

# A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 23

February 2009

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## FELLOWSHIP (1)

**Exodus 33: 7-11**

**2 Timothy 2: 18-22**

**Hebrews 13: 10-14**

**Revelation 3: 7-13**

**GJR** We have in the last four readings been looking into what we might learn from scripture as to Christian fellowship. We began with the peace offering in Leviticus 4 and 7, then Paul's setting out the principle of God's call, being "called into the fellowship of his Son", 1 Cor 1: 9. We saw the record of its practical effect, in the early days of Christianity as seen in the book of the Acts 2: 42-47. We then looked at the truth of the Lord's table in 1 Cor 10: 16-22, not the table on which the emblems stand, but *the fellowship*. Then from 1 Cor 11: 23-29 we have instruction regarding the Lord's supper, partaking of which is the *expression* of fellowship; and how we come into that by washing our robes, Rev 22: 14. The account in Acts 10 of the qualities seen in Cornelius provided an example of one whose associations of life were so regulated. We noted how fellowship with one another was maintained through the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, which cleanses us from all sin, 1 John 1: 7.

We then looked at the word of Jehovah to Rehoboam in 2 Chron 11: 1-4 following the division of the kingdom, and how Jehovah said, "this thing is from me". Not only had a king been unfaithful, but a people had too. In accepting the discipline, and the public shame that it brought, (for it was done in the presence of surrounding nations) the king of Judah was prospered and his territory became a haven for displaced priests from the cities in the other tribes' territories. Then Abijah addressed Jeroboam a few years later (2 Chron 13: 4-11) and asserted the covenant which Jehovah had made with David, and in doing so he addressed the whole of Israel. It was as if he was maintaining - in the language of Christianity - the truth of the one body. We noted that, although Abijah could not in his conduct be regarded as an example for much of his life, at that time he rose to be a type of someone who

appreciated the truth of the one body when it was practically and publicly denied all around.

The scriptures we have now read might help us to appreciate what is assembly ground, and that fellowship is to be enjoyed at that level. I think it is easy to understand what has been suggested, that the first epistle of Paul to Timothy is very much like what was communicated to Moses on the mountain: the second epistle is very much like his conduct following the failure of the people. We could have read, "all who are in Asia ... have turned away from me", 2 Tim 1: 15. It is an obscure comment which has great significance and I suggest we might ponder that along with the scriptures we have read. It does not say that they have turned away from Christ, and when he says "all who are in Asia", I take it that that included the assembly at Ephesus where so much had been developed; and yet they had turned away from Paul. We know what the Lord says to the assembly at Ephesus in His address to them in Revelation, and that something had happened which perhaps only the Lord had noticed. This touches the heart of our experience here, of our being rightly here: "thou hast left thy first love". I feel hardly qualified to speak of that. Something had happened that may have been outwardly imperceptible, but something inwardly had changed. Perhaps the effect of that was that they, as others, turned away from Paul.

It may be fair to say that, as far as the condition of things at the end of Paul's life was concerned, he may have died a heart-broken man because it seems he had only a few with him. He says, "Luke alone is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thyself", 2 Tim 4: 11. So it would appear that, of the many persons alluded to in the New Testament, Paul may have had just three or four sympathisers left. Out of the vast extent of his work, persons had turned away from him. I think that may have been the consequence of that spark, which had once motivated the brethren and the assemblies, somehow being lost. Had we only Paul's writings we would conclude that it had never been recovered, but we have John. We know that Revelation was not the last scripture to be written but I am confident it was written after Paul's second letter to Timothy. As we

know John lived on long after Paul. Paul was put to death, John was exiled; he had a vision of the Lord communicating to him about something which was recovery to a condition of affection which had the character of first love in Philadelphia. We know that historically that assembly also died out; there were at least seven assemblies in Asia Minor (today's Turkey) which are no more. The territory is largely Muslim and has been for hundreds of years. I think every interested soul would be exercised to see if there is anything available in the present day which corresponds to what the Lord Jesus could commend in that address to the assembly at Philadelphia.

**GR** It must have been a matter of sorrow for Paul to have to write the second epistle to Timothy because breakdown had come in. While we all acknowledge our part in the breakdown, it does on the other hand provide an area where what is peculiarly precious to God can be developed in triumph. In a way, is it to be expected that the public history of the church should be any different from the public service of the Lord Jesus which ended in outward ignominy and shame and apparent failure? The natural man might expect that what was established on a firm basis on the death of Christ and the Spirit would proceed from glory to glory, but publicly it has not been so. Yet through that, God is working by the Spirit and bringing up something which is choice in overcomers. The Lord Himself could refer to Himself, "as I also have overcome", Rev 3: 21. So that publicly we cannot expect any more than what was seen publicly at the end of the Lord's service in all His perfection; and yet there is something secured - excellence being formed which will go through - as it was in the Lord's work in the disciples. What wonderful apostles they were, what they were will be carried forward into the millennium and eternal conditions in spite of the public breakdown.

**GJR** Prophetically the Lord Jesus could say, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought", Isa 49: 4. Should we remember this difference: that the Lord Jesus was the testimony, and there was no failure on His part. He was the vessel of the testimony, He was the truth, and there was no failure there. The failure has

been that of the recipients, the church as a public body has failed as a vessel of testimony.

**GR** We must recognise that difference. In the world's view Christianity has failed and we have failed too. We know that intrinsic difference, but there is public failure.

**GJR** People say that religion has caused a lot of wars, and that religions all make a lot of their own leader, but the great distinction is that there is one Man out of death. God has only raised one Man out of death. He has not raised Buddha or Mohammed. In the presence of hundreds of witnesses, He had one Man whom He raised from the dead.

**RDP-r** I always find very encouraging what Paul writes to Timothy, "the things thou has heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also" (2 Tim 2: 2), Paul has not given up what he has brought in; "all who are in Asia ... have turned away from me" does not alter the basic fundamental truths that have been set out and are to be carried through. 2 Timothy is very encouraging.

**GR** It says "faithful men", not apostles or appointed bishops or anything formal like that, but persons who are morally faithful.

**RDP-r** I think there is a basis for the matter of fellowship to be continued until the Lord comes; the principles of it we should not adjust to circumstances.

**GR** We have been speaking of the essential need for separation for the service of God to proceed. That would apply to fellowship too.

**RDP-r** I think we need to see what fellowship is for. It is not just to have links amongst the saints; it is in view of what is for God.

**GJR** It is for the glory of His Son. We touched on that in our earlier reading when the question was asked, 'Why does it matter, why is this important?'. Divine pleasure is at stake.

We had reference to faithful men in Timothy: is it possible to identify such in Exodus, apart from Moses who certainly was faithful?

**MJC** We spoke of Joshua last week as someone who departed not from within the tent and there is no limit in verse 7 "... every one who sought Jehovah went out to the tent of meeting"; it does not restrict the number. What does being outside the camp mean? We made a distinction between those who are outside the camp and those who remained at the entrance of their own tents. I imagine that there are many persons who would desire to be outside the camp, but that does not itself bring them all together. So what is the meaning of 'outside the camp'? That expression is used by ecclesiastical positions, and so on. How can we intelligently understand it? The scripture in Hebrews exhorts us to go "outside the camp", but just taking that up in exercise does not seem automatically to bring all such people together. In terms of the practicality of fellowship, if persons are exercised as to being outside the camp, what does it mean in practice?

