

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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“HIS DEPARTURE”

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PM In seeking guidance for these meetings I have been affected by five words that are recorded in Luke 9, “who ... spoke of his departure”. I wondered, dear brethren, if we could enquire together, and get some impression of what was before the Lord Jesus, and see its bearing on our present position in the dispensation. We are on the eve of our departure; the departure of the church to be with Christ takes character from His departure. His departure was distinctive and glorious but the character is the same; it is glorious. It is noticeable that in these four passages we have read the Lord Jesus does not directly refer to His death, neither do Moses and Elias on the mount, but they refer to His departure. The disciples were receiving an impression of the glory of the One who was departing. Peter says in his epistle they were “eyewitnesses of *his* majesty” (2 Pet 1: 16): they saw the majesty and glory of the One who was leaving this scene. What a Person: He was transfigured before them. We can enquire into that, because the One who was heavenly and did not belong to this scene was moving here, and as we have later in the chapter, setting His face stedfastly to go to Jerusalem. If He was to depart from this scene, it was the scene in which He was being rejected. He was not received here; Luke gives us that character right from His incoming: there was no room for Him in the inn, chap 2: 7. That is the character of the scene through which we are passing today. There is no room for Christ and no room for His own, but He sets His face stedfastly.

When we come to John 13, it says as to the Lord Jesus, “knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world to the Father”. He did not belong to this world: He says that in chapter 17, “they are not of the world, as I am not of the world”, v 14. Think of the movements of the Lord Jesus “knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world”, the world in which He did not belong. But He was going to the Father, and then the writer says later, “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given 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”. Not only did He know that He was departing out of this world to the Father, but also that “he came out from God and was going to God”. It is in the light of that that He “rises from supper and lays aside his garments” and washes the feet of the disciples. He has a

place in mind in His departure, "I go to prepare you a place". The longings of His heart come out in John 14, "I go to prepare you a place". It was a place where He could have His own at home in association with Himself.

JW I think it is very good. I was thinking in this first chapter that you read they were speaking of His departure but it is interesting that in the second scripture in Luke it speaks of the days of His receiving up. It is obvious that He was departing from this world but He had another world in view.

PM Yes, the world into which He was received. Paul tells us in Timothy He has "been received up in glory", 1 Tim 3: 16. There was no glory in the scene through which He passed save what permeated that pathway, "a glory as of an only-begotten with a father" (John 1: 14), but He was going to be received in a world pervaded by glory.

JW I wondered what you would say about "the days of his receiving up". Is that the receiving up in the beginning of Acts? Luke says, "And it came to pass when the days of his receiving up were fulfilled".

PM The Lord anticipated that time and His movements from this moment, in Luke's gospel, were in the light of that, but they were also days of rejection here. I think it has been said by another that the days from Luke 9 onwards were really what Paul refers to as to "the dying of Jesus", 2 Cor 4: 10, JT vol 60 p523. He did not belong in this scene: He was rejected here because His face was set as going to Jerusalem.

TM Is it not interesting that at the end of Luke we have His departure? I was thinking of what you said as to the two on the road to Emmaüs. He says, "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?", chap 24: 26. His departure began to cause their hearts to burn within them, but before He departs He blesses the disciples and they go back to Jerusalem with great joy, v 50, 52.

PM Yes, He lifted up his hands and blessed them. In the book of the Acts, Luke says that the angel said that He will come again in the same manner, chap 1: 11. His hands are still lifted up, and right through this dispensation His hands have never ceased to be lifted up in blessing. What a glorious Person!

RB Although always personally suited to return to heaven, it was the divine order that He should depart by this suffering way.

PM If you and I were to be brought into blessing, it required that He had to go that way: if the purpose of God was to be established on the basis of redemption, it required that He had to go that way. Think of all that had proceeded in the Old Testament in which God went on with His people, He went on with them in the light of the fact that the Lord Jesus was going to die and that His precious blood was going to be shed. What a wealth of food for our souls in these movements. As you say, personally He could have gone from the mount of transfiguration to glory; He belonged there, but for the will of God it required that He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem.

RB Do you think the Spirit of God had shone out to Isaiah: so there was some impression of this in chapter 53? There was nothing for the Lord in this scene.

PM You are referring to the fact that He grew up before God “as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground”, v 2. The Lord Jesus did not belong here; He belonged in another world, and His own do not belong here. We have often been taught that the assembly does not belong here: it is here for testimony. The assembly is heavenly in origin, in character and in destiny. It takes nothing from the world through which we pass.

BWL Do we get at the mount of transfiguration a preview, really, of His receiving up in glory? I am thinking about what Mr Stoney says; we often speak of the Lord's steps from the manger to the cross but he says it is from the manger to glory, and from the glory to the cross, JBS vol 2 p348, vol 7 p167.

PM I wondered that. They have a view of the Lord Jesus in a condition in which they will know Him in a day yet to come. They were accustomed to seeing the One who was here in humility and lowliness, but they shall see Him as the Centre of a scene that is above this world altogether. These disciples see Him, you might say, speaking carefully, in relation to a spiritual order of life in which these men, Moses and Elias could be seen with the Lord Jesus. And these three disciples received an impression of what that order of life would be in which not only His departure would be fulfilled, but ours also. You think that would be right?

JL Is there something specially appealing then about the words used here, “which he was about to accomplish”? I was thinking of the certainty of all that lay ahead. James, in his epistle, warns us in regard

to our movements that we are to be subject to the mind and will of the Lord, and how we should live (chap 4: 15), but is there something very glorious connected with the departure of the Lord Jesus? Does it give positive assurance in relation to the coming glory?

PM Very fine. There was no doubt that His departure was going to be accomplished. It was in the hands of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God: it was His departure. The second passage we read is His reception: no doubt a reference to the Father's appreciation of Him, but this was His own action, the Son of God, moving forward, about to depart out of this scene. What movements they were! It would be right to say that the One who was here needed no moral change. He was just as suited to the heavenly realm into which He was going to enter as He was when He was with them here upon the earth. Everything was morally perfect.

EJM From here on in this gospel, the Lord emphasises what is of heaven. He "beheld Satan as lightning falling out of heaven", chap 10: 18. Then they were rejoicing in the success of their service and He says, "rejoice not, that the spirits are subjected to you, but rejoice that your names are written in the heavens", v 20.

PM He was drawing the attention of His disciples to that character of life, was He not? It belongs to another world altogether. We may, if we are not careful, become earthly. The book of Revelation speaks of judgment falling upon "them that dwell upon the earth", chap 3: 10. Is my life in another scene?

EJM Do you think the truth of justification then bears on that, "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom 3: 24), not for this scene, for another world altogether?

