency, and every circumstance, however extreme. And then Jairus's daughter. He took hold of her hand and said, "Child arise" (v 54). What an impression she would have, as a child, of the love of the Lord Jesus.

M.J.W. That is beautiful. I was thinking the area is wide because it says, "let us do good towards all, and specially towards those of the household of faith", Gal 6: 10. The latter would include the daughter and the child, those in particular relationship to the Lord Jesus, but then it says, "let us do good towards all". What would you say about that?

J.T.B. Well, "the household of faith" is an extensive thought; it would not be just our immediate company. Every believer would be included in the "household of faith". But to do good towards all would require us to have a wide outlook.

R.W.F. Do you understand that love is the great motive? I was thinking it is not love for anything abstract, but "I love my master".

J.T.B. When he said distinctly and was thereafter brought to the door-post, it was really the tangible, substantial, expression of love in a way which could not be surpassed. Saying distinctly is a very precious thing, is it not? Do you have something to add?

R.W.F. No, I was simply thinking that at times we think of the need to divest ourselves of this and that to be serviceable, but the great moving power, it seems to me, is love and love must have an object. We have been given an Object for our love.

J.T.B. If we have not love, we are nothing, as is brought out in Corinthians. That would be a test for us – the substantiality of love expressed in each one of us.

E.C.B. What do you understand by “good” to which you drew attention?

J.T.B. Simply that you can have, for example, good soldiers and bad soldiers. That is why I read 1 Chronicles 11: those who stood along with David in defending the plot would be good soldiers, but those who fled would be bad soldiers. Similarly, you have the contrast of the good and bad bondman in Matthew 25. Then, too, the very positive allusion to the good stewards. There are, of course, references in scripture to the bad steward but, in Peter, the emphasis is on what is good. These encouraging scriptures might help inspire us, in taking up any kind of responsibility, to seek to do it well.

E.C.B. It is familiar to the brethren that Jesus declined the expression “good” – “Good Teacher” – but who could deny that He was good? I wondered whether it implied on our part that, if we are to be serviceable, we need a proper judgment of evil.

J.T.B. That is right. The Lord says affectingly, “No one is good but one, that is God”, Mark 10: 18. No doubt a testimony to the perfection of His manhood and the place that He had taken in bondman service but, as you say, it would imply in our hearts the judgment of everything that is contrary to God, God Himself alone being good.

E.F.W. Would it be not only a contrast to evil – that is certainly true – but would it be what God would do? In creation what He saw was not a contrast to evil but what was like Himself, what He had made, what He saw was good. Do we need the first to contrast it with evil – evil is abhorrent – and then to see on a positive line how much it is linked with what God does?

J.T.B. These opening verses in Genesis testify that, before the intrusion of sin God saw what was good in the creation, and in man, as made after His likeness. It says, “Jehovah Elohim ... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”, Gen 2: 7. How intimately God, speaking reverently, identified Himself with man, taking pleasure in the acme of His creation. Yet how soon evil invaded the domain of

God's pleasure and left its legacy of sin. But we find in Christ the answer to all that.

J.McK. It is interesting in that context that God says, "It is not good that Man should be alone", Gen 2: 18. I wondered whether therefore the idea of completeness enters into this too. It is interesting that it was in the type God who gave the Hebrew bondman his wife.

J.T.B. God considered for Adam in that way. "I will make him a helpmate, his like", Gen 2: 18. So also the Hebrew bondman. As you say, God gave him his wife; and the bondman loved her and his children through everything. Like the Lord Jesus "having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end", John 13: 1. So the assembly is the object of the affections of the Lord Jesus. It was for that He suffered, for her He served, and, on that account, He was brought to the door that there might be the abiding testimony to His love and faithfulness.

D.E.R. This illustration of the Hebrew bondman and his committal is all with a view that that same character of committal should mark us, is it not?

J.T.B. I thought so. Christ is the great model for each one of us, not that we could ever attain to the enormity of His sacrificial love – loving His wife and His children, loving His Master's will, too!

R.H.B. Lower down the passage in Timothy that you read, we read, "Strive diligently to present thyself approved to God, a workman that has not to be ashamed", 2 Tim 2: 15. Is that the sense of a good bondman, that he is "approved to God"? We have to strive diligently; with Christ it is what He was: "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!", Isa 42: 1. Is that the standard that is set before us?

J.T.B. We learn from Him. The word "diligently" is *apropos*. It implies total commitment and dedication to what God's interests entail for each one of us.

P.J.H. Is it interesting to see the delight that the Hebrew bondman has in the authority of the master? He had been bought, but he feels fully possessed by him. He is taken possession of when the affection comes in. In Ephesians 2 verse 10 it says, "For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them". You get the preparation as well as the "good works" there.

J.T.B. "We are his workmanship", so we have been created for a purpose in that sense. We would be exercised to identify what God would have us do, to discover the "good works" for which we have been formed.

P.J.H. It is a sense not just of duty but the whole heart and affections are in it.

J.T.B. You get the sense here that this particular committal was in no way irksome. Things can become irksome to us but there was nothing like that in Jesus. Philippians 2, of course, brings out the bondman *par excellence*, the One who "subsisting in the form of God ... emptied himself taking a bondman's form" (vv 6,7). The sequence of verse 7 is affecting in that "taking a bondman's form" precedes "taking his place in the likeness of men", as if to emphasise that the Lord Jesus came to serve and to serve in love.

E.C.B. Do you think that our ability to apprehend the Master's will, even unconsciously, enters into this? In the other four scriptures you have read, nobody has a commandment. In Luke in a parallel passage, the master says, "Trade while I am coming", (chap 19: 13), but not in Matthew, and the mighty men do not have a commandment. It is a question of knowing the Master's will without commandment. I was thinking of what has been said about knowing from the heart.

J.T.B. It is very much a matter of the affections and I think we only acquire that sense of direction as in the Lord's own presence.

E.C.B. And by continuous intimacy. We learn it in relation to one another. We know what one another want or prefer without asking every time.

