

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 34

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THE WILL OF GOD

Hebrews 10: 5-14; 9: 2-5

Romans 12: 1-2

2 Chronicles 5: 7-10

Ephesians 1: 3-6

RB What is in mind, beloved brethren, is to enquire into the will of God. It comes into the scriptures which we have read either directly or typically. We see it pre-eminently in the Lord Jesus in His pathway here in all that He accomplished as a Man. Everything that God had in His heart for man was taken up by that blessed One, and we see in Him the full setting out of the will of God. We did not read any scriptures from the gospels bearing on it, but the brethren should be free to bring in instances in the pathway of the Lord Jesus when the will of God was particularly before Him. We think of Him in the wilderness, being tempted of the devil, how He answered. We think of Him in Gethsemane in prayer. How blessed to be engaged with that One. But the will of God from the viewpoint of Hebrews 10, and also from 2 Chronicles and Ephesians, is an accomplished matter. The Lord Jesus has fulfilled that will in its perfection and it involves His present position at the right hand of God. I thought from our perspective, in what the wilderness typifies, this reference in Hebrews 9 is very beautiful, particularly verse 5, “the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat”. We get some impression of the Father’s delight in the Man that was here, these cherubim speaking of what is protective. That comes into the gospels as well: Matthew’s gospel refers to the little child, and there is protection for the Lord Jesus by His parents and by other agencies as directed by God. This is a beautiful reference, and prior to that it speaks about the golden pot that had the manna and the rod of Aaron that sprouted; so that as we are found here in testimony we have the divine resource in the manna, speaking of the provision of grace from above, and the priesthood of Christ in the rod that sprouted. I wondered if that would help us as to Romans 12 where we are besought to present our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to

God". I think that has been likened to a priestly act, and the reference to intelligent service would also bear that out. We are not to be "conformed to this world, but ... transformed by the renewing of your mind". My impression is that as engaged with the ark in the wilderness in our pathway here, and as we prove help in not being conformed to this world, we prove what the manna is and Aaron's rod that sprouted. We prove the life, and where it is resident above, and that enables us to be here for God's pleasure.

David was one who went in and sat before Jehovah and he saw the end of things as before God. I think as we are engaged with that, and also with the Lord as He was here, we prove what it is to be transformed because we are feeding on that blessed One.

In 2 Chronicles 5 we have the ark at rest, the staves drawn out. That relates more, I think, to final conditions which we read of in Ephesians 1. We read "according to the good pleasure of His will" there and as the brethren are aware there are other references in the chapter to His will, God's will. There is "the mystery of His will" (v 9) which relates to heading up all things in the Christ, and there is "the counsel of His own will" (v 11): we can refer to that if there is time. In 2 Chronicles 5, it is no longer a wilderness setting: it is final conditions; the manna and Aaron's rod that sprouted are no longer in the ark. There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put there at Horeb. That relates to the One who has fulfilled the will of God in its detail and in all its glory; and there is going to be an eternal result from all that has been done by that One. That was what I had before me; do you think we could find help in considering that?

JMcK Yes. I am sure that is very instructive. Could you just say a little bit more of how it applies to us? We speak about these things a lot, but maybe we need to be more instructed to see how we come into this ourselves.

RB I felt that as being engaged with the Lord Jesus as the Ark of the testimony there would be something formed in us that would bear these characteristics. I think the more we frequent the divine

presence and contemplate the One who was here as a blessed Man, the One who said, "Lo, I come to do thy will", the more that would have an effect on us.

JMcK I am sure that is right. We often say, and it is ever true, that God has only Christ before Him and as we are occupied with Him it is in order that these features are wrought out in us for God's pleasure.

RB Yes, that is what I have in mind, feeling the test of it for myself. The first thing that we have to come to is that our own will has to go. We have to submit to the Father's will and the Lord Jesus, you might say, would encourage us to do that. In Matthew 11 He says "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me", v 29. That must relate to the way that He was here before His Father as a Man. For us obedience must be involved in it. I noticed a comment of Mr Darby, that obedience is the only exercise, save praise, of life to God from us (vol 16 p 6); so this matter of doing the will of God must be something very important for us.

AMcK Is there something in this expression here in Hebrews 10, "He takes away the first that he may establish the second"?

RB It is essential that we come to that. We know what the first represented here. It would have represented the system of worship that had been set up and had been recognised by God, but all of that has been done away. For us we have to realise that the first order has gone and that everything is now centred in an ascended Man.

AMcK I wondered if it would be a matter of everything having to be removed in order that the will of God might come into expression.

RB You know in your own experience how important that is. Until you have come to some understanding of that, it is a struggle, but once you have had your affections engaged with the Lord Jesus, the One who was here, the Ark of the testimony, that is the whole secret of it: attraction to Christ where He is.