PM Justified for the world in which Jesus has been glorified. How wonderful that is! He was not justified publicly on the earth, was He? He has been received up in glory: the One who is justified in the Spirit.

JW Why were Moses and Elias not the focal point, but they appear with Him?

PM I wondered that. When He came in, angelic beings had to worship Him. We might just contemplate that. The heavenly host were praising God, angels spoke to the shepherds, but here it is persons in whom God has wrought. They had looked on to Christ in their service here and testified as to this glorious Person. Moses, the meekest man

of all the earth (Num 12: 3) says, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you like me", Acts 3: 22. Think of the light that Moses had, and Elias also. The footnote (note c) says, 'they were no other than', they were recognised, as Moses and Elias in whom certain features of the work of God had been formed and could be recognised. They could speak with Jesus about His departure.

JW I think that is helpful. I suppose these were the best of the men that could be found. Mr James Taylor says Moses was probably the greatest man in the Old Testament (vol 2 p121), but, however great the men were, they were not to compare with the Lord Jesus, and in his epistle, Peter does not refer to these men at all.

PM These men representing the law and the prophets: all that had gone before which had looked on to this glorious Person; they are able intelligently to enter into conversation with Him, without in any way detracting from the distinctiveness of Jesus.

JL May I suggest that Moses was used to introduce the representation of the heavenly things, and Elias specially used to recover the people to it following a time of departure? But Christ is the great accomplisher of all for God.

PM So that all is centered in and held by this blessed Man.

JD Do you think His departure would involve a consideration both of His glory and His sufferings? You also linked it with the departure of the church from this scene. That would be the link, do you think, the matter of glory and sufferings, so that the bride is the Lamb's wife?

PM I wondered that. There is a good deal of suffering in the spirits of the saints, and we may yet be called on to suffer actually in the testimony, as many are, but whether that is so or not, the suffering and the glory must go together, must they not? "The sufferings of the Christ" and "the glory about to be revealed", (1 Pet 5: 1): we cannot ignore the suffering side but it is not the emphasis here. The emphasis is on the One who was here who did not belong here but He was departing to another world. We know that He went that way by way of suffering.

RJF The word that is used here is "departure which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem". It implies to me that it is a heavenly view of things, looking on to His ascension and glorification, but there was so much that was to be accomplished at that time. It is a heavenly view of

things here rather than an earthly view. I just wonder perhaps if we could look into that a little further.

PM What you draw attention to is important and gives us some impression of what was before divine Persons in these days in which the Lord Jesus was moving here. The cry was, "When will he die, and his name perish", Ps 41: 5. Men thought His death was the end but the divine view was that this blessed Person was departing out of this scene and departing gloriously. Majesty was His; greatness was His. The fact that He suffered and died does not in any sense diminish the glory and greatness of the Person that was here, but in going into death He broke its power.

In John 12 He had secured something in the little company in Bethany that was of such a character that He could pronounce after that: "Now is the judgment of this world", v 31. That comes between the beginning of chapter 12 and what we have in chapter 13. He secured something in the company that gave Him a basis, we might say, reverently, to pronounce judgment on the scene through which He passed. It is a principle that God never pronounces judgment until He has what He delights in. That was so in Simon the Pharisee's house, Luke 7: 36-50. He does not say anything to Simon by way of condemnation until the woman anointed His feet, and I think we can see that as we trace it through scripture that when He reaches what delights His heart, He has the basis, we might say reverently, to say what needs to be judged.

TWL I was wondering about this in the light of what has been said. Is this not Christ as the Man of purpose? He is moving for God here. We often speak about the feelings He has for man, but here He is moving for God. What He was about to accomplish was for God.

PM Yes, very much so. The Lord Jesus always considered for God, even when He was twelve years old. There may be young people here at the age of twelve, but when the Lord Jesus was twelve He said, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?", Luke 2: 49. That was always His motive here, and He lived "on account of the Father", John 6: 57. And the Man of God's purpose was the only One who could make known all that was in God's heart. That really is what we have in chapter 13 of John, that not only was He departing "out of this world to the Father", but He knew that "he came out from God and was going to God". These are deep things; we need help talking over

them. The Father could not have anyone being compared here with Christ; He stands alone.

PEH There is no comparison “but having fully awoke up they saw his glory”. It says, “Moses and Elias, who, appearing in glory, spoke of his departure which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem”, but for the disciples “having fully awoke”, the glory of the Lord was distinctive.

PM It was distinctive, and finally He was left alone with themselves. What a result! We have an incomparable Christ. Not only is He unique but He is distinctive and glorious in every way.

PEH The delight of the Father - “*This is my beloved Son: hear him*” - in the light of what has just transpired!

PM Peter says, “this voice we heard uttered from heaven, being with him on the holy mountain”, 2 Pet 1: 18. What a voice, the Father's voice! It was heard at the waters of baptism, not in a corrective way. It was heard there because, you might say, speaking reverently, the Father could no longer keep silent as to His delight in this blessed One, but it is heard here to draw attention to the One who stands alone in the Father's affections. He says, “hear him”: what a privilege we have in this dispensation to hear God's beloved Son!

DAB Did you think that contemplating His glory, as these persons did on the mount, is to have a moral effect upon us so that, when our departure is complete, it is only a change of bodily condition? That would be the effect upon us of what this passage would bring in.

PM We should link it with what we have in 2 Corinthians 3: “But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image”, v 18. How wonderful that is! It is what is open to us now; it is not only what will be. When we see Him actually, “we shall be like him” (1 John 3: 2), but at the present moment, we can be “transformed according to the same image”. I think we have some touch of that at the Supper.

DAB And John's view was, “we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father”, John 1: 14. That could be taken as a reference to this passage, and I have often thought that that comment by John really covered his ministry. It was an experience that this man had that he would never forget.

PM I have wondered if John finding that place in the bosom of Jesus

saw there the glory of the Person that he had never seen anywhere else, the attractiveness of the Person that he had never met before.

ADM I was thinking of what was said as to the matter of purpose: is that confirmed by “which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem”? It is not here what men were going to do to Him, which very sadly they did. Do you think it is the holy resolve of the Lord Jesus to carry out the divine will? We see through the gospels that nothing could deflect Him from that. That is a special glory which we can feed on, and in our measure seek to be coloured by.

PM Does not Peter take that up when he begins to preach in the Acts? He speaks of “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”, chap 2: 23. He says, 'You had wicked hands but God was over it all', “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God”. Everything was in divine control. How wonderful that is! We may look, and we do, at the breakdown of the church and we weep over it, but there is the other side that everything is under the Father's hand, under the hand of Christ. That does not make any excuse for the breakdown, but divine Persons are forming features of the Lamb's wife in suffering conditions in view of our departure.

