

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE REPROACH OF THE CHRIST

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AMcS I thought it would be helpful for us to speak together about the reproach of the Christ. We are living in days when there is great pressure on the saints to conform to the world. There is pressure upon children to go along with the current of what is proceeding at school. There is pressure upon our sisters to conform to the fashions of this world. Our brothers are also under pressure to go along with the social world that marks the workplace. Each one of us would feel these things. There is one thing that would keep us from being conformed to the world, and that is some sense in our spirits of the reproach of the Christ. He Himself has been here. He has walked the pathway before us and there is no one who has suffered to the extent that He has suffered. Psalm 69 helps us as to His inward feelings concerning His sufferings, and there is a depth to that Psalm perhaps few of us would be able to handle. Nevertheless, there are verses from that Psalm quoted in the New Testament that help us to see that Christ is in mind, at least in some of the verses. Our Lord came here to do the will of God. As a result He was reproached all through His life, and never more so than when He hung upon the cross. The fact that the Lord Jesus hung upon the cross was shameful in itself. He "endured the cross, having despised the shame", Heb 12: 2. Think of the end of our Lord's life, how they nailed Him to a cross and gambled for His clothes as He hung there. However, there was more than that. Men cast their reproaches upon our Lord as crucified in weakness, 2 Cor 13: 4.

Peter does not appear to have been near the cross. In his first epistle he speaks of being a witness of the Lord's sufferings (1 Pet 5: 1), but there is no mention in the gospels that he was present by the cross. Peter had not been able to bear the reproach of the Christ, Matt 26: 69-75. Yet, in his epistles, we see how Peter was recovered and how he would help us to accept the reproach of the Christ. It is clear that it is only as the Spirit is free within us that we can accept that it is a blessed thing to be reproached in the name of Christ. If the Spirit is not free within us, if we are marked by the self-confidence that Peter was marked by, then very soon we will be marked by the cowardice that was

seen in him and we will not think reproach is a blessed thing. However, reproach *is* a blessed thing, and there is compensation for those who accept being reproached in the name of Christ, in that the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon them. We might get help as to what is involved in that.

In Hebrews 11, we see a man who had a good upbringing, at least for the first three months of his life, and received care from his sister in Pharaoh's palace. Moses was also skilled in all the wisdom of Egypt and had all its riches. There came a point in Moses's life where he had to make a decision. It may well be that many of us are at that crossroads today. There is a decision to be made. We would seek to encourage one another to make the right decision, because the recompense is far greater than the cost, the recompense is far greater than the reproach. Moses found, and will find in the day to come, that the recompense is far greater than anything that the treasure of Egypt could ever give.

Finally, in chapter 13 we find that our Lord was crucified "without the gate". His death involves that we have a place in the holiest. We also have an altar, which involves the privileges of Christianity. How wonderful that is! But if we are in the gain of what it is to be inside the veil, and if we fully appreciate the blessings of all that is connected with the altar, our great desire will be to, "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach".

ECB It is a matter on which we used to speak much more than we do now. The tendency to become accommodated to the general environment in which we are is something against which we need defence. It is interesting that in the case of Moses, in particular, the word of God and direction of God was enough for Him. We used to hear a lot more about it in the preaching of the gospel.

AMcS I trust that we will touch on that side of things because it is my conviction that recovery for us all, as individuals, will come as a full and true gospel is preached and accepted by us.

ECB The scriptures that you have read carry the idea that the reproach of the Christ is its own reward.

AMcS Yes. What makes it special is the fact that He suffered. That is what was in mind. There are many exercises that the brethren carry as to conformity to the world amongst us, but the answer is Christ. I thought we should start with Him and bring Him before our hearts that it might rally the saints to Him and then, as rallied to Him, we can accept

the reproach that is connected with Him.

ECB It is of interest in the scripture in Matthew that it is the Son of God who suffered this. It is the Son of God, as if someone as great as that could endure all this for us.

AMcS The fact that He is the Son of God includes that He is able to help us with our infirmities. It might naturally go against the grain for us to accept reproach but He is Son of God and He has passed this way before and He is able to intercede on our behalf that we might be maintained in relation to bearing His reproach.

DAB We had a word a few years back about the dream that Joseph's butler had relating to the pressing of the grapes. What was observed was that there are things about the Lord Jesus that we would not know if He had not suffered. They are among the things that we love Him for the most. What was coming out in Him we need to take on.

AMcS It is the fact that our Lord has suffered that is particularly in Peter's mind in his first epistle. In the way the Lord responded to reproach, He has left us a model as to how to suffer, 1 Pet 2: 21. The Lord Jesus would therefore be the lever in our souls to help us to be prepared to accept reproach.

DAB What Peter goes on to refer to as to what He suffered we cannot enter into: He bore our sins. I like what you say, it is *how* He suffered.

AMcS Peter himself was full of self-confidence. That can mark any of us. When they came to take the Lord Jesus in the garden Peter took the sword and cut off the ear of the bondman of the high priest. That kind of bravado is not what is in mind at all. Peter then went from one extreme to the other. He denied Christ. The great thing is to have our eye not on ourselves but upon our Lord.

In Matthew 27 a person who was apparently thought to be disreputable was pressed to carry the cross. Simon of Cyrene was the kind of person whom they would compel to carry the cross of Christ. We know from Mark's Gospel that there was a result from that. Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus, apparently believers; so the worst plans of men come to nothing, Mark 15: 21. That is the character of the first part of the section that we have read. Everything was done to shame the Lord Jesus to the point of stripping Him and putting Him on a cross and casting lots for His garments. Think of the indignity of that. Had they said nothing to Him the whole scene, in itself, was marked by shame which the Lord despised. However, there was more than that;

men actively reproached the Lord Jesus at His weakest moment.

ECB Does it not say prophetically, "Reproach hath broken my heart" (Ps 69: 20); and yet He went on?

AMcS The Psalms help us as to the inward feelings of Christ as He passed through sufferings. I would have liked to have read Psalm 69, but you feel you need to go carefully with these Psalms because even part of a verse might refer to Christ, and the other part to the Jewish remnant. There are parts of Psalm 69 that are quoted in the New Testament. It was the zeal of God's house that devoured Christ, Psalm 69: 9; John 2: 17. It is because of that, that our Lord Jesus was reproached, but He did not feel it in a stoical way. He felt it in His heart that persons were reproaching God, and those reproaches were falling upon Him. He knows how we feel about these things. He understands.

ECB I often think of the verse in John, "as the Father has commanded me, thus I do. Rise up, let us go hence" (John 14: 31), and He was going to the cross.

AMcS He was. He knew what He was going to bear when He got there, and the reality of His manhood was such that He would feel it, and feel it as none other could feel it. The sufferings of Christ involved the delicacy of His humanity: He would feel suffering in a way that we could not quite feel it.

EFW Would something of the depth of His feelings be seen in Gethsemane because He knew exactly what He had to go through? No one else knew, and His tears are very moving.