J.T.B. I think that is right. It is illustrated again in the Lord Jesus: "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed", Isa 50: 4. In that holy, intimate morning communication from His Father, He knew just what His Father would wish Him to do on that particular day. There were these nights spent, too, on the mount of Olives, no doubt in holy communion, identifying freshly what lay before Him and what His Father's will entailed. There is a fine expression, "*abroad* on the mountain called the mount of Olives", Luke 21: 37. It implies a great realm of expansion, underlining what you say. How we need to crave the intimacy of communion with Him to help us establish what He would have us do for His testimony.

E.C.B. Perhaps it is one of the things that we do not practise sufficiently, hence we get all over the place.

J.T.B. I think that is right. Recourse to the holiest would help us. You are really shut up with Him in holy nearness in that way.

P.J.H. Does Psalm 1 come into line here? – "But his delight is in Jehovah's law, and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (v 2).

J.T.B. Psalm 40 as well: "... in the volume of the book it is written of me" and then he goes on to say, "To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight, and thy law is within my heart", (vv 7,8). There is something very affecting about that expression, "within my heart": not just exactly in my heart, but "within my heart" as if the affections of Christ encompassed the law. As we were saying, it was not irksome to Him.

D.E.B. We live in a time when there is an emphasis on liberty and freedom in the pursuit of one's own will, but that does not obtain in Christianity, does it? "For the Christ also did not please himself", Rom 15: 3. I was thinking of this reference: "I will not go free". The Lord supremely set that forth and if we are to be serviceable, we need to have that same committal: "I will not go free".

J.T.B. I think "bondman" really is the word for slave. There was that addiction to His Father's will. He was bound in that way. And yet there is "the perfect law, that of liberty" too, Jas 1: 25. How we

can expand in this matter of service to Christ, as legitimately subject to Him! Not casting aside restraint in any way, but operating and serving Him according to “the perfect law, that of liberty”.

Q.A.P. At the end of Matthew 11 there is that reference to the yoke – “Take my yoke upon you” (v 29) – and yet it is presented so beautifully, so attractively in a Man who is “meek and lowly in heart”. He says, “for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”. Does that help us to see that it is an attractive matter?

J.T.B. That is right. The yoke would imply conformity with Christ. In some way, you are sharing it with Him, moving in harmony with Him, while submissive to Him.

R.H.B. What is the scope of that in its typical bearing: “and he shall be his bondman for ever”?

J.T.B. We cannot limit the scripture. The scripture says, “and he shall be his bondman for ever”. He died that He might be a bondman for ever. It must involve His present position: He still serves as a bondman, yet we cannot restrict the glory of the Lord’s Person. In wonderful, condescending grace, He remains devoted to the service of His own. At the very end of Mark’s gospel, after the Lord was taken into heaven, it says they went out to preach everywhere, “the Lord working with them”. How affecting to think of the Lord actually serving along with them in the glad tidings.

R.H.B. Yes, and remaining a man, do you think, is involved in it. Notwithstanding who He was, He took that form and has retained it? The scriptures speak of His present activities, “always living to intercede for them”, Heb 7: 25, and other activities of the Lord that are proceeding at the present time, that we are to be conscious of.

J.T.B. It is very interesting to see how even priesthood involves service. Priesthood is, of course, dependent on sonship and, as we go on to chapter 28 of Exodus, we find priesthood developed in Aaron – of course applying typically to Christ - where it says “that he may serve me as priest”. Though the Lord is on high now, as Man glorified – and how our hearts exult in his exaltation! – yet He still

graciously serves. In a priestly way He serves, as you have quoted from Hebrews. But His service as a bondman is especially affecting.

J.McK. The fact that He retains it would perhaps emphasise His complete committal to this place, and the depths of the affection that would not relinquish something that gave such pleasure to God, that there was a real Man who was able and willing to do His will.

J.T.B. Speaking reverently, God can point to Him as serving still on His behalf. What delight the Father has in the fact that the Lord Jesus yet serves in love for His own, and that we are the recipients of that love. This expression that “his master shall bring him before the judges” is affecting. God is, as it were, providing a public testimony to the authenticity of His committal and service. These judges would hear the evidence; they would open the book of his labours of love. If it were John’s gospel (one simply applies it) they would read in chapter 4 of a Man “wearied with the way he had come” (v 6) – what bondman service that was! Then, in John 13, the Lord Jesus laying aside His garments to wash the feet of his disciples. Surely these judges would say, what a testimony all this is to bondman love!

E.C.B. It actually says, “and he shall be his bondman for ever”. Does that not bear on the fact that, if we think of the Lord as “bondman for ever”, it is as serving the Father? This scripture does not bear on the Lord serving His own.

J.T.B. That is very interesting. The Father is interested in His children and in the assembly. The Father has His interests down here and the Lord Jesus serves that these interests might be fulfilled and completed.

E.C.B. Yes, I am sure that that is right but I think sometimes we lower the level of the Lord’s present service to the Father by extending the type of this scripture to bear on ourselves. At no point in the scripture does the servant serve his wife or his children.

J.T.B. That is very helpful and clarifying. As was said earlier, it was his master who gave him the wife, and the children belonged to

her master. It is in recognition of the Father's claiming in love that he serves.

E.C.B. Is it not right that the Lord having become man, as man remains in that relationship with God? We cannot alter the position of His deity, but it is as man in relation to God: this scripture bears in type on the Lord's service in manhood to the Father.

J.T.B. That is very helpful.

D.E.B. Is 1 Corinthians 15 relevant to what we are now saying: "the Son also himself shall be placed in subjection" (v 28). I am just linking that with this reference to "for ever".

J.T.B. I would rather have thought, but perhaps the brethren could clarify, that the Son being placed in subjection to Him would relate more to the position of subjection in which He is placed so that God may be "all in all" rather than, specifically, His bondman service. But that is an interesting enquiry.

D.E.B. Well, subjection is subjection. You cannot analyse it.

J.T.B. That is true. But the emphasis in 1 Corinthians 15 seems to be on the position in which He is placed rather than the service He carries out.