**GR** I rather doubt how many persons there are who would be intelligent enough about being "outside the camp" to desire it. I think there are many believers who desire to be faithful to the Lord who have virtually no light as to the assembly, who just want to go on in an individual pathway, but with no idea of the camp.

**MJC** It is impossible for us to say: the scripture as to the Lord knowing those who are His comes in from His side. I would doubt if the knowledge of the truth of the assembly was limited to a few thousand, or even a few hundred thousand believers.

**GR** I suppose we would have to say that it is a moral position taken up those by those who have a desire for it. It is not a public position.

**MJC** We need to understand what we mean by that - that is where sectarianism comes in.

**GR** Does the idea run parallel with dwelling in a corner of the house-top (Prov 21: 9 and 25: 24); we cannot get out of the house itself. There must be a difference between the house and the camp. We do not speak of the camp now so much, it is the great house.

**GJR** The language that the writer to the Hebrews selected was language which would have been readily understood by the readers.



I am reluctant to speak of this, and need to do so carefully and humbly, but these words “go forth to him without the camp” are very beautiful. We need to bear in mind that we are talking about a huge, irrevocable, life-changing move whether described here in Hebrews or in Exodus. Other faithful men in Exodus were of the tribe of Levi: “Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, He that is for Jehovah, let him come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered to him”, Exod 32: 26. They were faithful men and by their stand they alienated themselves from all who were not for Jehovah. “Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, He that is for Jehovah, let him come to me”. Imagine the hush; Moses was asking persons to disassociate themselves publicly and finally from what they had been involved in.

**GR** Moses would be God’s representative at that time?

**GJR** I am sure of that. He said, “He that is for Jehovah, let him come to me”. The sons of Levi stood up and came to him, “all the sons of Levi gathered to him”. He then tells them to do something which would have been a very hard thing if it was not that they were motivated by love for Jehovah. I think we must, in all our consideration, remember that there is only one thing that is valid and that is affection for Christ: love for Him. We are not talking about selecting a company of persons; rather, I trust we would have in our affections some element of jealousy for the Lord. That is what led the tribe of Levi to do what they did. In Hebrews the word is, “let us go forth to him without the camp”. You need to leave all that you are comfortable with, and you go out to a crucified (but now glorified) Man: “let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach”. I do not think anyone would be motivated to do that were it not for their love for the Lord. *It is to Him*, we cannot over-emphasise that, if we are going to leave the camp, whatever that means, it must be to go out to Him. Peter said to the Lord when he was on the water, “Lord, it if be *thou*, command me to come to thee upon the waters. And he said, Come. And Peter, having descended from the ship, walked upon the waters to go to Jesus”, Matt 14: 28, 29. These are huge things that are taking place in persons’ lives and I do not think

any amount of persuasion or arguing would ever induce anyone to do it: it can only be done in affection for Christ.

**GR** Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go?”, John 6: 68.

**MJR** Those who remained in the camp could not go beyond their own tent - how would you explain that they rose and worshipped? They were still in the camp, were they not?

**GJR** The challenge is that today I might recognise the greatness of the fact that there is a living Christian fellowship, there is a circle where that fellowship can be enjoyed, and where the presence of God is known. We know something of the divine presence when we are together and yet I might not actually let that govern my life. They stood in their own tents, their own homes, their own circumstances, and they wondered at and were moved in their souls as to the greatness of Jehovah. Perhaps they were touched in their affections that, despite their failure and their sin, the divine presence was still among them. It was when they saw the cloud, “And all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent; and all the people rose and worshipped”. It is like saying, 'Despite all our sins, the Lord is still with us, His presence is still with us'. That is wonderful, and yet they did not go out to Moses. That is a challenge to me, am I just an admirer? Do I wonder? But then do I go back home and not let it really govern my life?

Another aspect of this scripture is that, if through grace we know something of being outside the camp, if we know something about the tent of meeting, then we remember that there are probably vast numbers of persons who are in the camp in whom the work of God is and we respect that. I would have to say that many of those are more devoted Christians than I am. But would I go back into the camp to hear them? There are probably greater preachers there than I am; there will be, far greater; but would I go back and join them? There are great gifted preachers, but would the sons of Levi go back to hear them? I do not doubt the sons of Levi *prayed for* the preachers in the camp.

**GR** We tend to be greatly affected by gift, and manifestations of power. I think what you draw attention to is vitally important: affection for Christ - that should govern us, but it is a test.

**GJR** Going back to the matter of the camp and going out from the camp, I remember speaking to a couple who we once had fellowship with and who went away. They were seeking their way back and they said, 'We went out of the camp and we found ourselves in another camp'. Happily they were restored. I am sure we have all had the feeling that there are conditions among us that we are not happy with and we have thought of leaving, but I know that would not have been going out to the Lord. Mr Darby says that some may get hold of particular evil which galls their flesh and they leave the company, Collected Writings vol 1 p351. If the Spirit sanctions the body and they leave, they will put themselves out of touch with the blessing of God's presence. We would all know that - that sense that something which is evil galls my flesh: reacting like that is not going out to the Lord.

**GR** I was very exercised as to that thirty to forty years ago, when it was very difficult to decide whether to go or to stay. Alas, we have lost many who never came back, but what have we to learn from that?

**GJR** Scripture says that we are to pursue glorious positive things with other persons - you might say simple persons.

**GR** What do we understand as to Moses returning to the camp while "Joshua ... departed not from within the tent"?

**GJR** I think there is very important instruction in that. Please help us.

**RDP-r** I wondered whether we have to see that the Lord in His movements is able to do what we cannot. Moses represented the Lord, and He is able to move amongst the camp. The camp is not the world; it is a place where God is known, maybe imperfectly, but it relates to the area where God is known, and the Lord is able to move amongst them. He must be, because we meet persons who are very bright in the Lord, they know what He has done for them,

but few seem to have this real knowledge of what is for His heart. I think the Lord is gathering a great many in on that basis. But Joshua is one who came to the judgement that this (the tent) is the place to be and he does not depart from it. Because the Lord can do those things it does not give us licence to do them ourselves, but we cannot limit Him or the Spirit in their movements.

**GR** So we cannot limit the Lord in His movements on Lord's day morning when we break bread, but that does not give us licence to go elsewhere.

**RDP-r** A great deal of what has come in and has caused confusion is because of the mind of man, and personal feelings have come in too. There are persons who have the light as to the truth of the assembly but are in different paths, for one cause or another. Often the truth that they understand is the same, but they are walking alone at the present time. The challenge is as to why this is.

**GR** So 2 Timothy 2 brings up association. That scripture is so well known, and has been quoted many times, "Yet the firm foundation of God stands". Then we have this two sided seal: what the Lord knows and then what we need to do. It is individual. Is there a difference between the great house spoken of here and what has been referred to as the camp? We cannot get out of this house, can we?