RB I was wondering if you think the writer to the Hebrews in chapter 3 had something of this before him when he says, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest” (v 1), and he goes on to impress upon their minds that there is a whole heavenly system of things in testimony here now which is a manifestation of what is in heaven.

PM Yes; we may touch on that later.

DGC In relation to what has been said as to suffering and glory, do you think Stephen's experience of his departure when he was gazing into heaven was something akin to this? “He saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God”, Acts 7: 55. Is that the side of what is sovereign? What was given for him to see and appreciate was something very distinctive. You might say it was a foretaste of what was said about the assembly position.

PM That is helpful. Stephen does not speak of his own sufferings, though he must have felt them; he speaks of the Man who eclipsed them all. “Lo, I behold the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God”, v 56. Heaven was open to a man

who was standing for the Lord in the testimony. Paul says, “At my first defence no man stood with me, but all deserted me ... But the Lord stood with me, and gave me power”, 2 Tim 4: 16, 17. It is a wonderful thing to be conscious in any little part that we have in testifying as to our blessed Lord, that divine Persons are there to stand with us, to support.

JL Would it not being an overshadowing cloud have some direct connection with that? There is an interesting footnote given in Matthew's gospel to the significance of the word “overshadowed” (note 'b' to Matthew 17: 5) which gives us to understand that there is a peculiar brightness and blessedness with that cloud as it was in Stephen's case, to help us to get free of every element and be wholly absorbed by the glory of the Person.

PM That is very important. Being conscious of the shining of divine glory is to be known by us in the scene of testimony through which we pass. It “overshadowed”; it did not darken; it shed a light upon them, a light that they had not noticed or seen before; it was here but what it was drawing attention to was the One who was going to pass through death, break its power, be the Centre of the world from which every divine communication would come. How wondrous that is, “a bright cloud overshadowed them”, Matt 17: 5!

JD I was just thinking of the cloud. How near the Father was to be to the Lord Jesus always; He says in John, “but I knew that thou always hearest me”, John 11: 42. But here I was thinking that as Peter “was saying these things”, suggesting three tabernacles, it just seems immediately there was a cloud. It says, “But as he was saying these things, there came a cloud and overshadowed them”; as if the Father was right there. Peter was saying something that was out of place, but the Father was there to keep things in order. Do you think that would be right?

PM I am sure. The Father and the Son were always close together, but it says here, “they feared as they entered into the cloud”. It has come close to us too.

RJC Would we be encouraged in relation to the superlatives? I was thinking again in relation to what Peter could speak of in relation to “the excellent glory”, 2 Pet 1: 17. The hymn says -

Thy glory fills our sight (Hymn 35).

PM Well, these are experiences that Peter found hard to put into

words. He speaks of “the holy mountain”. No one had ever identified “the holy mountain” before, but Peter speaks of it: “the holy mountain”; “the excellent glory”, the majesty that belonged to Christ. The Lord Jesus went out by way of suffering, but the One who went out was none less than majestic and glorious. He had a majesty and it will be seen publicly in a day to come before which the kings of the earth will leave their thrones and lay their crowns at His feet. There is a majesty in Christ that the world knows nothing about. He moved here in lowly humiliation.

JW “They feared as they entered into the cloud”. Are you going to say a word about that?

PM They were entering into a new experience. They had not yet received the Spirit. They were entering into an experience of what was heavenly and in a sphere in which divine affections for one another were being expressed. They feared in relation to it. How wonderful that we have the gift of the Holy Spirit and we can know what it is to be seated, sat “down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus”, Eph 2: 6.

RB They feared because they could not sustain that glory. There is only one Man who could sustain that glory, but the assembly in the coming day will have the glory of God, Rev 21: 10.

PM Yes, she will have those moral features that are suited to God, that had come from God, and she will be formed in the divine nature.

RB I said that because I was thinking of what has already been drawn attention to: that what Stephen saw was Jesus. Is that not the characteristic of this whole dispensation, “we see Jesus” (Heb 2: 9), and as looking upon that glory, we can take on these features.

PM What you say is very exercising because it is the character of the dispensation. When did I last have that experience? We can sit here and say these things, and they are right, and I believe the Holy Spirit would exercise us as to whether what is true for us might be true in us. I hope I am not being too harsh.

RB No, you are certainly not; it is a very needful word and I take it to myself. But does it not enhance to us the service of the Spirit at the present time? If we are in the good of the Spirit, Christ will always be attractive to us, but are we in the good of the Spirit?

PM Therefore in the dispensation in which we are, which is the

greatest of the dispensations that there have been, we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That is a wonderful thing, that we should know a divine Person indwelling, and the delight of that divine Person is to magnify Christ.

EJM That was one of Stephen's credentials: he was “a man full of ... the Holy Spirit”, Acts 6: 5.

PM He was, and therefore even in the most difficult circumstances there was something that shone out in Stephen. They “saw his face as the face of an angel”, v 15. A man who was moving here, they had seen “his face as the face of an angel”, but in the conditions of suffering Stephen was not occupied with the pain he must have been passing through.

TWL I was just wondering about what the Father says here, “hear him”. At the end of Luke's gospel the Lord says to the two, “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?”, chap 24: 26. Hearing Him involves possibly what is in the next part of the scripture you read when there was affliction. The Lord says, “Ye know not of what spirit ye are”. When the Lord said, “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things”, we should expect that, should we not? “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?”. That is the “hear him” and so we should do the same.

PM “But as ye have share in the sufferings of Christ” (1 Pet 4: 13); that is what is normal in the believer's pathway. The measure of the suffering is not what Peter speaks of there, but he says, “ye have share”. Let us take up our part in relation to the sufferings of the Christ and, as we do so, the spirit that marked *Him* in the face of suffering is to be the spirit that marks us.

TWL I wondered that because when He speaks about entering into His glory, that was destination. The question for us is, “What is our destination?”. Do we have before us that we have a heavenly destination? If we do, we will ordinarily find that this scene is nothing but suffering, and that is a test: do I find that here? Does that fit in with your thoughts?

PM Yes, it does, and would lead us onto John 13. The One we have read of in John 13 is the One who earlier said that the world was under judgment, and He is departing out of this world. Dear brethren, we are about to depart out of this world. He was departing to the Father. He

was not loved here save by a few, but He was departing into the scene in which the Father's affection for Him could be expressed in a new way. Jehovah said, "Sit at my right hand", Ps 110: 1. What a moment!