E.C.B. Does that reference not bear especially on the Lord's position as Son of Man? He gathers everything up as Son of Man and delivers it up to "him who is God and Father" ... "that God" (and not man) "may be all in all".

J.T.B. That is right. The point in that scripture is that the supremacy of God might be attested in all that has been accomplished, as part of the wonderful operation of divine grace.

E.C.B. I do not want to say too much, but I am very interested in the suggested application of it to this scripture: "He shall be his bondman for ever". He will retain manhood for ever, but God will be all in all.

J.McK. Does it not emphasise the pleasure that God Himself has in a state of subjection, that it enters into the eternal condition?

J.T.B. I think that is right. The scripture referred to brings in the eternal state of things. It is very affecting to think of subjection running into eternity.

J.McK. All the dislocation that has come into the created sphere is because of insubjection and God will show in Christ, will He not, that He delights in that sphere that is entirely subject to His own supremacy?

J.T.B. That is very fine. Now, I thought perhaps we can see some examples of serviceability in these other scriptures: first, the “good soldier of Jesus Christ”. What do you say about the “good soldier”?

M.J.W. Some of us do not like the military aspect of things but obviously we all have to – or all should – bear our responsibility. What does the military aspect have in mind, or is it just an example?

J.T.B. “Take thy share in suffering as a good soldier ...” is no doubt a simile but undoubtedly there is conflict; there are things to be withstood, and principles to be maintained. The character of the soldier is necessary for that. I suppose the Old Testament illustrates how broad the service of the soldier is. There is the conflict with the Egyptians - that is dealing with the world’s system. Then, there is Amalek - confronting the power of Satan in the flesh, and the wars of Canaan: even in the land the need for a soldier arises.

P.J.H. Is the idea of the good soldier one who can be trusted to attain the objective throughout the suffering, the objective is in mind?

J.T.B. I think that is right. It is the Lord’s interests that are at stake. “No one going as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of life ...” That would be in contrast to the affairs the Commander-in-Chief, our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who leads the army. It is fine to get some impression of what His affairs mean and what His objectives are.

R.B. Urijah the Hittite lost his life because he would not become entangled in the affairs of life.

J.T.B. That is a very fine example. He laid down his life in that way for the testimony.

Rem. This one is not a rebel or a guerrilla. He is a “soldier of Jesus Christ”. Does that give him some legitimacy?

J.T.B. A regular soldier, enlisted in the ranks. One of the great features of the soldier is discipline, being subject to authority; and it is very necessary that we should know and observe the rules of engagement in that way. The teaching of the chapter helps us in all this.

A.J.E.T. Can you say something about the wording, “that he may please him who has enlisted him as a soldier”, not simply to fulfil a duty? I was wondering whether we carry forward Exodus 21, the bondman there loves the master. Now we have an illustration of one who desires that his Enlister should have pleasure.

J.T.B. That is the great objective. It is how he does things, how he serves, how he functions as a soldier. The soldier’s objective is what pleases the Leader of the army, Jesus our Lord. It involves total dedication to the interests of the Lord.

A.J.E.T. Yes, so however much fulfilment of duty is in it, there is something more for the believer who is “a good soldier of Jesus Christ”.

L.W.B. Put on the uniform: “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”, Rom 13: 14. We are all enlisted for military service according to the teaching in Numbers to guard the tabernacle and the holy of holies. All that is very important, is it not?

J.T.B. It is all those who *go forth* to military service in Numbers. There is a kind of dignity and majesty about it. There are underlying conditions too, as you were implying. Those from twenty years and upwards were numbered, suggesting a certain maturity in the Lord’s things. They had proved their genealogy, too, and had established their pedigree, all very important features for the soldier as he is trained to take his place in battle. They were encamped too round about the tent of meeting, every one by his standard. There were

four standards, which would no doubt refer to the universality of the position which needs to be safeguarded. It seems there was an ensign also for each of their father's houses.

L.B. That is another important thing, to carry the flag. The standard bearer is important too.

J.T.B. The ensign would add a certain dignity to the position. The ensign might be more a local thought but the four standards would imply universality, that we are all saying and doing the same things, and all having one end in view in the conflict – victory.

P.J.H. In one of Mr Lyon's preachings he said the royal standard flies when the sovereign is in residence and it flies best in a stiff breeze.

J.T.B. You would see the standard and the ensign, speaking reverently, flutter in Philadelphia. But they should flutter too in our own localities. It will be so, as we fall in behind the leadership of Christ. In Numbers, they take their place round the tent of meeting according to their position on the breastplate. It is Judah, Isaachar, Zebulun; Reuben, Simeon, Gad; Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin; Dan, Asher, Naphtali. It is not according to age or whatever: it is according to sovereign choice. So we need to find the place earmarked for us. It enters into this matter of serviceability. Are we fully discharging our commission? It is against that background that we take our place in military formation around the tent of meeting.

L.W.B. From another point of view in our day the standard is 2 Timothy 2. We stand by that.

J.T.B. In 2 Timothy 2 you establish your pedigree according to Numbers 1.

P.J.W. It says, "When the adversary shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Jehovah will lift up a banner against him", Isa 59: 19. That would be like the ensign you have spoken of, that the people of God might rally to it. Is that the thought?

J.T.B. We will never be left without a banner to which we can rally. The Lord Jesus is Himself the great rallying point and His

interests must always be protected by military prowess.

E.C.B. There is a great need for dedication to which you referred and committal, because entanglements are proving a considerable sorrow to the brethren and will, to the individuals.

J.T.B. We read in the house this morning from Hebrews as to the “weight, and sin which so easily entangles us”, chap 12: 1. Weights might be legitimate things, but they can impede us and we need always to be on our guard. And then in the parable of the sower the seed that fell among the thorns was choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life. How easily we can become overwhelmed by these things and spiritual life within us choked.

E.C.B. We therefore need help to help one another in committal to the Name of the Lord.

J.T.B. That is why I thought we might touch on 1 Chronicles 11 because the idea there is that they are working together. It says, “And they stood in the midst of the plot ...” They were working together with this common aim to defend the plot at all costs out of respect and affection for David, and we have that privilege now.