**GJR** I wondered if what is set out in 1 Timothy is the pattern of the tabernacle. That was glorious. The ark was the centre and God dwelt there, His people were regulated there, His people approach Him through it. I wondered how the camp corresponds to the great house in 2 Timothy. They both speak of Christendom, and embrace all believers and perhaps more, the whole profession. I suppose it embraces the mainstream churches, the Church of England, the Swiss Church, the Roman Catholic church, the non-conformist churches. I am not sure that you could include the cults because you could hardly regard the cults as Christian, though I have no doubt there are Christians within them. There are sects, for example, which deny the eternal personality of the Lord Jesus and

the personality of the Holy Spirit. I do not see how you could say that is Christian. I think the camp includes all who profess Christian truth.

**RDP-r** I think for ourselves it has come down to a matter of simplicity. It is not just a position, but I believe there is what is marked by the presence of the Spirit of God at the present time. I think there is a difference between the Spirit's presence in individuals, and the Spirit's presence in the company. There are many that have received the Spirit, but the Lord's present mind is discovered in a special way where the Spirit is active as the saints are gathered. I believe the Spirit's direct speaking and the mind of the Lord as to what is really for the heart of Christ relates to a company.

**GJR** We would all love to have a part in that company.

**RDP-r** I think we should be exercised if there are others who are seeking to be on the same ground as to what actually keeps us apart. We have been through some very serious exercises of late in this regard, and I have to be very careful of excluding those that I have known in the past. I feel that there is a sense of the Spirit speaking and ministering Christ amongst the saints in a peculiar way. The danger is that we make the company something official as a result of that.

**GR** Would you agree that whilst you might have the privilege of enjoying the experience of divine speaking, I might be in a state that is out of it at any given time? It is not fixed in that sense; it needs to be maintained in exercise.

**RDP-r** In Exodus they had to go out to the tent, and we need to be maintained in that spirit of exercise to seek the things of the Lord. If the Lord is speaking, would we want to be anywhere but where He is speaking? That is the great thing on occasions like this; we would seek to be present, so as not to miss something of what the Lord is saying.

**GJR** Have you more to say about leaving the camp?

**MJC** In practical terms we break bread with one another on a regular basis, but we need to be constantly proving ourselves; it is not simply a membership card and that is it. It is a practical matter which we may be able to hide quite successfully from other people, but in terms of the reality of it is down to our own state. We do not want to put too much upon ourselves - our hearts condemning us. There is what is greater and the Lord would not desire us to be over-occupied in our own limitations; but it is not automatic and we can easily fall into that.

**GR** “Let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread”, 1 Cor 11: 28. It is positive, not stay away: go ahead and face it, prove yourself, and then eat. Many, alas, have given up.

**RDP-r** If we have the privilege of knowing these things and holding them, we would not hold them just for ourselves: we need to hold them as available for all the saints, so that they are available for any to come and share. I think there would need to be a commitment in relation to it when you are speaking of fellowship, it is not ‘come and go’, but you would hold these things for the Lord’s people, have the whole assembly in view.

**MJC** “With those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart” is not a doctrine or creed, this is a matter of affection.

**GR** What is “call upon the Lord”? What does that mean? We often use these words; does it imply that we own the lordship of Christ and so call upon His Name? Does it imply dependence upon Him, looking to Him as our Lord and Head?

**RDP-r** He is spoken of as “the Master”. Would that go along with what you are saying, dependence and subjection?

**MJC** It would appear from this that it is not a collective action; it is individuals who do this? It seems to be something which is individual, experiencing different things, and what is beyond that, or fuller, as together. This seems to be where we start as individuals.

**GR** We have often been told that the position is an individual one, but we can get beyond what is individual.

**GJR** "Call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" would suggest to me that these are persons who have no strength in themselves. They are weak persons, so weak that they have to call upon the Lord; they have nothing here. They are simple, "out of a pure heart". There is nothing about them that is political or complicated; they simply are committed to the Lord. There is more than one, "with those". The Lord in John's gospel (written later than this) does say, "If any one love me, he will keep my word ... and we will come to him", John 14: 23. Here it is "with those", this is not a path which makes us into loners.

**RDP-r** Is this not the kernel of fellowship: we are of the same mind? That is, it is persons of a like mind who desire to be here for the Lord and to serve Him, but if we are going to serve the Lord we have to remember who He is, and that is why this matter of purification and sanctification is essential. That is individual; we have to see that our condition is suited in relation to the greatness of who He is? It is not something that we can do in a natural way, but behind all this is the Spirit's prompting, the Spirit's help in relation to these things. It is all in view of there being right conditions for serving the Lord.

**GR** How wonderful it must have been when Mr Darby and a few others really applied the scripture; it must have been an experience!

**RDP-r** At that time they experienced a lot of opposition because persons whom they left almost took it as an insult as if they were not good enough, but we need to examine ourselves as to that, as to whether we really are suitable to gather to the Lord's Name, or would He have to come in as He did in Revelation and say "I have against thee ..." (2: 4). It is quite a searching matter to "call upon the Lord out of a pure heart".

**GJR** You referred to the sensitivity of what is pleasing to the Lord. There are some dear brethren who would make everything of inward purity. This is not simply that: "call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" is inward purity, but it does actually involve separating from persons. Paul in 2 Corinthians says, "Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us purify ourselves from every pollution of flesh and

spirit” (chap 7: 1), as though there is the outward and the inward. You cannot simply say, 'I am pure in my heart, but I will go along with persons who are not clear as to the truth'. This scripture makes it quite plain that it is necessary actually to separate as far as fellowship is concerned from *persons*, be they very bright believers, if necessary, so that we may pursue these precious things with those who “call upon the Lord out of a pure heart”.

**RDP-r** Purification starts inwardly. It has a practical external effect, but it has to start inwardly.

**GJR** Yes. On another occasion if the brethren are willing I would like help as to why Mr Darby, and many others who felt compelled to leave the established church, did not join one of the dissenting churches.

**Malvern**

**24<sup>th</sup> July 2008**



## FELLOWSHIP (2)

**Hebrews 13: 10-14**

**John 11: 49-52**

**GJR** We have been considering the truth of fellowship and how the scriptures present that privilege to us. For the first three readings we sought to exclude from our minds the practical hindrances to fellowship and sought to see the glory of the truth as presented from the divine side beginning with the call of God into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and reaching its climax in the expression of fellowship in the Lord's supper. We then recognised that we would have in our enquiry eventually to face the practical working out of that in conditions which are a practical denial of it. For this we looked at the Old Testament and learned from the action of Moses who found the need to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, and how God in His dealings with Israel preserved a remnant in Judah; and we saw that those that subjected themselves to the government of God found blessing. We looked at the New Testament, Hebrews and 2 Timothy, and reflected on how the first epistle of Timothy could be likened to the vision Moses saw of the tabernacle, and how the second epistle could be likened to Moses's intelligent action as governed by the truth of God in conditions of ruin. We also noted Paul's comment as to persons in Asia who had turned away from him and how that perhaps was the fruit of what Jesus spoke of as the leaving of first love. We noted how Paul never saw recovery, but John did in Revelation, Jesus conveying to him something very precious: "the Spirit and the bride say, Come", Rev 22: 17. That is assembly truth recovered. Then there were those who have a little power and were told to "hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown", Rev 3: 11.