TM Is there a certain dignity connected with departure? I was thinking of Paul's "desire for departure and being with Christ", Phil 1: 23. I was thinking of the departed saints; there is a certain dignity.

PM Well, we have reference to it. When the Lord comes, He will call "each in his own rank", 1 Cor 15: 23. There is a dignity about that. When the Lord comes for us at the rapture He will call, "we, the living who remain" (1 Thess 4: 15); there will be no disunity. We shall depart to be with Christ. That is a very blessed moment, is it not?

I wondered whether this section in John 13 has in mind our part here until He comes. He knew 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". That has not changed; He still loves His own who are in the world. But He knew also "that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and was going to God". That is a further thought. The brethren may help as to that. It is not exactly that He was going out of this world to God. "He came out from God and was going to God". It involves the revelation of Himself so fully made known, and the Lord's longings that it might be answered to by men who have part with Him. Would that be right?

JL I was just wondering about the wonder of the Lord's reception into glory. He speaks about His departure "out of this world" and then further down that He "came out from God and was going to God". That was accomplished in His ascension, was it not? In resurrection He came out of the grave and proved His victory over death but at His ascension He went up into glory and was received and honoured there.

PM Yes, indeed, He was; and what a moment for heaven, a Man sitting there, but that One none less than God, blessed Man entering into heaven; He belonged there because of who He was.

JL The link with 2 Corinthians 3 that was referred to earlier is the same. We are helped by the Spirit to view Him there.

PM Yes, and to see that, God as having been made known, the Lord Jesus has in mind that He should not go out alone. He came in alone; He came out from God; no one else could accompany Him on that, but what is in view here is that men should be with Him in going to God. We

are also to know what it is even in the present time to be with God in a priestly way here in the scene of His absence. The feet washing will not be needed for heaven. We will not need feet washing there; feet washing is needed now in view of part with Him.

JD Do you think this matter of going to God could be linked with what Hebrews speaks of as “bringing many sons to glory”, Heb 2: 10?

PM Yes, go on.

JD The Lord was really bringing His own into the light of the revelation of God, doing that in the conscious sense of the Father's love in His own service to them, do you think?

PM That is just what was in my heart. He came out from God; what a movement that was! The One who Himself came out to make God known. Nothing could be added to that revelation, so full and so complete, but He came out in view of going to God. It does not say that He was going back here, but God was before Him in the movements of divine grace. It has been said that in His ascending movement He was going in order that men might be with Him in the very scene in which God was known. There was to be an answer in men to the revelation of God.

BWL Does coming out from God involve declaration? As you say, going to God involves there is an answer secured.

PM An answer secured in persons that are for God. Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 8 “to us there is one God, the Father ... and we for him”. We are living in a time when sadly, many are happy to know merely that God is for us; that in itself is a wonderful thing, but it is a very blessed thing to know what it is to be here for God: that is priesthood. The food of the priests is to set man up for God. We can rest in the blessings of all that God is as having made Himself known but if there is to be an answer to that it must involve that there are men here who live for the pleasure of God.

RB Mr Raven has a remark that, as Son, He comes out to express God; and as Son of man He takes everything up on behalf of man, FER vol p69. When He came out from God, He had in His heart the whole declaration of God, and that the Father would be revealed. How wonderful that is; He was acting for God in a scene where God had been disowned but He was going to God in order to establish the whole system of things and bring us into it. He is there on our behalf. Is that

not a great comfort to us at the present time? He has gone back to establish new ground for man so that there is a place for you and me in it - "part with me".

PM I am very thankful that you say that because it is important for us to lay hold of, that the Son of God is really Christ on behalf of God, but as Son of man He is there on behalf of men and that is a very wide thought. It includes not only the saints of this dispensation but it involves what God will secure throughout every dispensation, and it is all held by the Son of man. Wonderful blessed Man that He is! And here in His lowly grace He lays aside His garments. Think of the One who we are speaking of, the Creator of the universe, Son of God, glorious Son of man: He lays aside His garments and washes the feet of the disciples. Why? Because He loved them so much that He wanted them to be at home in the scene in which He was going to be at home, and He wanted them to be here in the testimony in purity as He was here in testimony but He was intrinsically holy.

RJF Does the Lord loving His own, loving them to the end, fit with going to God? It speaks here of "having loved his own who were in the world" - but then He loved them to the end. As the note implies, it goes beyond the realm of time (note a). I wondered if that fits with going to God. It shows the immense strength of divine love, and what He did in washing the feet of His disciples was one of the steps of loving them to the end, do you think?

PM I am sure of that, and it is almost as if John would say as writing this book (as we would understand the last of the books of the Bible to be written), 'I have proved it through every circumstance': He has loved us, not only in view of keeping us calm in the scene of His rejection, as thankful as we might be for that, but He has loved us through every circumstance in order that we might be here for God with affection for God, so that the One who was His God might practically become our God.

TM Is there profit for us in the Lord's departure? In John 16 He says, "If I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you", v 7. So that the Lord's departure also involved the coming in of the Spirit.

PM How essential that was if man was to be set up for God. Priesthood involves that the believer is indwelt by the Spirit and is to be regulated by the Spirit. That is essential if there is to be a priestly state here that considers for God. I think the disciples had this sense that the

Lord Jesus was considering for God; He would leave that impression on the company and that there was to be a company here that was considering for God. If you walk around with bare feet you soon pick up some dust, but the Lord served that everything that may be picked up of the character of the world, might be removed that we might be in liberty in serving God.

Fraserburgh

27th April 2019

Key to Initials:

R Bain, Buckie; D A Brown, Grangemouth; D G Coull, Aberdeen;
R J Cumming, Aberdeen; J Drummond, Aberdeen; R J Flowerdew,
Sunbury; P Hogan, Grangemouth; J Laurie, Brechin; T W Lock,
Edinburgh; B W Lovie, Aberdeen; E J Mair, Buckie; T Mair, Cullen;
P Martin, Colchester; A D Munro, Grangemouth; J Webster,
Fraserburgh

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE

Ephesians 1: 14,15; 2: 18; 3: 14-21; 6: 17,18

WMP Following on our impressions at the Supper this morning, my primary thought is what comes into chapters 2 and 3 of this epistle. I think we had a distinct sense of the operations of the Holy Spirit in order that we might be found in full response to the heart of the Lord Jesus, and then what was for the Father in the response of sons who serve Him. We get this reference to one Spirit, "access by one Spirit". We might enquire why it is put that way, and then speak with one another about what is the import of being strengthened by the Father's Spirit, that is *His* Spirit, the Father "of whom every family is named"; the Spirit of that One giving power for all that follows in that section.