E.C. The apostle Paul says to Timothy, “Take thy share in suffering ...” One of the teachings in military service comes under the heading of *esprit de corps*, that is they move together as one. Is there the thought here that we are together in suffering: if one suffers, we suffer with them. There is much suffering. We are to take our share in that.

J.T.B. Paul says, “I rejoice in sufferings for you ...”, Col 1: 24, and this thought of association in suffering comes out in verse 14 of our chapter: “And they stood in the midst of the plot ...” They were sharing in it together. They would relinquish nothing. “In the midst of the plot”, is a very heartening word. They were not standing on the border or the periphery, but right in the midst of it. They would let nothing fall.

E.C. It helps us to value one another.

J.T.B. Yes, the inference here is that they stood with David. I think we stand with Christ in these things, with our Leader in that way. It is not our plot: it is His plot, and it is fully of barley. What a fine thing that is!

J.McK. The victory gained is attributed not to the mighty men but to Jehovah.

J.T.B. Yes, they carried out the service, but “Jehovah wrought a great deliverance”. How the Lord values what is for Him amongst His people, values how they stand for it and seek to defend it. There is something very evocative in “a plot of ground full of barley”. We might consider in our localities that the testimony is small – it is not even a field here: it is just a plot – but nevertheless it is worth standing in the middle of and defending. As “full of barley” it is productive for Christ because barley suggests Christ in resurrection. How that great truth is being assailed in our day. The Person of the Lord Jesus and the truth of resurrection as under attack but here are men willing to stand together in the midst of the plot in order to secure it intact for the divine pleasure.

R.W.F. Do you get the impression from the way this reads that God is looking for us to make a stand at the Lord’s direction and when we do, He will bring deliverance?

J.T.B. The circumstances seem to be totally adverse. “He was with David at Pas-dammim, where the Philistines were gathered together to battle; and there was there a plot of ground full of barley ...” The truth was being assailed and that is the position at the present time in Christendom at large. But however adverse or unfavourable the circumstance, the need is for desires in us to safeguard what remains. It is in that way that the testimony will be protected.

E.F.W. So God comes in and magnifies what they did. They took up their responsibility and delivered the plot but “Jehovah wrought a great deliverance”. Standing maybe in a very small position but taking up responsibility God can make that very effectual for His own pleasure, can He not?

J.T.B. It is fine to get some sense of the divine objective? It is for God, not for our own gratification. There is no word here about them receiving medals but rather “Jehovah wrought a great deliverance”. It was for Him that the plot was protected.

P.J.W. Paul says at one stage that, “the Lord stood with me”. All deserted him but “the Lord stood with me, and gave me power ...”, 2 Tim. 4: 16,17. Do you think that is something like this? The way it reads it seems that it was just Eleazar and David who stood in the midst of the plot.

J.T.B. The people had fled from before the Philistines: poor soldiers they; they had fled, and had deserted the battlefield. They had come short in their appreciation of what the plot of barley meant for God. But there were those prepared to value things as God values them and to defend them accordingly. That is something we ought to covet.

A.G.S. Jude writes exhorting the saints “to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints” (v 3). That rallying call really is very *apropos* at the present time to each one of us.

J.T.B. I think “the faith once delivered to the saints” would link on with the “ground full of barley”. It is the whole scope of what has come down to us: nothing missing. I suppose if one ear of barley had been relinquished, there would have been a loss, but the whole plot of ground and every ear of barley are preserved intact for God. How precious that is! – “the faith once delivered to the saints”. We should be exercised to defend it.

A.G.S. Jude wrote a long time ago. How much more the need is now because it is still precious. “The faith once delivered to the saints”, every tenet of it, and here what potential there is. As you say, what there is in one ear that will be for the divine pleasure!

J.T.B. Often we become a bit introspective and we fail to appreciate the fulness of what God is working in these days. By and by, the crop will be displayed in all its glory and to its full extent. As one and another is taken from us, you feel these things. But soon

the full crop will come into view. What an answer to a suffering testimony when the full crop is secured intact for God!

D.E.R. We sometimes express desires that God would come into a situation but this section would help us to see that God comes in through the means of faithful persons, standing, which would stimulate us that we might stand and then the local position and the saints will be delivered.

J.T.B. The mighty men acted spontaneously, without specified command. You just need to turn over the page in our chapter and you get some indication of their mighty exploits. They did that out of love for what was for God.

P.J.H. So there is great food value in this barley. As the hymn says,

Oh the sight in heav'n is glorious! (Hymn 212)

J.T.B. Well, Christ is there, a Man in heaven, glorious sight! We might refer briefly to these other scriptures. In Matthew 25 it is the question of bondmanship and aspiring to this wonderful tribute, "good and faithful bondman". We should covet that. Here the question is of trading and making use of what God has given to each one, for God has given something to us all. We have a measure of faith and "to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ", Eph 4: 7. How much there is to trade with in that sense!

E.C.B. Can you help us all as to how it is done?

J.T.B. Well, can you say something about it?

E.C.B. Not much, but I think it is important at the present time is that each of us should be diligent in the Master's business, not neglecting things. It is easier to set a pattern of neglect in the company and I think that what we need is a pattern of affirmation and consolidation.

J.T.B. There is a reference in the Proverbs to buying the truth. It is bought at a price in that sense: "Buy the truth, and sell it not", chap 23: 23. That might enter into this matter of trading. Again, as has

been referred to earlier, commitment and dedication seem to be needed. In the Proverbs it says in relation to wisdom that “they that seek me early shall find me”, chap 8: 17. “Riches and honour are with me; durable wealth and righteousness ... that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasuries” (vv 18,21). It is a question of bent of mind.

E.C.B. Yes, and the tendency to think that the Lord is a hard man so that we can dilute what is suitable to the Lord.