I wondered if we could look again at Hebrews because in the last reading I missed the vital point of that section and would like to recover that at any rate for myself. I think we are well grounded in the truth (and it is something that we hold precious) that there is one body, and that we should resent anything that is a practical denial of

that. We hold dear the truth that unity is in the mind of God for His people. We are well taught that God's principle of unity is separation from evil. In passing, it would be good to remind ourselves that there is a unity that is not of God. That is illustrated in the history of Babel: we see a unity there that is remarkable, but it is a unity that had not God as its centre and constituted blatant rebellion against God, Gen 11. I suggest we should remember too that Satan's great aim with men, including the people of God, is not division, but unity - in error. I think he will reach that when the church is gone. As Paul says, "the mystery of lawlessness already works" (2 Thess 2: 7); there is such a thing as "systematized error" (Eph 4: 14), and we would do well to be constantly reminded that we are called to a separate path.

I would suggest that tonight we dwell on the truth that has also been unfolded to us that the ground of our gathering is not *only* separation from evil.<sup>[1]</sup> This is where last week I think I missed the point of the scripture in Hebrews; going out of the camp is not an end in itself.

**MJC** You mean it is going forth to Him?

**GJR** It is going forth to Him; I would like to grasp that truly.

**MJC** We have the great matter of the Lord's own suffering being "without the gate"; that is set as the pattern. And then the exhortation is to "go forth to him without the camp". It is not simply leaving the camp; it is *to Him*. That is what we get in Exodus as to the tent, it was not that being outside the camp was an end in itself - the tent was the focal point.

**GJR** This is knowledge we have been brought up with and, thankfully so. Among many others, Mr Darby wrote two tracts, one is entitled, 'Separation From Evil God's Principle of Unity'. Some years later he re-read the article in a publication, and he reflected (Collected Writings vol 1 p366) on how, if carelessly read, that tract could give one side of the truth, and so he wrote another, 'Grace, the Power of Unity and of Gathering'. I wondered whether we might be refreshed on that this evening. It would be good if we were so led that we could conclude these readings with the passage in John 11,

remembering that it was written long after the epistles and after the book of Revelation was written - John, this old man, (decades after the church had left its first love, and persons had turned away from Paul and what he represented), when the truth had been largely given up, recalled and wrote those words. Paul described persons, outwardly Christians, who are enemies, not of Christ but of the cross of Christ, Phil 3: 19. This was the background against which this old man writes his gospel and he tells us this which his readers did not know before. He tells us something in this prophecy of Caiaphas which goes beyond Old Testament prophecy. The fact that Jesus should suffer for the nation was widely foretold in the Old Testament: "after the sixty-two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and shall have nothing" (Dan 9: 26) is just one example. Mr Darby makes the allusion (see Collected Writings, vol 1 p139) that before Jesus's coming (and going into death) the salvation of the elect of Israel was assured. John 11 highlights an additional reason for Jesus dying, and that is "that he should also gather together into one the children of God who were scattered abroad". Let us remember the era in which this was written. It was written in what is in character our day; the house of God in all its glory having become publicly the great house years before, and this man is led of the Spirit to quote what the Spirit had led Caiaphas to say. This is a major reason why Jesus died, "that he should also gather together into one the children of God who were scattered abroad". So we go forth to Him.

**GR** The fulfilment of that is yet future, but is it your thought, that while we are thinking of the fellowship we are looking at the completeness of it as it is in God's mind? I had not connected them before. It takes us back to the beginning of our consideration, God's thoughts, so much greater than ours.

**RDP-r** In Hebrews it says: "let us go forth to him". I wonder whether the purpose of gathering the saints together is in view of the service of God. It is not an end in itself, it is not just a matter of gathering saints together, but there is a purpose in our gathering: that we might be available for the service of God.

**GJR** That is explicitly stated in Hebrews, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God”, chap 13: 15.

**RDP-r** We need to get into our hearts that that is what God’s purpose is in taking us up. It is not just for our blessing, but it is for His praise. That is why He sets us together because then the richness of our praise is fuller, as each one has his part.

**GJR** Could we grasp in our affections that every one of the Lord’s people is required for the service of God? I remember there was a brother in Malvern who had been under assembly discipline for years, quite rightly so. A local brother went to see him and he said, ‘You are needed in the service of God. The Lord can do without us for our preaching and our ministry, but He needs you in the service of God’.

**RDP-r** We had yesterday in Worcester as to our place in the body. It is a place that only we can fill. It is important to see that, that we are all needed in relation to this great response.

**GR** The question you left us last week was, ‘Why did Mr Darby not join the dissenters?’

**GJR** In his time - the nineteenth century - there was an array of dissenting, non-conformist churches. Some asked him why he did not join with them; for a long time I was genuinely puzzled why he did not.

**JAT** He had the truth of the one body clearly before him: the Head in heaven and the body here, and he looked and looked for an expression of the church; he kept looking. I think the Spirit of God led him as subject to the Spirit, with others as well (but he in a distinctive way), and we can thank God today. We owe it to the Lord, for the Lord has His servants who have helped us. Such were not satisfied short of the true answer, or with a partial answer. My dissent might be on one point and yours on another: it is not a question of dissent it is rather a question of *assenting* to Christ in glory and the body here.

**GJR** I am glad that you remind me not to make too much of Mr Darby; I mention him because his is a name we all know, but we must be careful not to make too much of Mr Darby.

**JAT** Anyone who serves the Lord rightly would not look for followers for themselves, and yet the more we read his writings and his hymns and poems the more we value what the Lord had in that vessel.

**GR** Do you think that if he had found other individuals who carried the same exercise and took up the path set out in 2 Timothy 2 that he would have been with them? I would not say 'join them' but he would have found himself in fellowship with them? It is not a matter of joining a company.

**GJR** That sounds very much like what did happen.

**RDP-r** One element of it was to do with the liberty of the Spirit. Many of the dissenting churches modelled their ways on the church they had left, the clergy and so on, which Mr Darby refers to as dispensationally the sin against the Holy Spirit. It is really the liberty of the Spirit amongst the saints that is key to this matter of liberty in fellowship and in being able to enjoy the relationships with divine Persons and Christ as Head of the assembly.

**GJR** I am sure that is so.

**RDP-r** I think we need to be assured today that that is the basis for our gathering.

**GR** We do not want to make things difficult; the truth is not complicated. The scripture we have read, 2 Timothy 2, and the other scriptures we have been reading, are not complicated; they do not involve a lot of doctrine, but really movement towards Christ.

**JAT** The presence of God is the whole point. Moses, an outstanding servant, expressed as his greatest wish that God would be with His people. If He was not with them, His people, the journey would not be worth it, and if God was not going to be here tonight by the Spirit (although it might be nice to meet one another) it would not have the same purpose. Is not the presence of God the great criterion?

**GJR** It is and a leading characteristic of that is the presence of the Spirit and the liberty of the Spirit that we have been speaking of, a divine Person here on earth. If we think of the presence of God, perhaps we first think of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Peter said, "Thou has not lied to men, but to God" (Acts 5: 4), and then "Why is that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?", v 9. It is that divine Person who is here indwelling the assembly. To know the liberty of the Spirit must be a very precious thing.

We seek to follow that quality of exercise which was found in persons who have gone before as to finding an expression of the one body. There must be many gatherings of Christians in Malvern among whom the Lord has His own. Someone might come and say, 'We are all in one body; so I could go to one company today, another tomorrow; to one for the reading meeting and for the preaching to another, on the basis of us all being of the one body'. *Would* that be the confession of one body or would it be a practical denial?