AMcS At Gethsemane, our Lord had the totality of all that the cross would involve before Him, including the forsaking of God. From that point onwards, things change as to the history of our Lord Jesus, if we can say that in a reverent way, because now it was man's hour and the power of darkness, Luke 22: 53. We do not find Him now passing through the midst of the people as He did in Luke 4: 30. We find Him being delivered up to the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus was mocked. Think of what He suffered from the soldiers in the praetorium, the spitting and mocking and beating. After that, He went to the cross and hung there as a spectacle to the whole world. Think of the shame of it. That is what our Lord went through.

QP I wondered whether it links on with your line that in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, where we see in particular the influence of the world on the saints, he speaks of "the word of the cross" (1 Cor 1: 18), and

then, "For I did not judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and *him* crucified", 1 Cor 2: 2.

AMcS The word of the cross involved what was expressed in the apostle as he went to Corinth. Paul was well able to take the Corinthians on their own ground intellectually, but he determined not to do that. He was not going to use in Corinth what he had learnt at the feet of Gamaliel, Acts 22: 3. Paul was determined to bring in the reality of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

DAB What you have read and what you have suggested shows that the hours from the third to the sixth have a glory of their own. It has very much laid hold of me that I trust the perfection of what was seen in those three hours, because if there had been any doubt then, how could the darkness that followed possibly have been contemplated?

AMcS The first three hours involved the height of what the Lord suffered at the hands of men.

DAB It impressed me that Satan's object was to taint His offering, to cast some shadow on His spirit.

AMcS We see particularly in Luke the way that our Lord dealt with reproach when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 34. That is the line that ought to lay hold of us, not the self-confident bravado that takes some kind of joy in being reproached in a natural sense. We have to be careful as to what we say, but there are professing Christians who seem to take some pride in acting like that. That is not the thought at all. The thought is that the Lord felt it and felt it keenly, but in His spirit He was able to react as only He in its fulness could react.

HAH Mr Gardiner used to tell us about Elijah's offering, 1 Kings 18: 33,34. They were to put the water on, and do it the second time, and the third time. He said that the Lord felt the power of what He suffered in the Sanhedrim, and then before Pilate and the soldiers, and then the reproaches of the cross itself - "Do it the third time".

AMcS There is something in the forsaking that is beyond us (while we will be eternally thankful for it). It is something that we cannot comprehend, although as accepting it by faith we owe our very being to it. Yet we can take full account of what led up to that point. Paul could say, "I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in his flesh", Col 1: 24. Our love ebbs and flows. Perhaps we were able to bear reproach last year, perhaps not this year. The only thing that will help

us is the fact that our Lord went that way first, and He will support us in it.

JW Men sought to humiliate the Lord here but He "humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross", Phil 2: 8. The Lord deliberately went this way, knowing what was coming upon Him.

AMcS Yes; particularly from the Mount of Transfiguration. "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9: 51), knowing all that would befall Him there. There was nothing that took our Lord by surprise. He knew what man would do to Him, but He went forward. Thank God for that!

RMB In connection with the verse you quoted in Psalm 69, I notice that the first part of it, "the zeal of thy house hath devoured me" (v 9), is something that the disciples remembered at the time when the Lord Jesus claims the temple; but the second part, "the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me", is not quoted until much later by the apostle Paul in Romans 15: 3.

AMcS What the Lord did in John 2, which impressed the disciples in connection with Psalm 69, is really the reason why man awarded to Him the cross. It was because the Lord "published righteousness in the great congregation" (Psalm 40: 9), that man awarded Him the cross. In Romans 15: 3, Paul mentions in connection with not pleasing ourselves, the other part of Psalm 69 which you quote. No ordinary man accepted the cross like Paul accepted it. It is seen particularly in 1 Corinthians 4 where Paul refers to the apostles being set forth as "a spectacle to the world", 1 Cor 4: 9. We also see in the second epistle all that Paul went through as he bore "about in his body the dying of Jesus", 2 Cor 4: 5-12. I feel tested in saying these things but Paul was qualified to mention that verse in Psalm 69.

RMB I wondered whether that thought, that the reproaches of them that reproach God should fall upon Christ, was something which the apostles came into the understanding of later through thinking about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. Do you think the understanding of that was the fruit of their prayerful reflections afterwards?

AMcS Yes. There was no one quite like the apostle Paul who followed the Lord in that pathway. When he was converted it was said of him that he would be shown the things that he would suffer for the Lord's name, Acts 9: 16. As reflecting upon that, Paul never became bitter or introspective. He just accepted that if a man is going to be here for the will of God, reproach will be connected with that. We also need to

accept it. If we are going to be true Christians, as we are identified with a Man who has been reproached on the cross, we will also be reproached.

RMB In Matthew 27, the suggestion is that the Lord was there because He was not in the pathway of the will of God. The implication is that God would not have Him, because in some way He had offended or departed from God; but that verse in Psalm 69 shows us that, because Jesus was so much in the place of God here, all the venom which men directed at God Himself fell upon Him.

AMcS That is why Peter says, "take not as strange the fire of persecution which has taken place amongst you", 1 Pet 4: 12. It is the common lot of a Christian to suffer reproach. We want to encourage one another just to accept that because we all take the ground of being Christians.

DJH I was thinking of the number of times it comes in in the Galatians, "I am crucified with Christ", Gal 2: 20. If we were taken account of in that way in the world we would suffer the reproach of the Christ. Then he says, "the world is crucified to me, and I to the world", Gal 6: 14. It is in that setting there in Galatians where the religious flesh was coming in. It is something which would bear upon us.

AMcS Paul could say, "I am crucified with Christ". It did not matter what anyone said to Paul in Galatia or at Antioch in the way of reproach because he knew the reality of the cross of Christ in his life. We get upset when we suffer reproach because we really have not judged ourselves entirely. If we had judged ourselves we would accept reproach as the common lot of a Christian.

That brings us on to our next scripture. Peter in his epistles gives the experience of a man who had been adjusted. All of us can identify with Peter in the gospels. Reading his experience is like looking in a mirror. No one can look down on Peter. We look at his experience and see our own experience. We have been like Peter. We have let the Lord down. We have been hasty and impetuous. There have been times when we have been self-confident. There have been times when we have been cowardly. It is wonderful to see the way Peter got the gain of all that he passed through. The Lord appeared to him and adjusted him. Therefore, when Peter received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, he was able to bear reproach when he and the apostles were accused of being filled with new wine, Acts 2: 13. Peter never became bitter as to that. He responded in the light of "the Spirit of

glory and the Spirit of God" resting upon him, and with a new covenant ministry was able to present Christ to those who listened. I wondered whether there was a lesson for us in 1 Peter 4.

DAB Do you think he got the gain of what the Lord had said to him John 21, "Follow thou me", v 22? I am impressed that his following became more and more exact. He speaks here about following in His steps. The more exactly you follow the more you learn about the way that Jesus went.

AMcS We need to keep close to the Lord and not allow any distance to come in. We also need to ensure that our relationships with the Holy Spirit are right. Peter had been marked earlier by self-confidence (Matt 26: 35), and if we are marked by self-confidence then the Spirit will not be free within us. Peter then went from one extreme to the other in associating himself with persons in the world, Matt 26: 58. We all know from experience that the Spirit will be grieved if we associate ourselves with worldly persons and we will not be able to accept being reproached in the name of Christ. That is what they did to Peter; they said, "*thou wast with Jesus the Galilean*" (Matt 26: 69), "*thou wast with the Nazarene, Jesus*", Mark 14: 67. They were really reproaching Peter in the name of Christ and he could not accept that.