J.T.B. Thank God we know the heart of the Lord Jesus, and that should be a great lever with us, “and to know the love of the Christ”, Eph 3: 19. That should never cease to affect us nor should the cost to Him that we might be enriched. He “became poor, in order that ye by *his* poverty might be enriched”, 2 Cor 8: 9. So we should be exercised to enhance the value of the talents given to us. It is interesting to study how the talents were used in the tabernacle system: one talent of gold for the candlestick. Do you think as we trade our talent of gold, it might make for greater light shining in our localities and give us a greater appreciation of the light that has come to us? There were the talents of copper, too, that entered into the copper of the wave offering which went into the construction of the copper altar, as well as the pegs of the tabernacle. What a service we can render through bringing our copper talent into use to increase the stability of the local position: the pegs of the tabernacle though they might seem insignificant, make a vital contribution to the well being of the local meeting. Then, too, the silver talents were used for casting the bases of the sanctuary. How fine to grow in our appreciation of the work of redemption as laying the basis of everything that is for God.

D.H. It does not depend exactly on what we are given, because both these, the one with the five and the one with the two talents, in effect secured one hundred per cent for the master.

J.T.B. It is how we make use of what we are given. As we were saying, everyone has been given something to make use of in what is referred to as the master’s business.

R.H.B. In regard to how it works, does the passage in Romans 12 help beginning with presenting the body as a living sacrifice and then it goes on to say, "having different gifts, according to the grace which has been given to us" (v 6) and then a long list of things starting with prophecy but coming down to very simple matters like hospitality and so on, paying honour one to the other. If we are a believer, we have been given something to contribute to the divine system, have we not? The question is whether we are contributing it.

J.T.B. Even in the building of the temple there were workmen and workmanship: the stonemasons and so on, all plying their trade. What skills they had to set forward the operation. There are "distinction of operations" and "distinctions of services" as brought out in 1 Corinthians 12 (vv 5,6), but all conducing to the enhancement of what is for God. So it does create exercise with us to use what we have to optimum value.

R.W.F. Do you think we have been given more than perhaps we realise? You referred at the outset in connection with this scripture to Ephesians 4: "But to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ". Who could say what the extent of that is?

J.T.B. He is the God of measure and He would be concerned to ascertain whether, according to His own measurement, what we have been given is being properly used.

R.W.F. Yes, because that section deals with gift and we might say we will leave it those who are gifted to give a word in the ministry meeting or whatever it might be, "But to each one of us has been given ..."

J.T.B. How divine Persons value even the least of services!

E.C.B. Is not the reward in these cases very blessed? You do not get tangible reward here. What you get is to share in the Lord's joy! Is that not attractive?

J.T.B. That is fine. “I will set thee over many things” seems to look forward to the future; entering “into the joy of the lord” is present, do you think? It is a fine thing actually to know the approbation of the Lord Jesus and to enter into His own appreciation of what has been done. It is “the joy of the lord”. The Man of sorrows here, once acquainted with grief, but now a man of joy, and He would have us to enter into that.

E.C.B. “Thy countenance is fulness of joy” (Ps 16: 11): that is where Jesus is. The one who made five and the one who made two, both get the same. The great thing is it is not tangible, not wondering what towns you are going to look after; what you have is sharing in the joy of Jesus exalted.

J.T.B. That is right. His holy presence needs to be coveted, for joy is found there.

A.J.E.T. Does the fact that there is no prescription, as was said, as to what they are to do for gain or even how they should use it bear on the quotation at the beginning, “prepared for every good work”, what may arise in any particular opportunity?

J.T.B. It seems to me very important to understand how God would have us operate in any circumstance and having identified the need to be able to bring resource to meet it.

A.J.E.T. We can be sure there is resource if we are acting, resource from the divine side.

A.G.S. Peter and John said, “Silver and gold I have not; but what I have ...”, Acts 3: 6. Is that something of this substance? They had really entered into the joy of their Lord and what was secured.

J.T.B. That was a circumstance which was unforeseen, but they were able within themselves to meet the need. That is very important.

Q.A.P. Paul speaks of rekindling the gift that was there in Timothy (see 2 Tim 1: 6). Is the way in which we can encourage one another to develop in that way?

J.T.B. That would enter into this matter of mutuality, not only sharing in suffering but sharing and enjoying together these very positive things that can so much help forward the interests of the Lord Jesus. That might involve, as you were saying, rekindling and stimulating God's work in each other.

R.J.F. Can we trade by asking questions? For me it is very easy to sit back and just let things wash over, but the only way we can individually find out more is by asking a question and very often that leads to clarification for others as well.

J.T.B. That is very practical. Often the simplest question brings out the deepest truths. That would be involved in buying the truth. We need to be exercised to enter livingly into what is proceeding in our gatherings, and sometimes a question can bring out an aspect of the truth in a way that was unforeseen.

R.W.F. We can rely upon God to make use of that means to bring gain. He is the Giver of the increase.

J.T.B. The Lord Jesus was found "in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers and hearing them and asking them questions", Luke 2: 46. The Lord Jesus again is the supreme model.

D.E.B. Mr Coates has an interesting piece on distinguishing between what is mine and what is God's. He says we tend to think that our house and our property and so on is ours and what is eternal is God's but, he says, in fact, it is the other way round. What is up there is ours for present possession; the material things are God's anyway.

J.T.B. That perhaps raises the matter of stewardship which Peter brings out – the exercise to be a good steward. Everything belongs to God in that sense down here, as you are saying, and we should be exercised to use it for Him.

F.R. What were your thoughts about Matthew 25 when this particular servant has been reprimanded (v 26) – "And his lord answering said to him, Wicked and slothful bondman, thou knewest that I reap where I had not sowed, and gather from where I had not

scattered". That is really the position today, is it not? The Lord in a sense is not here, but that is the whole point of the exercise, there should be those who have taken up His work.

J.T.B. I suppose the wicked and slothful bondmen would hardly be true lovers of the Lord Jesus. We have the privilege, as having been given something from Him, to use that in His service. So as "stewards of the various grace of God", we can reflect the mind of heaven, acting and operating in the way that God would act.

M.J.W. The grace of God is such a wonderful, full and active principle. Are we going to be those who are available to distribute it?