**JAT** It is a privilege, and it is by divine operation that we are members of that body, but it is a responsibility which has to be followed through in the present climate and conditions. We would all confess that we do not know everything, but the present condition, what has come in, has made the difference. We cannot limit the presence of divine Persons, but there is a way that is right before the Lord which He would have His own to take and I think that is the submission of my will. There are certain conditions that are needed, certain requirements at the present time. I think what our brother said earlier was helpful, that Mr Darby and others did not have a formula. They sought the Lord in the presence of God and they did not think ahead; rather they were dependent and that is how things have unfolded.

**GJR** In Acts we read of assemblies, and we know that all those assemblies were a local representation of the one assembly. The thought of an independent church, an independent assembly, is nowhere to be found in the scriptures. The very notion of an independent church is a denial of the one body. But what a beautiful thing is the thought of persons gathering together to the Name of the

Lord Jesus in happy communion and fellowship with one another in many different places; and they are in the enjoyment of the one body.

**RDP-r** In view of the current conditions no company can say that we are *the* one body, but we must acknowledge the one body. No company can claim to be the one body.

**GJR** I think we have been delivered from any such notion of that.

**RDP-r** It is difficult to understand the present conditions unless we are subject and accept the humbling.

**GJR** Scripture shows us, and in some measure experience confirms to us, that there is blessing in accepting the humbling and in making no claims. We have often noted that those in Laodicea have much to say about themselves, but those in Philadelphia had nothing to say about themselves, Rev 3: 7-22.

**RDP-r** It is not a matter of persons *joining us*: we recognise those that are of like mind with whom we can walk.

**GJR** We know that the only ground on which we can walk together is divine grace.

**PD** It is important to keep the truth before us in spite of the many denominations around us and to keep in mind and heart the matter of divine principle. We would like to break bread with all believers in Malvern, but we cannot. In relation to your enquiry, it is not because any brethren are better than other companies, that is not the reason. Why are we where we are? Why are we not looking or seeking to join another company? I am sure other companies could be less worldly than us.

**GJR** To answer your question directly as to why I am where I am, in the ordering of God I was born into a household where these truths were valued, but I am distinctly conscious of having to wrestle with the question as to whether that was really to be my life. Firstly I had to learn that was not enough to save me eternally before God: I needed the Lord Jesus to shelter me under His blood personally. I have asked Him to do that and He has done that. Trials which the

Lord has allowed us to go through have also led me to question whether this is the company to be with and there have been times when I have doubted that, to the extent that there was a time when I was minded to leave - not because there was anywhere else that I thought I should go - but I know this, had I done so, I would not have gone forth to Him outside the camp. I would have gone forth to myself, and would have perished in the wilderness.

**GR** Which many have done.

**GJR** Brethren, I do hope that we can be refreshed in this that the ground of our gathering is not only separation from evil, *it is grace*. That is the ground on which we gather; the means to that end and the obligation on us *is* to separate from evil. If there are persons who deny the deity of Christ or who are not clear as to cardinal truths, we cannot have fellowship with them. If there are companies who have turned a blind eye to blatant blasphemy in the assembly we cannot have fellowship with them. If there are persons who are mixed up with the politics of this world we cannot have fellowship with them, but the act of our separating is not the ground of our gathering.

**JAT** It seems to me that the writer of this letter to the Hebrews, and Peter, coalesce in this as Peter, when the Lord was on the water, said, "Lord, if it be *thou*", Matt 14: 28. I think we have to say, "If it be *thou*. command me to come to thee upon the waters". Peter made that his clear objective, to go to the Lord, but then he doubted, he looked away and he began to sink; but he did not, he could not sink, because he cried, "Lord, save me", v 30. That was a real experience.

**GR** He did for a time walk on the water - that is a wonderful positive thing - before his faith failed. He had the Lord before him in what he did. The others remained where they were. We are not going to reflect on them but we are going to value Peter for what he did at that time. We can speak of Peter's failures, but that was a very attractive moment. There is plenty of evidence to try and prevent us



doing what is right, even within ourselves, but all that was overcome by faith.

**JAT** The exhortation is “let us go forth to him without the camp”; that is the appeal. I cannot think of a greater lever to the heart of a believer. I could be an isolationist, but fellowship involves that I am not, we share these things.

**GJR** The Lord Jesus in Hebrews is presented as outside the camp, but before that He is presented as inside the veil. We have an anchor for the soul, entering in where Jesus is, chap 6: 19. Where is He? He is inside the veil. He has gone in, (He is going to come out as the High Priest, He will come out and bless Israel) but now He has gone in. Publicly He is outside the camp, but what corresponds with being outside the camp is our privilege within the veil. I would like to know the reality of that.

**RDP-r** I was thinking of, “Be ye holy, for I am holy”, 1 Peter 1: 16. It is not separation for separation’s sake; it is separation because we are having to do with the divine presence and the glory of the One who is a representation of the Father. These things, by necessity, require me to separate from evil because you cannot contemplate evil in the presence of God.

**GJR** What is the lever in my soul for holiness?

**RDP-r** Holiness is by love?

**GJR** That is very much like our ground of gathering.

**RDP-r** It is love and grace. What a power to the soul that is!

**GJR** I do not know anything else that would bring about holiness.

**MJR** We do not have a name, we do not call ourselves any church or group, what can we say as to that? We may receive a letter from another locality as an invitation ‘to the saints gathered to the Name of the Lord in Malvern’, etc. We do not have a name, and we would not seek to limit or exclude others, would we?

**GJR** Do you think that when we speak of the one body we have to make the effort, and seek the Spirit’s help, to grasp in our minds that

we are speaking of all the saints. We do not know the majority of them, but when we speak of that we are holding in our affections every one of the Lord's people who has the Spirit. When it comes to the working out of that it involves painful experience. There is a small chapel on the hills here; I might go there, there are some good preachers there, some of whom have preached in this room, and I might say, I will go along and listen and support that, for it is a good work. But I cannot enjoy fellowship with them; I cannot break bread with them because I do not know what they are mixed up with. Were I to go along there I would be practically denying the truth of the one body. I think the principles of the fellowship that we have been enquiring into would forbid me to go there.

**GR** Do you mean that there are persons there who are the Lord's but their position does not acknowledge what we have been talking about tonight. We have departed from that; so to join them would be a denial of the one body.

**GJR** It is a church on its own, an independent church. There may be people of God there, but they are independent and I read nowhere in scripture of an independent church. I read of assemblies.

**JAT** What do they meet in the light of? Or what do we meet in the light of? The truth that there is one body and every true believer belongs to that. That does not work out practically in fellowship with every believer. I think we should get God's view. That truth is a most wonderful thing and one we should give thanks for continually, and hold to.

**GJR** We think of those who meet there, of those who meet in the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Churches and the Roman Catholic Church; we are thinking of the children of God there and we are thinking about the fact that Jesus died so that they should be gathered together into one.