I would be interested in what the brethren would say about the first reference to the Spirit here where we read in chapter 1. In this first chapter, we have, "Blessed be the God and Father" (v 3); we are introduced to the spiritual blessing that comes to us from the Father. Then we have "the Beloved; in whom we have redemption" (v 6, 7), "the Christ" in whom all things are to be headed up, v 10. And then the Spirit: you get an impression of the completeness of all that is set out for us here. So this passage cannot end without the introduction of the Holy Spirit, otherwise how could these thoughts be effectuated in us? How would we come into the practical gain of all that is set out for us were it not for the service and power and sealing of the Holy Spirit?

AAC I would like to enquire more as to the sealing, but I was thinking of what was in the Lord's heart, and how He knew the importance of the Spirit coming; He knew what the effect of that power and coming would be. That was something that man naturally could not understand - why was the Lord going to go? But the Lord said, "if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you", John 16: 7. I was thinking as you were speaking that we might have some apprehension of what was in the Lord's own heart when He said those words - He knew the fulness of what we have entered into today, and the fulness of what we are brought into by the Spirit. The Lord Jesus knew all about that; these souls did not perhaps quite understand the fulness of what was explained to them, but when the Spirit had come they began to realise the greatness of what is there and is opened up.

WMP I think what you say is most helpful and we might perhaps just refer to these verses in John as amplifying the thought. The Lord Jesus

was known to them and He had made the Father known. I like what you say, that there could not be completeness in what was going to be for the divine pleasure without this matter of the Comforter coming. Which part of John did you have in mind?

AAC Chapter 16: 7: “But I say the truth to you, It is profitable for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you”. We often take account of His asking the Father but this passage draws out the Lord's own activity to send the Spirit to us that that which is of Himself may be seen, that which is for His own glory and the Father may be released.

WMP So, following on from what is said, is that why it is the Holy Spirit of *promise*, because the Lord had spoken of Him?

DAB I was wondering after we read in Luke 24 yesterday about the purpose of Luke's writing. He touches on what we are saying: they were to await “the promise of my Father” (Luke 24: 49); and that came to me when you spoke about the way in which the Father and the Spirit are brought into Ephesians 1. He says they would be “clothed with power from on high”, that is from the world into which He was going; “on high” is the world into which He was received up.

WMP So that is important. As John 14 and 15 bring out, the Spirit comes from that realm, coming from a realm where there is an exalted and glorified Man.

DAB As the Lord closes His relationships with His own on earth, He has all this in His mind; but the Spirit would have to come before they could know it. He has, as it were, let out the kernel of it, “the promise of my Father”. And there is a connection too with the gospel, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name”, v 48. His heart was full of the things that have been opened up now that the Spirit has come.

WMP These persons then would have been in the expectation of that. The Lord served them in the forty days, did He not, to introduce them to what was to come following His departure? We have His receiving up in Acts 1, and it strikes me that there was a period of ten days in which we might say three divine Persons were in holy communion in that realm; but all having in view that the Spirit would come and seal persons.

RDP He is spoken of here as “the Holy Spirit of promise”. He is

referred to in the note to John 14: 16 as like a solicitor, someone who takes up our affairs. He helps us in all the breakdown and weakness; but here it is “the Holy Spirit of promise” - this part of the chapter speaks of things that have not yet happened - or some of it has not. I wondered if the whole of the Spirit's service carries with it that side of promise and what is positive. It is victorious it seems; “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” suggests a bright end to the whole operation.

WMP I fully go with that. So the fulness of what is expressed in Ephesians 1 awaits us, but the present enjoyment of it, the appreciation of it, the Spirit helps us about that.

RDP I think He maintains it through the whole of the Christian pathway. This glorious prospect is going to happen, and we have “the Holy Spirit of promise”; that is the seal. We go through trials, and we shall go through trials, but we have to see the operations of “the Holy Spirit of promise”. We have a hymn,

We expect a bright tomorrow' (Hymn 86).

He is with us as “the Holy Spirit of promise” the whole way through.

DAB When God makes a promise, He commits Himself to do everything that will be needed to bring it about.

WMP Yes, I think that is important to understand, that the divine promise is not anything like the promises of this world. There is a divine certainty about them.

DAB Well, just to use the example in the passage you have read in chapter 2, Paul discusses the cleavage between Jew and Gentile. There is the “wall of enclosure”, and Christ Himself has broken down that wall. Now there is no difference, so that we *both* have access. I was impressed with that this morning, that before the passage mentions access, it brings all those who will have that ingress together; annulling all the differences that led some to think that they had a way in and others not. Christ has broken down the wall of partition, and if that meant the cross and the shedding of His blood, He was committed to that; God was committed through His promise to making a way through the veil.

WMP So the Holy Spirit of promise must have in view that being maintained; souls do not just have a mental apprehension of it, but it becomes substantially formed in persons.

DAB It is a matter of experience; in other words, if you take this way, you will find it has been made. You are not testing whether or not it has been made; you will find it has been.

RDP And if in any sense we touch the service of God - I speak advisedly in saying that - it is not just us few; if we touch the service of God everybody is there. There is no thought of weakness or what is partial. It is not that we are unthankful for the few who may be present; but if you touch the service of God, the Holy Spirit of promise gives the full thought. Is that right?

WMP It is, yes. A brother mentioned that this morning in response to the Lord Jesus, that we are part of a whole thought. It is not the few here; we enter into what belongs to the whole.

JES Would you say what the Holy Spirit would engage us with when it speaks of Him as “the earnest of our inheritance”? It brings in the full thought of what God had in His mind for us.

WMP I think so. It seems to me that if we are to prove the “access by one Spirit”, and the Father's Spirit is to strengthen us inwardly, it must be first in this character that we know Him, making things good, all that is in the purpose of God, the knowledge of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the knowledge of the Beloved, the One who is the Christ; all that becomes effectual in our souls.

JES I was thinking of that verse in Genesis where it speaks of Abraham's servant, “the eldest of his house, who ruled over all that he had”, Gen 24: 2. It may link with your thought as to the greatness of the Holy Spirit and what He has under His hand. Everything that God has in His mind he would have under His hand and would show to us. Would that link with this verse here as to “the earnest of our inheritance”?

WMP That is very good. I like what you say, that what the Spirit brings to us are not partial thoughts; He has got the whole. This section in Ephesians gives us the scope and glory of divine thoughts and divine operations; and the Spirit says that He can make all that good for us.