J.T.B. It is how God acts. It is God's attitude towards us, and God would have us act in that same way.

P.J.H. Could you help us as to why it says, "various grace" and not 'various graces'?

J.T.B. It implies the diversity of grace which is able to meet every circumstance. It is the disposition of God reflected in the actings of believers on earth.

P.J.H. Very good. It says in Hebrews 12: 15, "watching lest there be any one who lacks the grace of God". In that way it is one in every respect.

J.T.B. It is how God operates according to the feelings of His own heart. Mercy relates to God's sovereign intervention when all had gone awry on the ground of man's responsibility. Mercy furnishes us with the position but grace makes us suitable for it. As deepened in the sense of mercy and conscious of how the grace of God had operated in and with us, we are to act in that way, as reflecting Him and His own blessed heart.

D.E.R. Peter would remind us that any gift or any service is not for the glory of the person with the gift or undertaking the service, but, as rightly exercised, it is all for the glory of God.

J.T.B. It is a fine ending here "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory ..." so that if we are serviceable to the Master, it is not for personal gratification. The

great end is that the Lord might be glorified and that God Himself might receive glory in His own blessed service.

E.C.B. I think the Authorised Version says the 'all-various grace of God', implying its ability to come in in relation to every circumstance. If you wish to work that through, follow Peter's history through the gospels.

J.T.B. That is very good.

Sunbury

6 March 1999

Key to initials

J.T.Brown, Edinburgh; R.Brown, East Finchley; R.H.Brown, East Finchley; D.E.Burr, Redbridge; E.C.Burr, London; L.W.Burton, Merton; E.Croot, Dorking; R.J.Flowerdew, Sunbury, R.W.Flowerdew, Sunbury; D. Hawgood, Bexley; P.J.Herbert, Newport; J. McKay, Witney; Q.A.Poore, Swanage; D.E.Remmington, St. Albans; F.Roe, Glasgow; A.G.Smith, Bexley; A.J.E.Temple, Sunbury; P.J.Walkinshaw, Gillingham; M.J.Welch, Sunbury; E.F.Woodford, Dorking

GIVING

Jim T Brown

Proverbs 23: 26 (to “My son, give me thy heart”); John 4: 7 (to “Jesus says to her, Give me to drink”); Genesis 24: 45 (to “and I said to her, Give me, I pray thee, to drink”), 17, 18; Numbers 28: 1-8

Giving is characteristic of Christianity. “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9: 7), because it reflects the disposition of His own heart. How unstintingly God has given: “He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things?”, Rom 8: 32. Not only has God given the Lord Jesus, but as having given Him, He did not spare Him. John says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal” (chap 3: 16). John emphasises the giving of Jesus. What a gift unsurpassed! But Romans emphasises the fact that as having given Him, God did not spare Him. “Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and there offer him up for a burnt-offering ...”, Gen 22: 2. How the Father loved Jesus! John again says, “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father” (chap 1: 18). What mutual, reciprocated affection was there! But God spared not His own beloved Son. What giving! In Paul’s epistle to Timothy, he says, “the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all”, 1 Tim 2: 5,6. “For all”, the whole of humanity is involved in that. Job sought a mediator; an umpire, who could lay his hand on God and him (chap 9: 33); but there is today and eternally a glorious Man, “the mediator of God and men”, who can lay His hand on God and on men because He has given Himself a ransom for all.

In Acts, we find words attributed to the Lord Jesus Himself, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (chap 20: 35). But if you scoured the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, I do not think you would find precisely these words uttered by the Lord Jesus. Is

not the Spirit of God just saying that writ large across the life of Jesus was this spirit of giving? He gave the gift of sight to the blind: “more blessed to give than to receive”; He gave the gift of speech to the dumb man: “more blessed to give than to receive”; He gave the gift of life to a dead man: “more blessed to give than to receive”. See Him in Gethsemane: “not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22: 42): how eloquently He was saying there “It is more blessed to give than to receive”. See Him at Calvary. Never did these words, “more blessed to give than to receive”, have greater import than when the precious Saviour from the cross exclaimed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”, Luke 23: 24.

Then Romans speaks about “the free gift in grace, which is by the one man Jesus Christ”, and “the free gift of righteousness” (chap 5: 15,17). You see there the apostle’s soul enthusing, welling up, as he recounts the magnanimity of a giving God, who gave His Son and spared Him not that we might be given entrance into the affections of His heart and the glory of His purposes.

Well God, having given, seeks that we might give in return. How often as we revel in the generosity of God and enjoy these wonderful gifts, we fail to respond to Him in a way commensurate with His giving. In the Proverbs God says “My son, give me thy heart”. Could there be anything more simple than that? It is as if the affections of God Himself are reaching out to our heart today, with the challenge: “give me thy heart”. Do you know that God has a heart? Genesis brings out that God has a heart. In a context in which evil had invaded the domain of His pleasure and man had been given up to unspeakable corruption, it says “And Jehovah repented that he had made Man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart”, Gen 6: 6. What God had invested in men! We were saying in the reading that man was the acme of his creation, the apogee of all that He had done. Think of God coming so near to Adam to breathe into him the breath of life! Yet man failed, and “it grieved him in his heart”. Have you thought of the longings of the heart of God? He seeks your heart. May we answer responsively to God’s desires.

Of course, He found what gratified His heart in the Lord Jesus here! It says of David, "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my heart", Acts 13: 22. What satisfaction and pleasure God found in David, typically, in Jesus! You might think of the attributes of God and, if it were holiness, the Lord Jesus fulfilled holiness as no other could: "holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners", Heb 7: 26. If it were righteousness, He fulfilled the law and made it honourable. The scripture emphasises that, in Jesus God found a man who answered not only to His attributes, but to the affections and longings of His heart. We had a reference to Psalm 40 in the reading: "To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight, and thy law is within my heart" (v 8). Encased, we might say, in the heart of Jesus was the law, just like the ark in the tabernacle overlaid with gold. Think of a man encompassing the law of God within His heart! It was as if the Lord Jesus placed it there, because it was so precious to Him, and God delighted in such a One, the Man of His choice.