**PD** When would that take place?

**GJR** Something immense had to be overcome for it to be so, and Jesus had to die for that.

**GR** Do you think it would be at the rapture?

**PD** Would we connect that with the rapture?

**GJR** We should. Paul speaks of “our gathering together to him”, 2 Thess 2: 1. We hold that in our affections, and we are looking for it. We are hoping for it at any minute, because it will eventually usher in the day of Jesus Christ, the display of His glory here. But I would love to have the energy of faith and the energy of affection to hold actively in my thoughts and affections the normality that we should all be together, then to think that we are going forth to Him, outside the camp.

**PD** We would not try to get it through our own thoughts; that is the wrong principle. The Lord would be able to do it.

**GJR** We read in the scripture of shepherds. The Shepherd goes after the lost sheep. We read of teachers, we read of evangelists, and these are given for the perfecting of the saints. But if any one of us is acting in any way towards another, whether it is teaching among ourselves, in the gospel, or in recovery work, all that can be appealed to is the work of God Himself.

**JAT** So published ministry goes out beyond the company in which it was given, and that is something that is expanding. We can pray about that. I think we should pray that others may get increased light which would lead them and guide them. There are some of our brethren who are in churches, or other gatherings, who would know in their consciences that they should not be there. There are those who do not have the courage to move. I am sure there are those who would know certain truths, and yet they would remain in the company knowing that they really should not be there.

**GR** I was thinking of the ministry that goes out that is appreciated by many souls, and there must be many who sigh and cry in Jerusalem as the scripture says, Ezek 9: 4. If we apply the ‘gathering together’ in the full sense to the rapture it is a wonderful contemplation that secretly on the earth for a little while there will be the whole of the church. The whole of the fruit of the death of Christ will be gathered at that time.

**GJR** A tremendous thought!

**GR** There will be other saints secured afterwards, but at the rapture there will be a tremendous gathering together of the fruit of the death of the Christ.

**JAT**

We are speaking of the truth of the one body, but what we experience also in the service of God is one Spirit. Would that have any bearing on what we are speaking of as gathering together into one?

**GJR** “He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit”, 1 Cor 6: 17.

**JAT** That must involve union. We do experience union. Mr Stoney says (vol 6 p424) that we experience it individually with the Lord, being united to Him, but there is nothing like the union of Christ and the assembly. That would confirm one Spirit, one heart. If we are responding to Christ as the assembly, it would not be intelligent to speak of hearts, it would be one heart, one voice, one Spirit.

**MJC** In Hebrews it says, “for we have not here an abiding city, but we seek the coming one”. Does that have any application to what we are speaking of? Naturally we might like an abiding city now, but here the writer is saying that that is not what we have. In one sense one’s energies spent in realising that are fruitless, “but we seek the coming one”; that is future. The praise in the next verse does not wait for the coming city; that is what can be enjoyed now, but there is what is coming and seeking that seems to be what we should be occupied with.

**GJR** The thought of the “abiding city” was a distinct one in God’s dealings with Israel. In numerous places it is alluded to, such as “my place ... where I caused my name to dwell”, Jer 7: 12. It was a major question: it was not Shiloh (other than for a while), it was Mount Zion, where David offered up the sacrifice at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, 2 Chron 3: 1. That was the place that Jehovah chose. I think the thought of an abiding city was rooted in

the consciousness of these people. Now the writer is saying we have not that.

**GR** And yet we have come to it morally, “but ye have come to mount Zion; and to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem”, Heb 12: 22. That is a moral matter.

**GJR** We have gone outside the camp; “let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach: for we have not here an abiding city”. It is an overturning of all that they held dear, “but we seek the coming one”. Meanwhile we have Jesus.

**GR** So the Jews were looking for an abiding city here on earth; we have a heavenly one.

**GJR** We do not have an entry in any list of local churches. This meeting room is not the testimony, it is a provision. Our gathering point is the Lord Jesus Himself, His love and His grace.

I would like to pass on something that arrested me from Mr Darby, in his reflections on what he had written as to separation from evil, God’s principle of unity, true as it is, what he also added on reflection is that the act of separating, in a measure, distinguishes those persons, Collected Writings Vol 1 p369. Our poor treacherous hearts are likely to take pride in that. How simple it becomes that the act of separation, *as essential as this is*, is not *alone* our ground of gathering’,<sup>[2]</sup> but it is the Person of the Lord Jesus in His present grace.

**JAT** I think it is very helpful to state that. Moses’s action was a humble action in the light of idolatry. Idolatry would not make you feel proud, certainly not Moses, and the situation today does not make us feel proud; we have to be humble. I think 2 Timothy 2 is not taking high ground: I think it is taking the only ground that is right.

**RDP-r** It is on account of holiness. That is what was essential in Moses’s day, it was the holiness of the One with whom we have to do. It means that separation from evil has to take place if we are going to enjoy the liberty that God wants us to enjoy in His presence.

**JAT** That is not stressed in any wrong sense; we need it. We were speaking of praise in Witney on Lord's day, and we have spoken of the service of God, and at the extreme point, Psalm 22 commences, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", v 1. I think that Psalm gives the foundation for response to God. He says, "And thou art holy, thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel", v 3. And if Israel is to be recovered it will be on the basis of what is in keeping with God.

**Malvern**

**31<sup>st</sup> July 2008**

## **Key to Initials:**

M J Cuckney, Malvern; P Deriaz, Vevey; R D Painter, Yeovil; G Richards, Malvern; G J Richards, Malvern; M J Richards, Malvern; J A Turner, Malvern

# **THE PERSONAL DEALINGS OF THE LORD JESUS WITH HIS OWN**

**Alex G Mair**

**Luke 8: 43-48**

**Luke 19: 1-10**

**Luke 24: 13-43**

**Revelation 3: 14-21**

I would like to say something as to the personal dealings of the Lord Jesus with His own. It is a very extended subject, but I want to confine myself to these scriptures I have read. There are other aspects that we could take account of. He puts His own to sleep; that is a very blessed matter. When a believer dies, what a comfort it is for the bereaved ones to know that their loved one has been put to sleep by Jesus. Then too the Lord Jesus deals with His own at the rapture for He comes Himself, not leaving it to an angel or to anyone else, but He comes Himself, and the Lord will lead us into glory Himself; no-one else will do that.

I would like to speak firstly from Luke 8. It is perhaps elementary but it is stimulating to see the way that this person has to do with the Lord Jesus, and also how the Lord Jesus has to do with her. The scripture in Luke 8 has a prophetic bearing and I will give you a very brief outline of it. The Lord Jesus meets Legion who is a type of the Jew who has to do with the Lord Jesus and comes into blessing. Then you get the swine rushing down into the lake. They typify the ungodly Jews who are swamped in the nations. There is the rejection of the Lord Jesus, "And all the multitude of the surrounding country of the Gadarenes asked him to depart from them", v 37. Jairus comes with his exercise and he is concerned as to his daughter who was dying: she is a type of Israel. At that point you get a story within a story. Now scripture does not normally do that. There is something special about this. The Lord Jesus is going to Jairus's house but Luke does not continue with that; he interjects with this woman who represents our dispensation. Then, just to



complete the picture, Jairus's daughter has died, and that is the situation currently with the nation of Israel. The Lord in His grace goes to the house and raises the daughter, filling out the type of the godly Jews that comes out of the great tribulation. They are brought out, given to eat and are brought into millennial conditions.