DAB He had missed a blessing by the company he chose to keep.

ECB Would you see a connection between what Peter is saying and what has already been referred to in Psalm 69 which is a Psalm almost entirely about reproach? It says, "the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me", Ps 69: 9. Now Peter says, "If ye are reproached ... the Spirit of God rest upon you".

AMcS If the Spirit is free within you and persons reproach you, you feel a real sense of blessing in your soul. However, we all know how many times we have been reproached and we have felt very sad or hurt. Maybe we think too much about ourselves. If the Spirit is free within us then we would feel as Peter states here.

ECB Being what we are, it is very difficult for us to understand that reproach is a glorifying process, but there is power from God's side as we seek to be here for Him, as Jesus was entirely. There is power from God's side to sustain us through every aspect of reproach because God is greater than man.

AMcS Exactly. You stand in the open air and as persons mock you for your preaching, you feel a certain blessing in your soul because they

are only mocking you because you are preaching Christ.

ECB If I can refer to personal experience, when I was in the army we preached in the open air in Africa twice a week in uniform, week after a week. You never felt that you were at risk, in a sense, from man.

AMcS I know we need to be careful in the days we are in, in open air preaching. We need to be careful in this city. It is a violent city, but sometimes perhaps it is not so much the danger that worries us, but rather the reproach connected with open air preaching.

ECB Perhaps it would help if you said a word as to what you understand by reproach.

AMcS I thought that the shame which the Lord despised as He endured the cross was the fact that He hung there as a spectacle. Had nobody done anything more or said anything more to Him, it was a shame in itself. But when a person reproaches you it is an active thing. Persons actively seek to say or do things to you that might tend to hurt you. The reason that they are doing it is because you are naming the Name of Christ as a Christian.

ECB "If as a Christian ...", v 16. The need to be willing to be identified as a Christian is something very much called for in the present day, with clarity as to what being a Christian is.

AMcS There are two sides we need to stress. We know what it is not to confess the Lord's name and then find ourselves in difficult circumstances like Peter. On the other hand, one might say, 'I am a Christian', and in the next breath say he is going to the football stadium, or some other worldly place of amusement. There needs to be consistency with the name of Christ.

ECB Nowadays, the newspapers do not favour Christianity, but sometimes they say of a man or a woman, that he or she was a committed Christian; they are people that are exposed to reproach.

AMcS That is the way it ought to be with all of us.

JW Does the reproach of the Christ and the Spirit go together? The Spirit is the answer to all our weaknesses which we find in ourselves. "The Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you."

AMcS It is only through the power of the Spirit that we are able to bear reproach. Otherwise we will be like Peter, either self-confident or cowardly. It is the Spirit's power that comes in, particularly in Romans 8, to help us to suffer with Christ. When we are reproached in the name

of Christ and the Spirit is free within you, there is something added that comes out in expression, the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God. It is like Paul and Silas saying to the Philippian jailor, "Do thyself no harm" (Acts 16: 28). We need to be prepared to suffer for the name of Christ, but not to be bitter as a result. We need to be able to act like Christ in such circumstances.

JMW In relation to what has been said, I notice that immediately after the Lord Himself quotes Psalm 69, "They hated me without a cause" (John 15: 25), He brings in the Spirit. He says, "But when the **Comforter** is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father, he shall bear witness concerning me" v 26. Does that confirm what is being said?

AMcS It does. The Spirit is here. He is here to maintain what is due to Christ, and for that He uses persons. If the Spirit is free within me, then I will maintain what is due to Christ in the way of testimony in the scene of reproach.

JMW I was wondering as to reproach, whether the element of hatred enters into it. The Lord Jesus Himself says, "If the world hate you, know that it has hated me before you", John 15: 18. I wondered whether the element of hatred is something that we feel very keenly in our spirits. There is active hatred against Christians, but at the same time the Spirit has come as a Comforter.

AMcS There is hatred, and as time goes on, hatred may increase, but the response to that is unconditional love, if the Spirit is free in the Christian. The Christian's love for men in their sins is not dependent on those persons' love for the Christian; it is entirely unconditional. There is forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit for men. That is what comes out in what we have in Acts 2: 13, Peter was being mocked. They were virtually saying that he was just a drunkard. Peter does not act in the same spirit in which he was treated. The Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God was resting upon him and he had a wonderful gospel message to touch those who were listening.

DJW I wondered whether Peter shows us that not only was an indelible impression of the sufferings of Christ left upon us, but the spirit in which He bore those sufferings, "who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously", 1 Pet 2: 23. Would that expression bear upon us in the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resting upon us?

AMcS It must be so. Men tried to humiliate Christ, but He had already humbled Himself, Phil 2: 8. When men did their worst to Him He never treated them in the same way. He never reviled again. There was nothing of that character with the Lord at all. He responded in unconditional love. That is what is expected of the Christian. When a Christian is reproached in the workplace or anywhere else, he does not respond in the same spirit. He meets it on the ground of the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God resting upon him.

DJW I am sure that is right. Do you think it brings out the value of the Holy Spirit that He would produce those same features in us?

AMcS Yes. We need to have the sense in our souls that if we have suffered reproach it has been for Christ. There is a tremendous blessing in our souls when that takes place that we would never have received had we not trodden that way.

DJH It is a wonderful expression, "for the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you". It seems that in this world where we are, the Holy Spirit would find somewhere where He can be complacent in that way. It is not only what it is for us, but what it is for the Holy Spirit. Is that another side of it?

AMcS I am sure of that. Peter in the gospels was a restless person. That can mark any of us. We need to be honest about that. We are often quite restless and anxious about what is happening here and there. It is good to see the gain Peter received through the work of Christ and gift of the Spirit because after that there is something very restful in Peter. Look at him in Acts 12. His life is in danger but he is fast asleep. The Spirit could complacently rest upon such a person. The test is, is it so with us?

DH Regarding Moses and Hebrews, it speaks about the treasures of Egypt which he could have had. That test does not apply perhaps to most of us, but do we see supremely in the Lord Jesus all that He laid by to come here and suffer the reproach of the cross?

AMcS Our Lord "emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form", Phil 2: 7. When He "became a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises" (Rom 15: 8), He could say, "for also the things concerning me have an end", Luke 22: 37. The Messiah would be cut off and have nothing, Dan 9: 26. And yet on resurrection and ascension ground, in a day soon to come, the whole universe will be seen to be His.

That takes us on to Hebrews, because it is very much in line with what motivated Moses to make the decision that he made. I wondered whether Moses might be a help to us. I think, if I could say it with the greatest of respect, many of us might find ourselves in the same position as Moses was. He had a very favourable upbringing with parents who prayed over him and cared for him as long as they possibly could. It was in God's providence that his mother was placed in Pharaoh's palace to continue the care that Moses needed. Yet at the same time he was being built up in all the wisdom of Egypt and really had everything at his disposal. You might say simply, the world was at his feet, yet there came a point in Moses' life when God revealed Christ to him. That made the difference.