AAC Is it characteristic of divine revelation that we know each of the three Persons of the Godhead in different ways? We have referred to the Holy Spirit as the promise, opening up these great things and helping us in the enjoyment of them. We also speak of Him as the Comforter, looking after our affairs. There is One who dwells in us, helping us in a practical way; who will be there in an eternal day in the

Father's house where there is nowhere greater to be. Likewise, we call upon the Father for simple, practical things; and yet it is the same One in whose house we shall have liberty of expression. The Lord Jesus has taken up our individual cases, and not only individually, but every aspect of our lives and pathway; and yet He is in glory above and our Object eternally. It seems to be characteristic of divine revelation that, in each of the ways in which God has made Himself known to us, He comes very close to us; and yet that closeness is maintained as we are sealed. And He is the One who helps us into that inheritance, leaving all that earthly stuff behind - it is all gone and forgotten in one sense - as we enter into the greatness of His thoughts, which is what we have here in this chapter.

WMP That is helpful. So it says, "in whom also, having believed". That was your point: it is a starting point for us.

AAC Exactly. I have been impressed recently with the importance of that, the way believing comes into everything. It is a starting point, and what we have here in a sense is the end, this glorious doxology. But it is the Spirit Himself who is the One who seals us.

DAB My father used to say when I was young that the Earnest is greater than the inheritance.

WMP If you would just open that up for us, please.

DAB The Earnest is a divine Person; it is not simply what God *has done*: it is God Himself. The Holy Spirit is not just a sample; we need to get away from that idea. Someone might want to make a new dress and they ask the warehouse to send a sample, but they cannot make the dress out of the sample that is sent. Sometimes we approach spiritual things like that, as if we have just got enough to see what they look like. But the Spirit gives us a completely different idea. He is fuller and greater even than what we will enter into, and therefore spiritually speaking (I do not mean in actuality when faith gives way), the fullness of the inheritance can be enjoyed.

WMP I think that is most helpful to see. So in this passage we have the greatness of the three divine Persons presented to us. It is all from the side of purpose; this is a divine provision that there might be glory to God in the assembly in Christ Jesus.

DAB We might think about what the Lord says about the Spirit; He says three things in John 14: 17: "ye know him" - that is objective as the

note says; “for he abides with you, **and** shall be in you”. Believers are conscious of the Spirit within, but we cannot reduce the Spirit to our measure; and I wonder if that idea of “with you” allows in our minds that there is Someone who is too great for the compass of our measure, but can nevertheless associate us with all His own things, the things that He has brought.

WMP I go with that. So what you bring up is as to the indwelling Spirit - He has come to dwell in believers, but the assembly is a vessel of praise. It is a vessel of testimony too, and that is by the Spirit.

My thought was to get some sense of the Spirit's service, and first in this matter of access. What had to be broken down was this wall of partition and the differences. What is applied there is the cross; so you might say we are in exalted territory here. The cross was necessary that all the differences - even those that exist today - might be taken out of the way.

DAB I was struck with that this morning. It was not part of the plan that Moses had, or Solomon's plan, but the Jews erected a “wall of partition” in the temple court (I understand that bits of it still survive) and Gentiles were not allowed to cross it. It was a man-made barrier. Much greater still, the entrance into the holiest was closed; the veil was in the pattern and was therefore a completely different kind of barrier, but there it was. And God has swept all this away, and now presents His true thought of the veil: it may exclude man in the flesh, but it admits the man in Christ. That is very precious is it not?

WMP It is, and that is exactly what we have here.

DAB And all the things that created differences have been annulled at huge cost to God. We have not paid anything towards that annulment; we have not ransomed ourselves from that bondage: “the blood of his cross” is the means by which God has done that. It is preparatory to our access.

WMP I wonder then if that is why it is “one Spirit”, because we go into together in that sense in the power of that one Spirit.

DAB And the body, the assembly, is the most remarkable creature thing that God has ever made. You might say that to preserve something in the nation of Israel was remarkable enough, but “out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5: 9), every social stratification, even differences of gender, all these things, He “has

made both one” to the point where “one Spirit” can be identified with it.

PFE In the verses we have read there is the thought of being rooted; it is not something from which we can be taken away.

WMP Yes, it is something very stable. So, in order that that might be so, in order that we might be rooted and founded in love, it seems to me that we need to know the Spirit's service in this particular way as the Father's Spirit, and strengthening in the inner man. We may come to that in a moment. But we ought to go with what we are speaking about, that in order for us to go in in unity in the service of God, it has to be in the power of one Spirit. I like the point that He is able to identify Himself with the oneness there is in the company because all that separated us naturally has been taken out of the way. It is most attractive.

DAB Although we often speak about the rending of the veil in the temple, actually, in the pattern given to David in Samuel, there was no reference to a veil - there were doors. The rending of the veil in Herod's temple revealed that God was not in the Jewish system any more, but He was coming out at the cross; and coming out in all His love, and the grace of which we sang, His readiness to forgive. He must want this very much indeed!

RDP This thought of both having access is preceded by the idea of reconciliation: “reconcile both in one body to God by the cross, having by it slain the enmity”. This is not just an agreement between the two warring parties. It is that He “might reconcile both in one body to God by the cross”. You could put those two words together, reconciliation and peace, and it is with God. Normally, if you get an agreement between nations, you have to something that polices it to make sure everyone complies with it; but this is reconciled - each and to God. Reconciliation is a great matter because it brings in the pleasure of God; reconciliation is for God. He has given us access by the Spirit. How can we know that? It is very difficult for us to throw off the idea of warring parties reaching some kind of agreement, but in reconciliation the gulf is not only bridged; it is removed.

WMP I think that helps our thought very much. So it says here, “through him”, that is Christ Himself serving, “we both have access by one Spirit to the Father”. What do you understand by access?

AAC I suppose it is the realisation of the place that has become ours because of what the Lord Jesus has done. We are enabled without any of the history - whatever it might be has all gone - and we are made

suitable then to express what is due to God in answer to His love. We are set at liberty; to me this opens up the whole of what God is looking for: that remarkable vessel which is now able to respond in liberty. It completes the matter. I thought what was said as to being rooted is quite key here because each stage is complete. At the start, we had what was “sealed”, but as we work through the whole thing, the Spirit's influence is such that what is there is complete: even today the answer to the Lord Jesus in the assembly is not a partial response, it is a full response, although we struggle to comprehend what it will be when all those who love Him will be there.

WMP I like your thought that we go all the way in. When you fly somewhere, you go to the airport and then you go through security and into the lounge, and then you have to be called to your gate before you get on to the plane. But there is no such thought with access - we have immediate entrance in the power of one Spirit to the Father's presence. We might ask if we are conscious of that: we are actually led into that area of favour.

DAB We have been taught before about the glad tidings of place. Reconciliation means that both parties are put on to ground on which neither of them were before; and that ground is in the holiest. We can understand why Paul says this is a mystery; nobody imagined such a thing.