Then too, He was "meek and lowly in heart", Matt 11: 29. Sharp contrast to men around us! It says in Ezekiel about the prince of Tyre that he lifted up his heart to make himself as a god, and the Spirit adds, that terrible indictment "and thou art a man, and not God" (chap 28: 2). How awful that a man should presume to raise himself alongside God: "thy heart is lifted up because of thy riches" (v 5), to set his heart as the heart of God.

And then the Lord Jesus says affectingly in the Psalms, "Reproach hath broken my heart", Ps 69: 20. He sought for comforters and found none. Not a glow of warmth in that madding crowd who mocked and sneered at Calvary.

Not a vestige of sympathy in that inveterate mob who falsely accused the Lord of glory. Not a heart that throbbed with love for the precious Saviour, God's own Son. I wonder if there is a heart here that is in some way cold towards the Lord Jesus. Open your heart and let in that love of His creating in you an answering response. That the heart of Jesus should be broken by the attitude of the cruel

and hateful men who surrounded Him in the hours of His sufferings must surely evoke a note of emotion from every true lover of His!

Thou soughtest for compassion –
Some heart Thy grief to know,
To watch Thine hour of passion –
For comforters in woe.

No eye was found to pity,
No heart to bear Thy woe;
But shame, and scorn, and spitting –
None cared Thy name to know.

O man! How hast thou proved
What in thy heart is found;
By grace divine unmoved,
By self in fetters bound.

That is the heart of Jesus. What about your heart, dear young person? Is it beating, is it pulsating with love, responsively to God Himself? “My son” – God addresses you personally. It is an appeal from God’s own heart. Let Me possess you! Remember David took the city of Zion? He took possession of it. It says at the end of Psalm 87, “As well the singers as the dancers shall say, All my springs are in thee” (v 7). Those who have their heart-springs in Zion are those who have given their hearts to God. These are hearts that God has possessed: “Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob ... This one and that one was born in her” (vv. 2,5). Mr Darby has a commentary on that latter verse. He says that it is Zion boasting of her heroes. Think of that woman in Luke 7! That was a heart that throbbed for Christ, allured from the city and all its diversions into Simon’s house: “I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart” In she came to Simon’s house, a cold house it was. What an atmosphere of frigidity was there! But in that woman was a heart that pulsated with warmth for Christ. She was a true heroine of Zion! Christ had taken possession of her heart! So God would say to you today, “My son, give me thy heart”. When David takes the

stronghold of Zion, he builds “round about from the Millo and inward” (2 Sam 5: 9), as if he is gradually, piece by piece, taking possession of your heart and constructing an enclosure within it for His pleasure, and in which His affections can reside. Let every constraint, every obstacle be swept aside so that the true David, Jesus Himself, can build within your heart, that your affections might be fully won for Him. Daniel, too, purposed in his heart. Oh that we might have the resolve of heart to give it unstintingly, unsparingly, to God Himself!

In John there is another appeal, and this time it is from the Lord Jesus Himself. You never fail to be impressed by John 4. Here is the Creator of the universe, sitting at a well, “wearied with the way he had come”, and He says to this sinful woman, “Give me to drink”. Now you know that as Creator He had formed all the rivers of the world. You think of the mighty Amazon; you consider the Nile; you go through the scriptures and read about great rivers; the marvel is that the One who sat at Sychar’s well had created these rivers with all the water in them, and yet in the perfection of His humanity, He asked of this sinful woman that she might give Him to drink. Isaiah says, He “measured the waters in the hollow of his hand”, Isa 40: 12. You reflect on the accumulated waters of oceans, the Pacific Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, the quantity of the waters in the seas. He measured them all in His hand. But still in His grace at Sychar’s well He said to a woman, Give me some refreshment: “Give me to drink”. I wonder if all here would respond to that same appeal today. Let our hearts be freshly liberated in response to Him.

At Calvary He said, “I thirst”. Read again Psalm 69. It says, “I am weary with my crying, my throat is parched” (v 3). Read Psalm 22, it says typically of Him: “my tongue cleaveth to my palate” (v. 15). That is the Lord Jesus in His sufferings: In John’s gospel where the Lord Jesus says, “I thirst”, the scripture says “and having filled a sponge with vinegar, and putting hyssop round it, they put it up to his mouth” (chap 19: 24). I think of my Saviour at Sychar’s well asking for a drink and I say, Is He worthy of some refreshment from my own heart? I see some unregenerate hand at Calvary reach up with that vinegar-filled sponge and put it at the mouth of my suffering Saviour

and I say, Is He not worthy, a thousand times worthy, or much, much more? Other gospels tell us that He did not drink, the Spirit of God no doubt indicating that the Lord desires something more than a vinegar-filled sponge. He desires your affections as He desires mine. I wonder if we are consciously giving Him to drink – the Man of sorrows as He was here, the Man of glory now. It is an appeal from His own heart to your heart and to mine: “Give me to drink”. May we be exercised to do so!

The Psalm says, “He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head”, Ps 110: 7. The Lord Jesus now, even in His exultation, desires to “drink of the brook in the way”. No doubt, “in the way” is the Christian way. Saul of Tarsus before His conversion, persecuted those who were “of the way”, Acts 9: 2. The way we are on is a way of reproach, but out of the reproach, even perhaps in the confessing of His Name, there is refreshment for the Lord Jesus. He bowed His head at Calvary. He bowed it Himself. No force in the universe could bow that head. It was His own act. But how fine to see Him in glory above, as He lifts up His head as refreshed by “the brook in the way” from loving hearts that are responsive to His desires and longings. The brook is soft and gentle, refreshing, cool and clear. It was a torrent that flowed against Him at Calvary, the torrent of God’s wrath. Who can measure it! “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy cataracts”, Ps 42: 7. But how fine to be conscious of giving Him, in His present position, something refreshing for His own blessed heart. May we be exercised in that regard!