MRC You said earlier that this could mark a turning point in the lives of any one of us. We are challenged that there is something before us that is attractive, but what makes us hold back? How do we overcome?

AMcS The responsibility of the servant is to place before the saints an object of attraction. God Himself also shows to us the bitterness of the world. In Deuteronomy 8, the Israelites looked back over the wilderness, and they would remember how God suffered them to hunger, v 3. They had no sustenance. They found out what the world truly was, and at that point they were ready to receive the manna, they were ready to receive what speaks of Christ. That may well be what is happening to the people of God at the present time. God is passing many of us through deep waters in many ways, but I think the result He is looking for is that we might choose Christ.

DJR Do you think too that accepting the reproach often means that we need to have some patience? Moses accepted the reproach but it was forty years before he was taken up for service.

AMcS Patience is a prime feature in the life of the Christian. If the Christian is not patient then he is not in communion with Christ. That speaks to a lot of our hearts. The service came forty years later but the recompense, I judge, still awaits him.

DJR That is good because he did not actually go into the land except when he appeared with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration, Matt 17:3.

RHB Is the recompense wholly future?

AMcS I think there was something revealed to Moses in the way of the knowledge of God that was very blessed, but as to the fulness of the

recompense, I wondered whether it awaited a coming day.

RHB I was thinking of what Moses said in the Psalm, "Lord, *thou* hast been our dwelling-place in all generations", Ps 90: 1. Then he had the privilege of association with Christ in glory on the mount. I thought there was for him, and for us, a present recompense. The Lord speaks of receiving in the present time, "and in the coming age, life eternal", Luke 18: 30.

AMcS I think in its fulness it awaits a coming day, but there is something that Moses proved no doubt in God's company and God's presence after he made the right choice. All through the forty years that Moses spent in the wilderness God would have been very near and dear to him. In addition, what Moses saw when he went up the mountain in Exodus is almost unparalleled. The whole unveiling of the divine system that was communicated to him was surely greater than all that Egypt could give. But, I wondered whether the fulness was seen partially in the Mount of Transfiguration and then will be finally seen in the part Moses will have in the world to come.

RHB I wondered whether there is an order in the passage you have read. It says "refused to be called son of Pharaoh's daughter", and then "he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king". I wondered if there has to be, with purpose of heart, an inward refusal before there is a willingness to leave. It is the leaving that draws the reproach.

AMcS I am sure of that.

ECB The context of this section in Hebrews is that the resource was in faith. I suppose there is that aspect of faith which assures one that God will see you through, but faith in what is yet to come, respect to the recompense, is future. What is the resource that would enable us to face reproach?

AMcS I am glad you bring that up because it was in my mind. In 1 Peter 4, it is the Spirit; in Hebrews 11, it is faith; and in Hebrews 13, it is affection for Jesus. They would all help us to accept reproach.

AGS Is it remarkable with the malefactor that there comes a time when he refuses to accept the reproach of his colleague? He chooses not to deny the Lord's name. He says, "Remember me, Lord" (Luke 23: 42), and then he has the recompense in what the Lord says to him. Assurance.

AMcS In saying "Remember me, Lord," the malefactor was looking forward, but the answer was, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise"

(v43).

AGS You feel very much for the dear young people because there comes a point when you have to make a stand. This man did, and you might say it was the last sentence of his life, but he makes a statement. It says of those in Philadelphia, "hast not denied my name", Rev 3: 8. Do you think affection links with a love for the Person, love for the Name?

AMcS That is what I think is the key to it all. What we are seeking to do in this meeting is to encourage one another. We all have concerns, we all carry exercises, but the best way to face them is to encourage one another by presenting Christ.

DAB Do you think that the temptations in the beginning of the gospels show that the Lord Jesus understands the choices He expects us to make? Satan showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. Moses had said, 'No, the reproach is greater'. Mr Gardiner used to say that it was as well it was only a moment of time, or all the suffering and evil would have come out. I exhort the young people; ask yourself, 'Why does Satan not show you that side of the world as part of his offer?' Also remember that the one who is making that offer is the same one who inspired the reproach against Christ at the cross. His offer is not worthy to be entertained.

AMcS It is a sugar coated pill, but really it is poison that will lead to moral and spiritual death. We would seek to encourage one another that there is something greater in connecting ourselves with Christ presently than going on with the course of this world.

QP I wonder whether it bears on our enquiry as to the recompense that at the end of Revelation the Lord Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward with me, to render to every one as his work shall be", Rev 22: 12. Do we need to be careful not to put the coming of the Lord as merely future, but as a present living hope? His reward is with Him.

AMcS We all need to live our lives in the light that our Lord could come at any time. It would help us morally, and also it would give us a sense of joy, that the One who has loved us is coming for us. Just to see His face will be enough.

JSH You have spoken about the love for the Person, the Person Himself. I was reading this week as to David and Jonathan where it says that Jonathan loved David, 1 Sam 18: 1. He was not occupied

with all that was around and all that had happened, but there was the person himself whom he loved.

AMcS There comes a point in our lives when it is not only what our Lord has done for us, wonderful as that is, but it is Himself that lays hold upon us. It is really the sense of the glory of who He is that eclipses everything else in this world.

GCB Do you think if we are prepared for the reproach of the Christ we have Himself? Those standing by the cross, they would not have chosen any other, they had Himself and His word, and His love.

AMcS That is what I feel. It is the reproach of the Christ; it is such a person that God has committed Himself to because he brings pleasure to His heart. Only the Lord can bring true satisfaction to our hearts. God has not given us a difficult choice. It is such a Person as the Lord Jesus He is asking us to commit ourselves to. If there is reproach with that, it is only because it is connected with our Lord.

DJH It is the reproach of the Christ, not the reproach of Christ. It is more than what is personal. It is what is personal, but it is the Man that God has chosen.

AMcS My impression is that right from the time of Adam, in relation to the promise that was given as to the seed of the woman, persons who had faith had the light of the world to come. Moses' parents had faith; Miriam, although she had her ups and downs, had faith as well. The light of that would be communicated to Moses so that he would know that even if there was going to be suffering now, finally he would be associated with that blessed Man in the world to come.

DAB Did you suggest that God had given Moses a revelation as to Christ?

AMcS I think there must have been some impression laid upon Moses as to the greatness of the One who would become Man, and suffer, and then reign publicly in the world to come.

DAB I wondered if then we could say to the young people who feel challenged by the offers the world is making, that they could pray for a revelation, something very personal that they could regard as their own, as a gift from the Father.

AMcS The servant needs to ask God to show him Christ, that it might colour his ministry amongst God's people. Young persons need to see that God is not a hard God, but a Saviour God and His great interest is that we "should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth", 1 Tim

2: 4. So, if we set ourselves in the way of that then God will not be our debtor. There is no doubt as to that.

PJW Peter had a revelation from the Father "But ye, who do ye say that I am? And Simon Peter answering said, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ... flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens*", Matt 16: 15-17.