What raised the wondrous thought ... ? (Hymn 92).

WMP What you have said is interesting because that goes on to what he says in chapter 3, “ye can understand my intelligence in the mystery of the Christ”. And then he shows us how he got that intelligence. It was being “strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man”, and he got that intelligence.

DAB The point about a mystery is that you can know it if you have the key, so that you can unlock the mystery. But there is more than that I can see now: you do not only need the key, you need the *power*. The door is open, but as John found in Revelation, it is one thing to see in, but to go in we need the Spirit.

WMP That is my thought; so how could we know in a full way all that follows at the end of chapter 3, Christ dwelling in our hearts, without the Spirit strengthening inwardly, the Father's Spirit inwardly? So we can see that that is the realm of the Spirit's operations. It is not in our mental capacity but in the affections of the saints.

DAB And Paul's intelligence included that, because he prayed for this very thing: he asked the Father to strengthen them that they might enter into it. It was not enough for them to see it.

BHM I was looking at this “rooted and founded in love”, and thinking about the order of the words. You start by being rooted and then you get the foundation. You might think that something would be set up, and then you start building and establishing it; but here you have everything that you need, the nutrients, stability, support.

WMP Yes, it is good to bring the organic thought into it. To be rooted in love means you are drawing from it. We cannot be in this spiritual realm and be maintained by our natural thoughts. We can only be maintained as we draw on all that is in Christ and His love, His grace, His support. Being rooted is organic, and what results from that is life. So if a plant is rooted properly, it demonstrates life; and then you are suggesting that in being founded there is something very stable with persons, so that they are able to be in this realm of divine praise.

RDP We often refer to the idea of rooted as agricultural, and the other is construction, as if they are two illustrations so that the brethren can understand it; but I think this is one expression - “rooted and founded”. I think it is founded *and* rooted: there is a solid foundation; and at the same time it is rooted, it is growing, it is moving. I think “rooted and founded” are not two alternative suggestions to help us in intelligence: “rooted and founded” is one thing.

WMP I think that is most helpful.

RDP If we talk about natural, human things, like this meeting room here, if you say it is rooted as well as founded, you would start worrying because you cannot have one with the other; but in divine things you have the two things together.

AAC And part of this is that “rooted” suggests a supply. It is not something that causes problems as it would with this meeting room, this is a supply that maintains that structure.

RDP If you have a building like this room here, you keep the two ideas separate. If there was something rooted and growing underneath this place, you could have problems; but being “rooted and founded” in the way this is expressed here - we are not talking about human logic - we are talking about something that is solid, founded, safe and yet also living.

JES I was just going to say what you did, that it is living; is that the glory of Christianity? And to be able to apprehend the breadth and length and depth and height, it is something with a living supply, and a constant flow of blessing from God as we increase our apprehension of it.

WMP I am sure of that. The operation of the Spirit in this way is to quicken us; He quickens our affections in relation to God the Father. Hezekiah could say, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee" (Isa 38: 19); so it is that expression of life that is sustained by the Holy Spirit.

DAB And the veil is a Man: we have access "through the veil, that is, his flesh". Heb 10: 20. As I understand it, that is a reference to the Lord in resurrection; He is a living Man. It says, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus" - which is the same thought we have in Ephesians 2 - "the new and living way which he has dedicated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh". I think we have been taught that a reference to His flesh and blood would refer to what He was here as Man; but He is still a Man, so this is access into the holiest of all through a living Person. In the tabernacle, the most beautiful thing in the structure was the veil, and it is as if God looked at it and He thought, 'I can give access, even if I want perfection'. That is a wonderful secret in God's heart, and that perfection has been found in a Man in His presence.

WMP So you can see that what He has in His presence in this responsive scene must speak entirely of what that Man is; so there must be access through Him.

DAB And the temple, the place where God's service is, is living, is it not? There is no concrete, or stones or bricks; it is all living. It says, "**ye** are the living God's temple", 2 Cor 6: 16.

RDP We made reference to two areas: there is what is within the veil, but the believer also has the pressures of ordinary life, the meetings, and so on. What is within the veil is not a development; it is final. Our lives are a matter of progress and development, but what is within the veil is entirely complete. And the believer by the Spirit has access into this place. Men in the present time are looking for something, constantly searching; but the believer is within the veil.

DAB Mr Ernest Palmer who was local here and knew the river a bit said Hebrews 6: 19 refers to a particular kind of anchor. It is not an anchor to hold station; it is an anchor that is used to navigate. It is

carried out in front of the ship, so that when the chain is wound in, the ship is pulled towards the anchor - a kedge anchor. That is what we need, and what this reading is intended to promote. We have that anchor within the veil; it connects to us in the world in which we are, and it draws us out of it to that place of God's purpose. The Spirit serves us in that way, does He?

WMP In the way of power; so to use the analogy, to draw that anchor in requires power; there is power in the inner man.

AAC I was thinking that all that we have been speaking of is part of the "in order that" which we have here. It takes us back to what we were saying as to John 16. We have here "in order that ye may be fully able". We have that anchor which we are drawing on - I suppose that drawing is also from the divine side; but it is in order that we should be able to touch that which we have been speaking of.

WMP Why then is it His Spirit? It is said to be the Spirit of the Father "of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named". Why is it *His* Spirit that is referenced particularly?

AAC I do not know, but I always enjoy the way that God does everything Himself. It is His own; it is His Son; it is Himself, it is His Spirit. He does not delegate; it is Himself; all that we have is the result of His work, it is His own Spirit.

WMP It is.

DAB Mr A J Gardiner used to say that the Father's Spirit helps us to love the Son like the Father loves Him.

WMP Thank you for that: it is to bring us into His appreciation of all that has been found in Christ. So that if it dwells by faith in my heart, it must be according to that.

DAB The Spirit of God's Son is the one whereby we cry, "Abba Father" (Gal 4: 6); so in that way, He helps us in response to the Father; but the Spirit of the Father gives in our hearts the place that Christ has in the Father's.

JES Does that link with what has been said a few times recently in fellowship meetings, that if someone was able to give us his spirit, we would know his affections, his thoughts and feelings? The fact that, in His greatness, God has been able to give us His Spirit means that we can understand His thoughts and His feelings, and His affections - not

only as towards His own Son, but as to His thoughts in purpose.

DAB Yes, it was Mr Eddie Walkinshaw who said that - as he said, if I could do that, you would live in my life. And that is what we have here, living in the life of God, with Christ in the place that the Father has given Him.