Genesis 24 is another chapter that throbs with urgency and affection, as the servant finds an answer to Isaac’s affections. You might say this was a very menial test that the servant set for Rebecca, that she should simply undertake to give him and his camels to drink. In verse 14 the servant says that the maiden who responded in such a way would “be she whom thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac”. Would the prospective bride of Isaac not deserve some more sophisticated, refined test? Ah no! The servant sought from Rebecca an answer to the characteristics which were

seen in the true Isaac himself. He sought a bride who answered fully to the features Isaac himself displayed: “For also the Son of man did not come to be ministered to, but to minister ...”, Mark 10: 45. He says, “but / am in the midst of you as the one that serves”, Luke 22: 27. How Rebecca typically displayed these features which answered so blessedly and so perfectly to what would be seen in the Lord Jesus Himself. So she came with her pitcher and I wonder if we have a pitcher. It is the capacity to respond to a situation as it arises. Could Rebecca have foreseen, as she went to the well on this particular day, that she would be met with this request? Often it is the unexpected circumstance that tests us most. Have we resource to meet it? Needs arise in our localities. Have we a pitcher – the capacity, the resource, to meet that need, unforeseen and unpredictable though it may be? Rebecca had that characteristic.

She had a pitcher and here she carried it on her shoulder. How important the shoulder is! It is the ability not only to identify the problem, but to be able to carry and bring to bear the resource to meet it in a practical way. The Kohathites carried the holy things of the sanctuary on the shoulder. It enters into the Nazarite’s offering, too, on the day his consecration is fulfilled. There was a boiled shoulder of a ram. It is the carrying power of Christ now to be reflected in His own.

So Rebecca displayed this beautiful capacity to carry the means for refreshment. She carried the pitcher on her shoulder and she came to the well. This did not seem to be an occasional pursuit; the implication is that she came daily. How often do we have recourse to the well? The exercise would be to make it a daily matter, getting into the divine presence, so that we can draw from the inexhaustible supply which will set us up not only in our individual pathways, but will also set forward the work of God in our localities and – most precious of all – bring refreshment for the heart of divine Persons. Rebecca was able to do that, by coming to the well. It is where resource and spoil are found. In Judges it says, “the voice of those who divide the spoil in the midst of the places of drawing water” (chap 5: 11). You get a sense of that in Rebecca here, as she

says, “Drink, my lord!” It was the voice of one who was dividing the spoil “in the midst of the places of drawing water”. May we cultivate these positive habits so that we are able to provide delight and refreshment to the Spirit of God Himself.

“And she hasted and let down her pitcher on her hand, and gave him to drink”. It seems as if she took the pitcher from off her shoulder, put it down on to her hand and, in the intimacy of love, actually held the pitcher as the servant drank directly from it. How precious the opportunity available to us to develop these links in affection with divine Persons: “On her hand”, these hands of hers were safe. How we need to have safe hands to look after divine interests! The pitcher did not fall to the ground. Nothing was lost. None of the water was spilled. Everything was retained intact for the divine pleasure. She had the resource for this particular situation. She demonstrated her pedigree, and in doing so gave satisfaction and joy to the Spirit of God typically. May we be so exercised in our relationships with the Holy Spirit to have this resource, which is so gratifying to His blessed heart!

In Numbers, it is as if God is appealing directly to His people to respond to Him. It is a commandment, a divine fiat, that the heart of God might be gratified by what His own bring him. “My offering, my bread for my offerings by fire of sweet odour to me, shall ye take heed to present to me at their set time”. Little do we understand the longing of God for a response from His own. John says, “for also the Father seeks such as his worshippers” (chap 4: 23). That is from lovers who know the desires of His heart and are able to answer to Him in conditions suitable to His holy presence. It says in Chronicles, “for I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel to this day; but I have been from tent to tent ...”, 1 Chron 17: 5. Think of God identifying Himself with the tribulations of the sorrows of His own in the wilderness, yet within His heart cherishing a longing that He should be served, that there should be an answer to the affections of His heart! “But I have been from tent to tent”: how affecting to think of God, speaking reverently, moving with His own people in the wilderness, feeling their grief, entering

into their circumstances and yet within that heart of His, seeking a response to His own longings!

He says here, “two yearling lambs without blemish, day by day, as a continual burnt offering”. How God delights as we come into His presence with our continual appreciation of the Lord Jesus. “Yearling lambs” suggest a mature, developing appreciation of the Lord Jesus as the burnt-offering, the One, “who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God” (Heb 9: 14), another aspect of the giving of the Lord Jesus. The burnt-offering was wholly for God except its skin which was the portion of the priests. The burnt-offering was really a representation of what was in Christ in manhood and laid down in death that was so perfectly expressive of God’s own ideals and God wants to have our appreciation of it for Himself. How do we develop this on-going appreciation of the Lord Jesus? It is as we ourselves feed upon Him. Read about Him in Leviticus! Trace these offerings! How full they are! See the antitype in the gospels themselves!

And, then, the oblation too! The fine flour mingled in this chapter with the beaten oil. What a humanity was the humanity of Jesus! In Leviticus, we have its various aspects. There it was baked in the oven, or baked on the pan. What was baked on the pan was broken into pieces. However, God looked at the humanity of Jesus, it was infinitely fragrant to Him, not an inconsistency. Sharp contrast to the humanity around us was the perfect humanity of Jesus! May our hearts bring into the divine presence our appreciation of the humanity of Jesus thereby gratifying the heart of God Himself!

Then it says, “in the sanctuary shall the drink-offering of strong drink be poured out to Jehovah”. What satisfaction and pleasure there are for God’s own heart as what is so delightful to Him in Christ is poured out before Him in the service Godward. In John’s gospel, the Lord Jesus says, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman” (chap 15: 1). See the Father as the husbandman! What a vintage there was from Christ for the Father’s heart in His pathway down here. The “pouring out” suggests hearts

that are full and bubbling over with an appreciation of Christ so that God's own heart is gratified.

Well, may we be freshly stimulated, as affected by the generosity of a giving God, from our own hearts and in our own lives to contribute sacrificially for His pleasure and interests here, for His Name's sake!

SUNBURY

6 March 1999