AMcS That is fine. Peter was not morally up to that at the end of that chapter. The Lord had to say to him, "Get away behind me, Satan" (v 23) because he was not prepared to accept the cross, but in his epistle he is up to it. That has been our experience. We need to be honest with one another. There is nobody here who can take high ground. We have all had our failures, we have all made mistakes, but God in His grace has given us another opportunity to commit ourselves to Christ. That is what we are looking for.

EOPM The tenses are interesting in this passage in Hebrews 11: "he refused"; that is definite and final, he came to a point in his life. For many of us, that was an experience we had like Saul of Tarsus. But, the other two, "choosing" and "esteeming" are continuous. We have been speaking about the young people, but I think some of us who are older need to maintain this because it may not be features of the world as we get them in the slippery paths of youth. Some of the temptations are worldly principles, and earthly things continue with us. If we are continuing to choose and esteem we will be a good example to those following on.

AMcS And persevering too. That is why I read the next section, "By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he persevered, as seeing him who is invisible", v 27. As you know, it is harder to maintain a position once you have arrived at it than to arrive at it in the first place.

EOPM That is certainly my experience, but we have to do with One who can remember for us the day of our espousals (Jer 2: 2), can remember the day when we refused certain things. We may be able to look back on a brighter day with regard to some temptation or the other, but God remembers that for us. We need to go on choosing and esteeming. I have been impressed recently, in the last three or four fellowship meetings I have been at, that line has been quoted, 'And the things of earth will grow strangely dim'. It is because we are looking on Christ. That is the way round. If I am looking at the world and expecting it to grow dim it probably will not, but if I am looking at Christ, it will.

AMcS That is why, "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20: 21) is the moral order, but it is not the chronological order. Chronologically, faith comes before repentance.

EOPM We were reminded recently that there is a great need for conversion among us. I do not mean that the saints are unconverted, but the exercise and conviction of conversion among our young people coming into things for the first time, maybe. It needs to be maintained. Paul had such great light and was given such great entrance into things because of the fact that he had gone so deep in his personal exercises. Philippians 3 mirrors Philippians 2 - he went down and down, step by step, in no way in the depths that the Lord went, and then he came up. We need conversion and need to maintain a depth of conversion.

AMcS And it needs to be maintained in repentance as repenting sinners, Luke 15: 7, 10. In Hebrews 13, we, as Christians, have an altar. That is a very wonderful thing. It involves the privileges that are connected with Christian fellowship. The Christian also has a place inside the veil. That is tremendous. It was not open to an ordinary Jew in the past dispensation, nor will it be open to a Jew in the coming dispensation, but the Christian has that place inside the veil, Heb 6: 19. If we have these privileges there is a further thing that we need to accept, and that is, "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach".

ECB We need to give the camp a wider bearing than other religious bodies. I wondered whether the camp does not imply the whole of the world's system. We frequently use it in regard to the Christian profession, but it really has a bearing on the place that the believer takes in the present world.

AMcS There is a profession of Christianity in the world.

ECB Yes, but the believer has to have a judgment of the whole system of things that marks the present age. In the past, we have seen the way in which politics entered into the meetings. That is part of the camp which we are to leave. I remarked in the beginning when you said we preach about reproach, that we very rarely hear of it.

AMcS I would expect that any person who seeks fellowship should do so on the basis that they are converted. I will say more as to what I mean by that in the address. The fact is that there was no place for the Lord Jesus in the camp. The camp is an amalgamation between what is religious and what is political. It includes an ordered earthly service of worship. The cathedrals might seem to represent it in the most

flagrant forms, but every religious system that is amalgamated with what is political practically denies Christ His place.

DAB Would it be overstating the matter to say that He is the only Person for whom the world has no place? That is the challenge because it has a place for me and the problem we are talking about is my reluctance to give it up for One whose right place is denied?.

AMcS The fact is that many circles profess to know the Lord, but they hold error as to His Person. Some popular places in Christendom hold error as to the Person of the Lord Jesus. The kind of error we are referring to is not new. It was refuted by Mr Darby in the early 1800s when he insisted that the Lord as to His Person is *sui generis* - of His own kind. You cannot regard our Lord's humanity as equivalent to sinful humanity. The Lord Jesus was and is pure and holy in every way and yet you will find that prominent systems in Christendom blasphemously say that He could have sinned. That is blasphemy and we can have no part in that. Such doctrine is an attack on the sinless humanity of Christ. Persons who hold such doctrine have their eyes blinded and our place is to be with the Lord outside of all that. It is because it is the Lord, it is Him that we love and we want to be with Him where He is.

RMB We have spoken about the bearing this has on our position in relation to the world and in relation to Christendom generally. Does this have any bearing on believers with whom we may have once walked in fellowship?

AMcS If the saints sadly divide, the Lord does not go with sides. It is for us to find where the Lord is, and seek to be with Him.

DAB Our obligation is to ensure that in any sense in which we have a position it is congenial to the presence of Christ because we could leave the camp and bring its habits and pastimes with us, and even have them in our homes. That seems to me to confound the whole exercise that you have brought before us.

AMcS That line of things is a concern because we might well be outside of everything that is religious (although still part of the great house, 1 Tim 2: 20), and then go on with what is worldly. The exercise in suggesting these scriptures is to encourage us to make the right decisions in life. In this scripture, it is Jesus. The personal name of our Lord is used on its own in this epistle more than seven times . It is calculated to draw our affections to Him. We have to determine for ourselves where the Lord is. We have to speak to Him personally about

that and ask Him, 'Where art Thou, Lord'? We need then to ask Him for the grace to help us to go to Him. If there are any others with the Lord, we can thank God for that, but our responsibility as individual Christians is to be where Christ is.

RMB Do we not find that involves a certain amount of reproach? The departure that has come into the recovery of the truth is very painful in practice at times, but to find Him is all the recompense.

CJRB Does Hebrews 3 make it clear, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (v 1) and it goes on to say, "if indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end" (v 6). Does that strengthen your desire in this reproach?

AMcS We do not want to go back to what we have left. What we want is to be where the Lord is because *He* is there. That is my exercise.

London

15th September 2007

Key to Initials

C J R Brodie, Ealing; R H Brown, East Finchley;
R M Brown, East Finchley; D A Burr, London; E C Burr, London;
G C Bywater, Buckhurst Hill; M R Cook, Maidstone;
D Hawgood, Bexley; D J Hutson, London; H A Hutson, London;
J S Hutson, London; A McSeveney, Twickenham;
E O P Mutton, Walton-on-the-Naze; Q Poore, Swanage;
D J Roberts, Gillingham; A G Smith, Bexley;
J M Walkinshaw, Maidstone; P J Walkinshaw, Gillingham;
E F Woodford, Dorking; D J Wright, Havering; J Wright, Havering

THE ONE BODY

Alan McSeveney

Romans 12: 4-8

Ephesians 4: 1-6

1 Corinthians 12: 13; 10: 16-17

Ephesians 2: 14-18

We live, dear brethren, in the last days of the dispensation and we prove the reality of the difficult times that Paul spoke about in 2 Timothy 3. The public church has broken down. Worldliness, sectarianism, denominationalism, clericalism, independency, and a set order in what purports to be the service of God all predominate in the Christian profession. We could spend a long time speaking about these errors but I thought it would be more profitable to speak of God's answer to these errors - for God does have an answer. The answer that God is bringing before us in these days is the necessity of adhering to the New Testament pattern concerning His assembly. We have had ministry recently as to the house of God and the different aspects of the assembly as presented in scripture. My exercise for this address is that we might look again at the truth of the one body. It is the distinctive truth of this dispensation. It was not known in the past dispensation. God will not move on that principle in the next dispensation. That is set out clearly in Ephesians 3 where we find that the mystery involves that Jew and Gentile are united in one body, v 6. This distinctive truth has been recovered to the saints in the revival of the truth in which we have part. Its importance cannot be gainsaid. You will find repeatedly that those who have gone before have maintained that the truth of the one body has helped, governed and preserved the saints in these last days.