GBG Is this firstly for God's pleasure? In fact, there was no one else to appreciate this when the Lord said this, "Lo, I come to do thy

will". God was the only One who would appreciate that. There was no one else there.

RB Say more about that, when this took place, if it is possible to say that.

GBG We need to be careful, but the Lord Jesus came here with the intention of doing the will of Another. No one else has done that.

RB There was a body prepared for Him.

GBG That is right. I think this is firstly for God's pleasure. God appreciated the One who was coming in and who came in to do His will.

RB Do you think, too, that Satan recognised how crucial that was if the whole counsel and purpose of God was to be fulfilled; repeatedly in the temptations, and then again when he returns in the garden of Gethsemane, his attempts are to move the Lord out of this position of dependent manhood. There was some knowledge with Satan of how important this was for God.

MGW Does it look as though what the writer is aiming at for these beloved brethren is in verse 19 of Hebrews 10? He is leading up to, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way." In Judaism there was no access to this but now there is. Is He encouraging us in view of our actually taking it up? Let us get into the presence of God. Christ is there in all His loveliness, in all His delight to God. Is that what we are leading up to?

RB I am glad you refer to it. The fact is that the Lord Jesus has gone in as Forerunner. That means there are others to follow Him there, do you think? And not only has the Lord Jesus done everything that God had in His will for Him, but the intention is that there is a generation formed after Him that come into the same position. That is a very blessed matter, and something that we should all be conscious of, that the Lord Jesus has gone in but His intention is to take us in with Him.

GCMcK “By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”. Does that bear on what has just been said as to what has been secured for God: a sanctified company?

RB I think it is. It is a completed matter, is not it? The company is sanctified as a result of the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Other scriptures bring in perhaps a different aspect of sanctification but in this one it is a completed matter. So it relates to what has been said, that there is a company now that affords pleasure to God. God’s pleasure must lie at the heart of it. Do you think this would relate to what we do every Lord’s day morning in putting our hands to the loaf? I got this impression as the result of our time at the Supper a few weeks ago, an impression as to the One who had taken up the will of God and fulfilled it, and then it came in later in the service at the point of praise to God, the One of whom it is said “for thy will they were, and they have been created”, Rev 4: 11. That would relate to creation, but there is the matter of the will of God being fulfilled as praise ascends to Him.

GCMcK Yes, I think so. So really, as coming to the Supper we should be in accord with the sanctification. We should be in the path of the will of God, fully appreciating the One who did it perfectly.

RB It is a challenge to me but, as we put our hands to the emblems in appreciation of the One that was here for God’s will - the loaf in particular bearing that out; we are really pledging our allegiance to Him, and also setting aside our own wills, saying we are here for the will of God. It has been shown so beautifully by the One who was here as Man, but now we, as in the pathway, take that up and seek to be true to it.

NJH This One doing the will of God stands over against universal lawlessness.

RB Open that up please.

NJH This is the starting point really. Righteousness was established at the cross. It subsists now in glory. There is a Man in glory; so the will of God takes us right through.

RB That is the impression I have, and do you think a fresh sight of that would help us in our pathway here, in our wilderness pathway, because the matter has been completed to God's glory and full satisfaction? There will be an eternal result. It has in mind the millennium, in one sense, but there will be an eternal result. When the Lord was here and the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray He said, "let thy will be done as in heaven so upon the earth", Matt 6: 10. That was so when the Lord was here, and it will be so in the millennium when Israel is recovered; but do you think it should be so now as those that have an appreciation of this are here in testimony?

CAMcK You said in prayer that the Lord should be magnified in our view. We are challenged as to knowing what the will of God is in the first place before we begin to do it; but is it not wonderful that He knew intimately that will and was able to complete it to its fulness?

RB If we are exercised as to how we should follow the will of God we need to look to Him. He is the One that has accomplished it. He was here as a Man, He went through things, sin apart, He can sympathise with us as the High Priest and is available to do so, and I think, as being engaged with Him, the will of God becomes more apparent.

APG It says "Thou hast loved righteousness and hast hated lawlessness", Heb 1: 9. It came from His heart, did not it? "Thy law is within my heart", Ps 40: 8.

RB Very good. "He hath magnified the law, and made it honourable", Isa 42: 21. We see in Him the epitome of all these typical scriptures. It is very attractive. So, to refer to Mr Darby again, he pointed out that obedience in the Lord Jesus - obedience to the will of the Father - it not any check but motive, vol 21 p24. It was the spring of His life. He loved that will, and He loved the law, and He magnified it as here. How different from us, but then He is set before us as a model in one sense. Also (and again this is quoting Mr Darby), He never had a desire checked by an imposed law, vol 10 p29. Think of Him in all His beauty and dependence here as a Man. It bows your heart.