WMP I am really enjoying this thought, arriving at that appreciation of Christ as the Father appreciates Him. Why is He presented in this way here, as the Father “of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named”? It is the Father in that connection.

DAB Well, there are many families, they represent different stories in God's ways, and to quote him again, Mr A J Gardiner said he thought the Father had named every family according to what He saw of Christ in it.

WMP So that really confirms our thought as to it. It seems that we ourselves are drawn into the scope of all that is in the Father's heart for Himself. So while this is assembly response in its fulness, we are also made conscious that there is a much wider thought of glory to God.

DAB I do not think we should lose sight of that; and actually as to the rapture we should have that in our minds - “those that are the Christ's” (1 Cor 15: 23) is a very wide idea, is it not? It is the threshold across which that whole redeemed multitude pass into eternal conditions.

WMP It is.

PFE Do you think this “according to” shows the real delight to the Father's heart to have this?

WMP Yes, in chapter 1 it is all “according to” is all from the divine side. Here it is “according to the riches of his glory”. Give us a bit more about your thought in it.

PFE It speaks of knowing the love of the Christ; it is to be the portion of every believer to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge.

WMP So that drinking into the cup, and the remembrance of the Lord Jesus after His coming in among us, and prior to entering into the service of God as we say, is intended to give us the sense of that, and the fulness of divine love towards us, and that expands then; the Spirit helps to expand that thought in our minds.

RDP In this reference to the Father, it is not *by* whom they are named, it is “of whom every family” is named. We have often wondered about the families, heavenly and earthly, and we know very little about them; but it is “of whom”, as if there is something of the character of what the Father is is represented in variety.

WMP Yes. We had yesterday “the Father who is of heaven” (Luke 11: 13), that is, the characteristic: would it be the same idea?

DAB I think that is right: something of His character is imparted, is it not? That is one of the wonderful things about adoption. I think Mr Walkinshaw also said that an adopted child never receives the father's spirit, but we do. We can say we are of the Father.

AAC Have you something for us as to the sword of the Spirit?

WMP I hesitated whether to read it or not because there is a certain glory and fulness about what we arrive at. The Spirit as the Earnest means that we are to prove these things; the Spirit's desire is that we might experience access by one Spirit to the Father, through Christ; and that we might be strengthened, know His strengthening power. I suppose that we come out from that realm of privilege - we have been there this morning, at the start of a week; but the Spirit is available in this sense, so that we can use the Spirit intelligently - use the sword against ourselves. Is it a reference to self-judgment? That is always necessary if we are to come up next Lord's day in the oneness that has been suggested; we need to be applying self-judgment.

AAC So this would speak of the way in which what we have been taking account of is preserved.

WMP Yes, that is a good word.

AAC I am glad that you touch on it because it is essential for us; otherwise we reach it and we fall away. That is not God's thought. Whilst we cannot remain as we were this morning, God's thought is that we are able still to touch that. We are not prevented from going in to worship before God. He would have us maintained in that. There is a stark contrasting idea in the sword of the Spirit which is in a sense alarming, but it is necessary because of what is within if these things are to be maintained. But the Spirit has that authority.

WMP What is here is a protective thought; it is what is to protect us, and it protects us from what is within too: from what is within and of man.

DAB There are spiritual powers of wickedness in heavenly places; that is what this panoply is for. I think it has been said - I believe it was Mr Stoney's exercise - that Satan is especially against believers enjoying what we have spoken of, eg vol 3 p97; vol 8 p174. And the Spirit is "against the flesh", Gal 5: 17. I think it is very fine that the power to meet that is in the word, God's word. It might be a word of Scripture, or is it more the word we might get in communion with the Spirit?

WMP I would go with that thought. We come together for example for a meeting for ministry, and the expectation is that we will hear God's word. And in a reading also we would hear God's word.

RDP What is the setting of the panoply of God here? It would secure everything; the whole aspect of what lies in the Spirit. I wondered if this is a particular aspect. Of course the devil is attacking Christians on this earth everywhere, but I wondered if the special aspect of the panoply of God here is in relation to the whole spiritual aspect. We have references to "the artifices of the devil" (v 11) - I was thinking of what has been said that "our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies", v 12. I am asking about the particular aspect of this panoply; other scriptures speak of a similar thing.

WMP You will remember that the children of Israel crossed into the land, but there was opposition there; there were enemies there that had to be overcome. They had to be exercised about it and counting on God.

RDP I met a brother who had left (not recently), and he was expressing how he had gone from this company and that company, and I asked if he did not miss anything. He said, 'I never found anywhere where the truth of the heavenly and spiritual is known'. I wondered if in a way that is a particular thrust of the devil, to remove these things from us; it is not to take away our faith, but to remove the aspect we have been speaking about from the Christian's experience.

WMP I think that. It should sober us that those are the circumstances we are in here, but there is a power available.

DAB I am struck by what you said about this referring to self-judgment; I had not heard that before. If we speak of Israel in the land, they did not have too much trouble with the enemies, but they lost the energy and the desire; and the sword of the Spirit would keep that quick

and lively with us, do you think?

WMP That is very helpful. It was when they departed from the divine thought and looked to their own strength and power.

DAB And they lost desire too; they fell short of God's thought.

WMP Yes, that is good.

JES There is a reference in a note (/ v 17) to what is imperative; I wondered if that was key to an exercise, that it is not as if we come up against something and we put on the panoply to meet it, but it is something we are exercised that we have to have. It is imperative because if we do not the enjoyment of everything we have which is in a spiritual realm will be taken away from us, and our enjoyment of Christianity will go.

WMP Well, we often say that when the enemy comes in it is the top shoots that go first; that is, what is new and fresh and living in our affections for God. It is his first point of attack with us. We are to be encouraged that we can enter into what is spiritual, and then we have inward power in the Spirit to deal with all that is within ourselves that might hinder that remaining fresh with us.

LONDON

19th May 2019

List of initials -

Local unless otherwise shown

DABurr; AACroot; P F Eagle; B H Morris; W M Patterson, Glasgow;
R D Plant, Birmingham; J E Smith, Strood

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

Walter M Brown

To whom, Lord, shall we go? for Thou hast sought us,
Cleansed us and claimed us by Thy precious blood.
How can we go away? for Thou hast taught us
That we have all in Thee, O Son of God.

To whom, Lord, shall we go? for who so tender
To help and heal and meet our every need?
To Thee we yield our hearts in full surrender -
O blessed Saviour, we are Thine indeed!

We cannot go away, for as we hear Thee
Words of eternal life so richly flow.
Thou holy One of God, we would be near Thee -
O Jesus, Lord, to whom then shall we go?

1951

From 'Words of Truth'