In the scriptures that we have read, we find that the truth of the one body as accepted has a tremendous delivering effect upon the saints. In seeing the genuine article, we can be delivered from any imitation. God does not want us only to have a judgement of what is wrong but He wants to give us an impression of what is right. Indeed, it is only as seeing and enjoying the genuine article that we can come to a judgement of what is wrong.

I read in Romans because that is where we need to begin to see how we became part of the one body in Christ. The brethren well know that at the beginning of Romans 12 the great exercise is "to present our bodies a living sacrifice", v 1. The lever in the soul for that is the

compassions of God. That includes the way that God has come out in the glad tidings in the first five chapters of Romans in relation to our sins. The Lord Jesus has died and borne the penalty that the believer was under. The Lord Jesus' blood was shed; He went into the grave; He came out of the grave. He has "been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification", Rom 4: 25. We are thus delivered from the penalty we deserved for our sins, and justified before God in Christ. What compassion God had towards us when He moved in that way. Perhaps you knew it many years ago but I would seek to revive your interest in the way that God moved towards you in the glad tidings to secure you for His pleasure. There came a time when you had to confess your sins. There came a time when you had to repent of your sins. You were on the wrong road, and you needed to be turned around. That is true for every person who knows Christ as their Saviour. There is no doubt that if you were an obedient child and did everything that godly parents told you, you were spared from many of the sorrows that others have proved on the broad road. Perhaps in that way you did not need to stop going to evil places, but nevertheless you still needed to be converted. Even the disciples in Matthew 18 needed conversion, v 3. They needed to learn to be subject to the Lord and reject their own wills. None of us is subject naturally. It is essential therefore that each one of us is converted. The compassions of God go on from there. You discover that there is something within your heart that answers to the sin system outside of you. You require God to have compassion on you, and deliver you. It is essential for us to understand that Christ was made sin, and that the old man who could not be mended has been ended in the death of Christ. You are now not only accepted but you are also delivered. The Spirit is free within you and you are able to present your body a living sacrifice to God. Now dear brother, dear sister, that involves a radical change in your life. Formerly, you might have been free to do many things and go to many places and be part of the general current of the world going on to judgement but the gospel delivers you from all that. You are now able to understand what it is to be part of the one body in Christ, Rom 12 v 5.

You are part of the one body of Christ if you have received the Spirit, but the question is whether the gospel has laid hold of us in such a way that it delivers us from every worldly influence to be entirely available for the pleasure of God. The gospel as accepted delivers you from worldly friendships. You have to break with persons who are part of the world going on to judgement. That is certainly what happened in

former times. Persons were converted, and gave up worldly friendships and inconsistent occupations, and anything that smacked of the world that crucified Christ. The gospel delivers us from these things. In New Testament times, there were no arguments as to whether something was a wrong association or not. The gospel made the difference. Mr Darby received such a full gospel and it is clear that the gospel which the apostle Paul preached was never preached in its same fulness until the Lord touched Mr Darby. That gospel led Mr Darby to sever every worldly link and enjoy the truth of the one body in Christ. The true soul must come that way. You must accept that any body of which Christ is not the Head is a dead body, and has to be separated from. You do it, not because someone is forcing you to do it, but because of the difference the gospel has made in your life. You must make the break beloved brother, beloved sister. You can no longer go on with a world that has crucified Christ. You have changed your Man; you have changed your side. You are now "in Christ" and you know that any body, however worthy or reputable it may be, which has not Christ as its Head is rooted in Adam. One of those who helped the saints put it like this. He said that if he saw a man's cart by the roadside in a ditch he would help pull it out, but he would not join a society with unconverted persons for pulling carts out of ditches. It is all very simple when the gospel changes your life. You will notice that there is no need in the Epistle to the Romans to have long meetings discussing these things. The gospel delivered the Roman saints.

May I say, beloved brethren, the crying need of the day is for a delivering gospel to be preached. The danger is that we drop down to what has been called revival preaching. That commenced shortly after the beginning of the recovery of the truth in which we have part. Men such as Mr Stoney had their lives radically transformed through the gospel that the Lord revealed to Mr Darby. Shortly after, the nineteenth century revivals began. No doubt, as Mr Darby said, there was much of God in that but the whole character of revival preaching was to ensure a man got to heaven while going on with the world that crucified Christ. In fact, this was so much the case that Mr Stoney strongly deprecated those who said that God was with Moody and Sankey in a singular way while their followers insisted it was not necessary to separate from ecclesiastical circles in Christendom that had no foundation in scripture, JBS Letters Vol 1 p 216. How right that is. Beloved brethren, it is not someone giving orders but God who comes to us in the gospel. If we appreciated that, we would have no problems with worldly

associations or friendships. Our only bearing towards the world would be to bring the gospel to it. However, how can you bring the gospel to the world, and tell persons they need to judge the world when you yourself are caught up in the world? There needs to be a break. You say, 'I am going to lose my friends'. Beloved brother, beloved sister, God will give you better friends. He will give you friends who know Christ and who are part of the one body in Christ. Some say, 'I am going to lose my job if I break with worldly associations'. Do you think the Father will not look after you? Listen to the word of scripture from a man of experience, David. "I have been young, and now I am old, and I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread", Ps 37: 25.

This truth is not just confined to Romans. You also find it in 2 Corinthians. Paul laboured at Corinth but, when he left there, worldliness came in like a flood. The local assembly there was still recognised. That is important to remember, but the world came in like a flood. In the first epistle, Paul insists on the Lordship of Christ and in chapter 5, he stresses that the wicked man must be withdrawn from or, as he terms it, removed, v 13. In the second epistle, it is clear that that action had taken place and now Paul stresses that as God had granted repentance the Corinthians ought to grant forgiveness, chap 2. Paul then begins to develop the truth of the glad tidings, the ministry of the new covenant, and the ministry of reconciliation, chaps 3 & 5. The result of that is that the Corinthian saints were to understand freshly that they could not be diversely yoked with unbelievers, chap 6. The saint who accepts that and separates from worldly persons does not lose by it. He proves the care of the Father. I say it again dear brethren - the Father will not let you down. The Father will come in for you. Many of us have had to say to associations of various kinds, 'I am sorry, I cannot go on with that'. We have not lost out in doing that because God has helped us. Dear brethren, there is only one body before God at the present time, and that is the one body in Christ. It is inclusive of every Christian and exclusive of anyone who is not a Christian. If we have never come to that then we ought to lay hold of the gospel in all its delivering power. In presenting our bodies to God, we can have part intelligently in the one body in Christ. That is the answer to every wrong association.