This section of scripture that I have read relates to something that is barely mentioned in prophecy - in the Old Testament. We are in a dispensation that is distinct - it is a very blessed dispensation - a dispensation which is in faith, and this woman is a type of a person that operates in faith. She has a condition and has tried everything, but that condition cannot be met by any one except by the Lord Jesus. She comes up behind Him and she touches the hem of His garment. That is tremendous faith. That is an example of faith that this dispensation is marked by. If you have a condition of sin and you realise that you cannot do anything about it, you have tried everything, then you come to the realisation that you have to move in faith and lay hold of this blessed One, the Lord Jesus. So she touches the hem of His garment and immediately she is cured, her condition is met; but the Lord Jesus does not leave it at that. Peter and the others would leave it. They say, "Master, the crowds close thee in and press upon thee, and sayest thou, Who has touched me?", v 45. This is a very important point. The Lord Jesus says, "Some one has touched me, for I have known that power has gone out from me", v 46. Now, dear brethren, we need to lay hold of that. Every believer has to do with the Lord Jesus personally. We are not converted en masse. You have to do with the Lord Jesus personally.

The touch is not sufficient. The Lord Jesus says, "Some one has touched me". Now this woman, "seeing that she was not hid", came and confessed before all. That is the way of salvation, confessing Jesus as Saviour. We need to have more confessions, persons coming into blessing, and coming out and confessing before all Jesus as Saviour. It is a public matter. This woman, seeing she was not hid, comes out and "falling down before him declared before all the people for what cause she had touched him". She is acknowledging her condition and how she was immediately healed.

So that, dear friend, or young one, tonight if you are affected in your conscience and your desire to touch Jesus, exercise faith and touch Him, and come out in confession immediately: “with the mouth confession made to salvation“, Romans 10: 10. Do not delay, do not wait until the preaching tomorrow; it may be too late. The Lord Jesus may come before that time; He may come ere this meeting closes. Do not leave it! I know what your position is like and many here do. You say to yourself, ‘I want to confess His Name, but I will leave it until tomorrow’. Make sure tonight, come out and confess because you get the blessedness of having to do personally with the Lord Jesus.

In 2 Timothy 2 verse 19, “the firm foundation of God stands”; it cannot be moved and it has “this seal, “The Lord knows those that are his”. He knows every one. We do not know them. You take account of every believer, right from Peter’s preaching in Acts 2, to this very moment; the Lord Jesus knows every one. Power has gone out to meet the need. I want us to have a sense of the value of what the Lord Jesus is to the believer, and to endear Him afresh to our hearts. There is nobody like the Lord Jesus; there is no other Person who could meet this woman’s need. Then in 2 Timothy 2 it goes on, “Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity”. It is inconceivable that a believer who loves the Lord Jesus would continue in that which is not suitable for Him. It includes the youngest believer. We need to be sure as to these things. The Lord Jesus loves you. Included in the last word that He says to Laodicea is, “I love”. You may say, ‘I would not say that about a Laodicean’; He says, “I rebuke and discipline as many as I love”, v 19. I will speak about the overcomer there later. The Lord Jesus started out in the type as the Hebrew bondman (Exodus 21: 5) and he says, “I love”. That characterises the Lord Jesus; how He loved this woman. She is a type of the believer in our dispensation, and He says to her, “Be of good courage, daughter; thy faith has healed thee; go in peace” v 48. Have you had the Lord’s word for you? What a word that is, “go in peace”! What a solace to her soul after all the confusion and trial and tribulation that she had regarding

her condition. It is met, and it is not only met, but she is set up; she is going in peace. It is a wonderful thing and it is the Lord Jesus who has done it all.

Now, in Luke 19 Zacchaeus is a very interesting person. We could take this as someone who is perhaps a little further on in their soul. He knew about Jesus. You may know *about* Jesus. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus “who he was”. He had these desires, dear brethren, and if we have such desires, ask the Lord Jesus and He will always answer them. Dear young ones, if you have desires after the Lord Jesus, follow them up because the Lord Jesus will not let that desire go. He always answers desires after Himself. We are told quite a bit about Zacchaeus. Generally in the gospels we get a person brought on to view and we do not get too much of their background. We get a quite a bit of Zacchaeus’s background: he was rich; he was the chief tax-gatherer; and he was small. You do not see such persons in the world running. You do not see them climbing trees to see Jesus. Zacchaeus is different, something is working in this man’s soul. The rich men in the world, the self-satisfied and self-centred, have no interest in these things. Zacchaeus was chief tax-gatherer; tax-gatherers were despised. These things are all mentioned to set in our minds the way that the Lord Jesus answers desire. You may say Zacchaeus was a bit of an eccentric climbing this tree, but the Lord Jesus in His grace comes up to that tree and He says, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down”. This brings out one of the very beautiful features of Zacchaeus: he was obedient. If you have right desires and you might not be going perhaps in the right way in those desires, the Lord Jesus in His grace will adjust you. More than that He says, “for today I must remain in thy house”. That is beautiful. Zacchaeus’s desire is fully answered, but by far more than he ever expected. Zacchaeus thought he might see Him at a distance, but the desire of Zacchaeus was met by the Lord staying in his house.

When you have someone in your house, you begin to know them; you begin to know their likes and their dislikes. What a wonderful privilege he had with the Lord Jesus remaining in his

house. The others, we are not told who they were, “all murmured when they saw it, saying, He has turned into lodge with a sinful man”. Just think of what the Lord Jesus could say to those in the beginning of John when they asked, “where abidest thou? He says to them, Come and see. They went therefore, and saw where he abode; and they abode with him that day”, chap 1: 39. What a sense of being brought into close relation with the Lord! It has been said that you can have as much of the Lord Jesus as you desire. I would appeal to you to lay hold of it. Oh, just see the grace of the Lord Jesus, His own dealings with this man in meeting his desires and bringing him into such wondrous blessing, “salvation is come to this house”. The first scripture we read was the individual; this scripture is in relation to the man’s house. There is progress; our houses are areas where the Lord Jesus should be accustomed to lodging for it is out of our houses that we come to the Lord’s supper. We are coming from one clean place to another clean place because we love the Lord Jesus. Give Him more room; arrange your circumstances to suit Him. It is a very blessed matter; there is piety in that, arranging your circumstances so that God can come into them, and also allowing God to arrange your circumstances. It works both ways.

I go on to Luke 24. The Lord Jesus has very gracious dealings with these two on the way to Emmaus, two believers who were despondent. How easy it is to get despondent! The Lord Jesus in His grace draws near and touches them and sets them back where they should be. We can take account of many persons who are mourning over the tragedies and the disappointments in the testimony; they have stopped breaking bread; they have stopped remembering the Lord Jesus; they are sitting at home, and all the problems and exercises of the testimony are before them. Now these two persons had a tremendous disappointment; all their hopes and aspirations were bound up with the Lord Jesus, but it was in the wrong way. They expected Him to come into His kingdom now. They did not understand that He had to go out by way of death. So you can understand their disappointment. They are drifting away;

they are going to Emmaus. Jerusalem at this point was the centre of God's operations, but they are moving to Emmaus sixty stadia away, about seven miles in our terms. Just think of it, just visualise them, trudging along that road, hearts despondent, feeling very sorry for themselves and the situation they thought they were in, and then Someone draws near to them and He asks them questions. Dear brother or sister, the Lord Jesus will draw near to you. If you are feeling down, He will draw near and He will walk along with you. He will listen to what you say. He gave them a mild rebuke, saying, "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things?" He does not agree with them, but He listens to them and then He unfolds the scriptures. What an unfolding that was while walking seven miles; that would have taken quite a time with them being downcast. He starts from Genesis and goes through the whole of the Old Testament to Malachi, and He unfolds the scriptures concerning Himself. What an expounding of the scriptures! "Having begun from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself". He is drawing attention, not to what they thought, but to Himself and how He was going to enter into His glory. There was never a moment like this. Here was the One who was able to unfold the scriptures, the Expositor par excellence; you could not have it better, the expounding of the scriptures with such feeling.