Ephesians 4 brings before us another truth connected with the one body. We often refer to Ephesians 3 as a parenthesis and link the

end of Ephesians 2 with the beginning of Ephesians 4. However, it is good to remember that the parenthesis in Ephesians 3 gives an added emphasis to the verses at the beginning of Ephesians 4. Thus, the sense in our souls of Jew and Gentile being linked together in one body under one Head, and what it is to have all the saints before God in His service, must govern me in my approach to Ephesians 4. You could not think of having all the saints with you in Ephesians 3, and then adopting a sectarian line. Sadly, many Christians do just that. Indeed, one well known Christian lost his way as to the truth of the one body in Christ, and very soon found himself at Keswick under the banner of "All one in Christ Jesus". In other words, persons believe that believers can meet together for one weekend a year, and return to their separate denominations for the remainder of the year. That is not to say that there are not real believers there, but the truth of the one body must govern how we gather all the time not just one week in a year.

It is not right to go along to diverse meetings of Christians and leave it like that. We must accept that every denomination and sectarian system is contrary to the truth of the one body. It may surprise many to say this but there is no basis in scripture for any system such as the Church of England or the Church of Scotland. There are no Baptist churches in the New Testament or Methodist churches or Pentecostal churches. Someone will say then, 'What about us?' Well, there is a need to be careful when talking about 'we' or 'us'. Those terms can be used safely in the sense that they include every Christian, but otherwise, they can become sectarian. Yet, it is also necessary to insist that the brethren with whom we walk have not formed another sect. They have simply stood apart from every sect and denomination, and sought to revert to the New Testament pattern, in accord with the truth of the one body. Some will remember a pamphlet of Mr Darby's. Somebody opposed the truth through a pamphlet entitled *Is the One Body the Ground of Gathering?* JND vol 33 p 30. Mr Darby's simple answer was 'It is'. The brethren with whom we seek to break bread are on that line. They have stood apart from every system of man's devising and have sought to revert to the original New Testament pattern. There is no special membership.

If anyone wants to say that we have nothing to be proud of, I would go fully with that. If anyone wants to say that the state at certain points in the testimony was not very good when divisions took place, I would also go fully with that. It is clear that we have nothing to be proud about. Every morning we should kneel down in the presence of God

and confess our sins and the sins of our people, Dan 9: 20. We all need to get low in the presence of God. We are in difficult times, and we need to humble ourselves as to how things are currently amongst those we walk with. We need to accept our own part in that. We cannot just say that it is others and not me. We all are responsible and we need to get low in the presence of God, but in so doing we need to walk in relation to the truth of the one body. That requires meekness, lowliness and long-suffering. It requires bearing with one another. If the Lord has set us in a locality, we need to accept it and be thankful, Col 3: 15.

We all know that there is only one Spirit, but we need also to accept that there is only one body. The unity of the Spirit involves what was formed at Pentecost. When the Spirit descended there was a unity formed between all Christians. That subsists at the present time, and it is our responsibility to bring ourselves into line with that. As the brethren know, there are three concentric circles at the beginning of Ephesians 4, JT vol 67 p143. It is also helpful to see that they have a cumulative effect. Therefore, if we accept that there is one body and one Spirit, and we see that our calling involves being conformed to Christ in glory, we will be helped to accept the practical side of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism". Beloved brethren, we all profess to have the same Lord. Currently, that must involve naming the name of the Lord and withdrawing from anything that is inconsistent with the truth of the one body. That is not sectarian. We are actually withdrawing from what is sectarian in naming the name of the Lord and withdrawing from iniquity, 2 Tim 2: 19. If you do that and I do that, and every Christian in Christendom did that, how blessed it would be! We look for an entity on the earth involving every believer - the bride - saying, in consonance with the Spirit, "Come", Rev 22: 17. We long for that, and for it to be practically so requires that believers should submit themselves to the one Lord. There is also only one faith. We do not think we have peculiar doctrine that belong just to the brethren we walk with and ought not to govern every other Christian. People speak about 'Exclusive Brethren'. We do not accept that title although we cannot stop people calling us by that title. However, what persons may call 'Exclusive Brethrenism' is Christianity. If it is not, then we ought not to go on with it for one moment. We must go on with the Word of God. There is only one faith. There is no point in asking us to show you a constitution. We do not have one other than the Bible. There is only one faith, and every real Christian ought to bring themselves into line with what is set out in the teaching of the Bible. If that is so, then, practically, the one body will

be seen in expression. There is also only one baptism. That involves that we are severed from this world. As we accept that the man who was under judgement was vicariously removed in the burial of Christ, we will be delivered from the world. If you take that ground and I take that ground there will be less sorrows and heartaches amongst those we walk with. How wonderful it would be in working out the truth of the one body if we all accepted that our baptism also introduces us into the blessedness of the Lordship of Christ, and indeed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as presented in Matthew 28: 19. What follows on from that is "one God and Father". That involves the side of privilege. I will say more as to that before I finish, but what a wonderful thing it is to have part in what is for the pleasure of God as Father. We perhaps do not appreciate that enough. Many pious and devoted Christians are not in liberty in the presence of the Father. Yet it is available for every Christian to be before the Father in liberty, not recalling all their sins but being absolutely free as sons of God who have the Spirit of adoption. How wonderful that is! Have you lost the joy of it, dear brother? Have you lost the sense of the greatness of what we have been brought into? It is wonderful to know God as our Father, and be free in His presence.

I turn to 1 Corinthians 12. There we find that we have all been baptised by one Spirit into one body and have been made to drink of one Spirit. That also ought to have a delivering effect upon us. Dear brethren, many of us have come to it *through experience* that the clerical system is not of God. That is not to say there are not godly clergymen, but the fact is that they are in a position that God has not afforded them. At the beginning of this chapter, we find that the Spirit has distributed different gifts to different persons. They are not all centred in the same person. One person might have been given the gift of giving a word of wisdom, and another a word of knowledge and so on. The Spirit has been very liberal in distributing these gifts. It is a painful memory to many of us who sat under the clerical system that there were persons who could have been helpful, but were not given the opportunity because they were not clergymen. That is the truth of the matter. There is no need for argument or contention. According to the Scriptures, the clerical system is wrong. There are godly clergymen but they are in a wrong position. However, the most advanced clergymen are only just arriving at the truth of acceptance. I know of one who has it through reading the ministry of Mr Stoney. They have not yet come to deliverance because if they did they would leave

the clerical system. Mr Darby is an example of that. When he accepted the truth of acceptance, and knew the experience of deliverance, and that there was a Head in heaven and a body on earth, he could no longer go on with what was clerical. He could not stand to see persons who were gifted preachers being forbidden to preach by archbishops and bishops. He left the Church of Ireland, and gave up the clerical principle. In doing so, Mr Darby received from God a ministry that has stood the test of time. So beloved brethren, if you meet a clergyman, do not immediately tell him the clerical principle is wrong. Bring the gospel before him. Bring the full gospel before him, making sure of course that you are in the gain of it yourself. As accepting that, a clergyman will soon give up the clerical system. Many clergymen have received help that way. We all need help and we have a responsibility to help one another.

Now, the Spirit baptises into one body. That took place at Pentecost. In that one body there is no Jew or Greek. There are no Scottish, English, British, or German either. Each one of us needs to judge ourselves of our national characteristics because the baptism of the Spirit merges the saints into one body. Each one of us enters into the truth of the baptism of the Spirit through drinking into one Spirit. If we all do that, we will be satisfied and, if satisfied, we will be prepared to accept the place we have been given in the assembly. There may be someone who has been greatly blessed by God with a gift and there may be others who have not been given the same gift by God. If we drink into one Spirit and enjoy the love of God and that characterises our service we will let those with a greater gift have the place in service that is due to them. That place is of course only greater in service, not in sonship. Along with that, every true servant will also get below the saints, and esteem and love them. He will not lord it over God's heritage. The most spiritual of servants makes way for others who have questions and comments. Not only so, but this is not restricted to what is local. It may work out locally, but the fact is that God has set certain in the assembly. That is very wide in its bearing. It is sorrowful to reflect that an early difficulty amongst brethren occurred when the local assembly in Plymouth would not allow gifted brethren from Ireland such as Mr Bellett. It is almost unthinkable to think of a man who had such a distinctive impression of *The Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus* being told that his service was not required. Beloved brethren, administration is clearly local but in the working out of the truth, we are glad of any help we can get. So that when Paul and others went into the

synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, they were asked, "if ye have any word of exhortation to the people, speak", Acts 13: 15. We all need help. We do not have all we need in relation to gift in one locality. We are glad that God has set certain in the assembly who are in various localities and are able to help in a universal way.

I turn now to 1 Corinthians 10. It is helpful for us to pursue a little the thought that the body of Christ has a local expression. It is important to see that there are not churches separate from the one body. A social worker once asked an old brother known to many of us whether he belonged to a church. His reply was "No, I belong to *the* church". He did not mean that the brethren with whom we break bread with are the church to the exclusion of every other believer. We are not the church, but the brethren with whom we walk with do belong to the church. We are part of the one body of Christ, and that is the only church we belong to. That church has a local expression. We do not even claim to be that but we seek to walk in the light of the assembly.

Chapter 10 involves the great truth as to the Lord's table as bearing on the thought of the one body. As we come together at the Lord's supper and look on the loaf the pre-eminent thought before us will be the Lord's own personal body as a Man here on earth. Chapter 11 is quite clear as to that, "This is my body, which is for you", 1 Cor 11: 24. The effect of putting our hands to that ought to govern us through the week. It does not only govern us in our own locality, blessed as that is, it also governs our relationship with other localities. That is clearly stated in chapter 10, "Because we, being many, are one loaf, one body; for we all partake of that one loaf", 1 Cor 10: 17. Therefore, what takes place in one local assembly has its bearing on every other local assembly. We again need to remind ourselves that administration is local. Those who do not accept that will find themselves against the Lord. The first epistle to the Corinthians is clear that every local assembly has its individual relationship with Christ. The Lord has His own rights in each place and that needs to be respected. However, there is something else that also needs to be respected, and that is that every local assembly in its administration ought in love and consideration to consider for every other local assembly. We all need help on this line, but the intention in our mind ought to be respect for our brethren as doing what is right for the Lord. You not only want to do what is right in your local assembly but you want to keep in mind every other local assembly. That is not a hard or controversial thing to say. It

is simple love and consideration for the brethren. May we bear it in mind, and in saying that I want to stress again that I do not mean the sectarian 'we'. Every Christian would have part in the one loaf, one body. Alas, not all are putting their hands to the loaf. I trust we feel that and keep all the saints in our prayers. Our attitude towards other Christians is like Abraham setting seven ewe lambs before Abimelech (Gen 21: 28). We want to be like that, but we also want to understand where we are and why we are there. It has been helpful to many of us to have brethren set out clearly the background as to every division amongst those seeking to have part in the recovery from 1848 to 1972 in order to show where the brethren are, and why they are there. We need to arrive at that in a moral way. We need to have to do with the Lord personally, as to where He is. Peter said, "Lord, if it be *thou*, command me to come to thee", Matt 14: 28. It is not a question of leaving one church to join another church. It is, where is the Lord? That is not a sectarian position. It is available to every Christian and involves going forth to Him. There might be reproach attached to that. You might have your heart broken being criticised by other Christians for the stand you have taken. That is part of the reproach. We need to accept that, and ought not to respond in the same way. Our love ought to be unconditional. We may not always be able to manifest that love, but nevertheless it is there. If we cannot walk with saints, we can certainly pray for them. Many of us do pray continually that God may deliver our brethren, especially those who have once been on the pathway of testimony. We have not just wiped our hands of such persons. We cannot walk with them but we pray and mourn over our beloved brethren. May they be recovered! May we have part in that! We might of course need to be like Abraham in Genesis 18 praying and allowing God to grant repentance, v 22-33. However, we pray and do not adopt a hard attitude, because but for divine grace where might we be?

Now, the Lord's table and the Lord's supper are very blessed. The Lord's supper is taken in a public setting. That involves the wilderness - what the world has become to the Christian. We do not need at that point to go into great detail as to the Lord bearing our sins, because we are already clear in our souls as to that. We enjoy Him as the Sin-bearer at other times. There is, of course, provision made in Matthew's Gospel for remembering the Lord in that way particularly in sorrowful times amongst the saints. However, that is not the normal way we remember the Lord. The normal order connected with the

Lord's supper is found in 1 Corinthians 11, where there is no mention of sins. So that as faithful saints come together they do something that men can take account of. They put their hands to the emblems, and announce the death of the Lord. However, at that point the Lord honours His promise not to leave them orphans and comes to His own, John 14:18. The ground then changes and they no longer have Christ pre-eminently before them as Lord but as Head. They find then the Head strikes the chord that gives character to the service of God. The body responds to that and becomes available to the Head for the service and praise of God. As the Head leads in the praise, there is no need for a prearranged service. There are no hymns on boards, or clergymen saying it is time for children to go to Sunday School. There is rather Christ as Head leading persons into the presence of the Father as seen in Ephesians 2: 18. Beloved brethren, there are those who are older, and others too, who have arrived at this order of the service of God through exercise. From that standpoint, while fully admitting failings, many can state that they have found an experience in the service of God that they have not found anywhere else. It is blessed to know Christ as giving impulse to the body. It is typified in Luke 1 in the hill country of Judea in the holy communications between Elizabeth and Mary. Quickening came in there and that led to expressions of praise to God. As they listen to one another and they are moved by the Head they are led into the presence of the Father - the great representative of deity in the economy.

That is all I wish to say. The truth of the one body ought to be more to us than a picture on the wall. We do not just say that we gather on the ground of the one body, while we are going on with things that are inconsistent with that. The genuine article ought to have a delivering effect on us. As I arrive at this truth individually then I will find that makes way to have a vital part in the wonderful vessel, which is the one body in Christ.

May God bless the word.

London
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