But it did not set them in motion; it burned their hearts; it set their affections right. What put them into motion was His own touch. There are many sitting at home not remembering the Lord Jesus and the Lord feels that. He would draw near to them. Here He takes the housefather's place and He gives thanks. It says, "having taken the bread, he blessed, and having broken it, gave it to them. And their eyes were opened". It says, "how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread". Now this is not the Supper, make no mistake about it, it is not the Supper. The Lord never sets on independent lines. You find persons drifting away and breaking bread themselves in a house; it is contrary to scripture. They have to return to their company. That is what the Lord Jesus does; He sets them in

motion; He directs their attention to the breaking of bread. He stirs their affections whilst speaking to them of Himself, and then He draws attention to the fact that He had to go by way of death. They did not take any notice now of the declining day and the evening coming in. They set off for Jerusalem right away. That is what the Lord Jesus can do. Is He not wonderful? He can draw near to you in every circumstance. These two persons were not going on with a wrong course; they were not ignoring the Lord; but they became despondent, and here the Lord Jesus in His priestly grace draws near and sets them in relation to the Supper.

Now when they come they find that others had that message. He draws near and comes in Himself. Where do *you* want to be? Be where the Lord Jesus is! He directs them there. If persons are experiencing the Lord's presence, you need to be there because it is Himself. He says, "it is I myself". It is not a spirit; it is the Lord Jesus Himself. But then He says, "Have ye anything here to eat?" Now that is important. The Lord Jesus is looking for something from us as a result of our exercises and as a result of gathering together so "they gave him part of a broiled fish" - the exercise of the fire had taken place, and He partakes of part of a broiled fish - "and of a honeycomb". That shows the saints working together in order that there is something for the heart of the Lord and He takes it and eats it before them. What a blessed matter that is! It is the personal dealings of the Lord Jesus with His own that brings this about. We need to see that, whatever circumstance we are in, the Lord Jesus will come in and meet our need and help us by drawing attention to Himself. He always draws attention to Himself. Now tonight He is drawing attention to Himself in glory; He is there in final conditions, and the Spirit is here drawing our attention to where He is. It is a very blessed matter so that as we are walking in the light of Christ risen and glorified, we will not become despondent. "Even as *he* is, we also are in this world", 1 John 4: 17. It is a wonderful matter that the Lord Jesus operates in such a way to encourage our hearts.

Now finally I just want to touch on Revelation 3. I would rather have read as to Philadelphia but I have been constrained to read as

to Laodicea. The public state of things at the end of the dispensation is Laodicean, but the features that mark Laodicea can so easily mark us individually. We have to be very careful; we can go on with a form of things, know all the ministry, know all the answers, but the Lord is not encouraged to come in; He is outside of it. We might say, 'Well, you will get Laodicean conditions at the end', and speak of the awfulness of it, how it is nauseous to Him, and write them off, but what does He say? He does not write them off. The time will be when He spues them out of His mouth, when He sits on His own throne, but at the moment the day of grace is running its course and He is always in keeping with that. He says, "I counsel thee". Oh, the Lord's word of counsel! It is a word to the individual that he might become an overcomer. Who would listen to the Lord's word of counsel tonight? He says, "buy of me". That takes us back to what we had at the very beginning, a personal transaction with the Lord. Each one of us must have these transactions with the Lord. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire ... and white garments ... and eye-salve". You think of the grace of it, eye-salve to soothe the eyes so that you can see properly, see things clearly. I think it is a reference to the operations of the blessed Spirit, our renewing links with the Spirit so that we may see things clearly, and that we become hot in our affections towards Christ.

Then He says, "I rebuke and discipline as many as I love". We might have said that the condition of Laodicea is hopeless; there is nothing you can do about it. The Lord Jesus still has persons there, and He says, "I love"; He loves His own. This is a word to His own who are perhaps growing cold in their affections. He says, "I rebuke and discipline as many as I love". What grace! There is no one, dear brethren, like the Lord Jesus. At this point at the end of the dispensation there is Philadelphia and Laodicea; both will run on to the end. Right up to the very end He is still counselling, but more than that He is knocking. Have you experienced the Lord's knock? He is knocking in a meeting like this, seeking to arouse you. You remember the one in the Song of Songs who had put off her garment. She could not be bothered to open the door when the

lover was knocking, (SofS 5: 3). Do not be like that! Answer that knock! "Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking; if any one hear my voice". Have you heard His voice? What a voice of love that is! He is seeking entry into your circumstances. He says, "I will come in unto him and sup with him". The Lord Jesus will come into your own circumstances - nothing is left out - and He will sup with you if you open the door; but then far greater "he with me". That leads you back to the assembly as having part with Him. He has only one object, the assembly, and if you are going to sup with Him, it is in the line of being brought back into the full joy of assembly relations. You can understand therefore why the Lord in His personal dealings with His own, regardless of how far they may have gone, is still knocking. He is seeking entry, and He is seeking you to come back into the full joy of assembly life - "he with me". It is only the Lord Jesus who could do that; there is no-one like Him.

I trust that in what I have said that the Lord Jesus has been magnified in each one of our affections. Very soon He is going to sit down on His own throne, and He speaks of it in verse 21 to the overcomer: "He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome". I understand there is only one reference in the gospels to the Lord overcoming and that is in John 16: 33. He speaks there about having tribulations in the world, but we should "be of good courage: I have overcome the world". The features of the world have come in and are marking Laodicea. We need to be aware of that and be roused out of sleep, becoming overcomers, so that we are brought back into the full enjoyment of assembly life.

May it be so for His Name's sake!

**Glasgow**

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Edited and Published by  
David Brown and Andrew Burr 81 Roxburgh Road. West Norwood. London.  
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## **1 NOTE**

The above version of this reading has been amended in accordance with the following, which appeared in Issue No 27.

### **A WORD IN ITS SEASON No. 23**

Concern has been expressed as to certain remarks, accurately quoted in the second Reading on Fellowship, which was published in the above issue. It has been suggested that they could, in the mind of the reader, weaken the necessity of separation from evil - stressed elsewhere in that article: no weakening was intended.

Turning to the notes: the statement ‘...is not separation from evil...’ (this was in italics) would have been better rendered ‘...is not *only* separation from evil...’. – G.J.Richards

**2 Similarly** ‘...the act of separation is not our ground of gathering...’ would be better rendered ‘...the act of separation, *as essential as this is*, is not *alone* our ground of gathering’. – G.J.Richards