GBG Is that the force of the expression “the obedience of the Christ”, 2 Cor 10: 5? It was that kind of obedience. He did not have a will to be corrected like we do.

RB Exactly. It is true to say that He was the only Person here who had a right to a will. Would it be right to say that? Then in Gethsemane we see it most beautifully, “not my will, but thine be done”, Luke 22: 42. His holy soul rightly recoiled from what lay before Him, but He went through with it because it was in the Father’s will.

PAG I was just thinking of what it says at the end of John 14, “but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has commanded me, thus I do”, v 31. But then He says “Rise up, let us go hence”. He would have His own with Him in the motive spring of His love for the Father, do you think?

RB That would extend to us now. Do you feel, in our measure in our pathway here, we know something of that?

PAG Yes. We have spoken about the will of God, but I am just struck by the fact that the Lord explicitly says, “I love the Father”. It is a love of relationship that brings us into the good of these things.

RB So all that the Father is, all that God is, gives character to that will: love, grace, all these matters underlie it. So it is not an arbitrary will. We think of persons having a will, and we know what our own wills can be and are, but we see the love that underlies everything that God is doing and His will is an expression of that.

RG Early in His life He says, “did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father’s business”, Luke 2: 49. Do you think we need to know the will of God to be able to understand the Father’s business?

RB I think so. He knew it perfectly, but we, too, can come into some understanding of it as we grow in experience with God; and do you think being engaged with these things is essential if that is to be so? Do you think we grow in our understanding of the will of divine Persons?

RG It is not an arbitrary thing; it is a very extensive and expansive thought, the will of God, but then His love has been expressed in the Father, and what He is accomplishing in time, amongst men, for His own pleasure, do you think?

RB Yes, that is good.

JAG Peter says, “leaving you a model that ye should follow in His steps”, 1 Pet 2: 21. As being partakers of the divine nature we should be able to locate His steps quite easily, and I suppose the primary thing with the will of God is that God desires to make Himself known in His nature and attributes. That is to be reflected amongst the saints.

RB I am sure that is what we would all desire, to be more like the Man that was here, and to minister more for God’s pleasure. It is set before us as a completed matter but we want to be in correspondence with it in our hearts and affections, do you think?

JAG Yes, I think so. Here I suppose you can say it is abstract but it becomes concrete in the brethren.

RB We can see and take account of those that were particularly marked by this feature. We can read of them in the scriptures, but we have known persons, and we do know persons, that are like this. They have the will of God before them, and I think we would all covet to be more like that.

JAG We sometime have a view of the will of God as something that is hard and arbitrary but it is really for God’s pleasure. He delights in it.

RB Exactly, and I think we need to be more engaged with what the Lord Jesus is for God. That is what drew me to Hebrews 9, this reference to “the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat”. It is a very beautiful reference: the pleasure that there was in heaven as the Lord moved here is set out here. The cherubim are looking down on the mercy-seat and the ark supported the mercy-seat. In the ark are these articles that speak so beautifully of the One that was here for the fulfilment of God’s will.

RG-y Israel knew God's will. God told them what it was through His law, but do you think there is something particularly attractive in the fact that God makes His will known now in His own Son, and it is to be worked out, as this scripture suggests, in an atmosphere where family affections prevail?

RB I thought that was so in the first scripture, "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". That sacrifice involved the body of that blessed One. Do you think something of the feelings of divine Persons are shown in that?

RG-y Yes, I do, and what you have referred to already "the cherubim of glory", as you have pointed out, really speak of the Father's affections, and this protective matter that surrounds this blessed One, and we are drawn into that line of things.

RB I would be glad if you would say more about how we are drawn into that.

RG-y God spoke to Israel from Sinai and fear was the result; but He speaks to us through a Saviour who attracts our hearts, and then the thing is expanded as we get to know Him better, and His will becomes more precious to us.

RB That is good; so we move more into the matter of it becoming a motive for us as it was for Him.

RG-y I think that is very important. We may think, 'What would the brethren think?' or 'I should be doing this'; if it is love for Christ it puts the spring in our heart, and things become a joy instead of a duty.

NJH Was the will of Saul of Tarsus broken in three days? He was ready for the family expression of "Saul, brother", Acts 9: 17. And then he "took not counsel with flesh and blood", Galatians 1: 16. The will was broken; he was ready for the divine will.

RB Exactly, so it could be said of him "behold, he is praying", Acts 9: 11. Is that an indication of one whose will is broken? That could be said of Paul and there are others too. I suppose Jonah had his will broken and we all have to come to that in our own experience: our

own will has to go and there is another will that has to be predominant.

We see in the Lord in His pathway particularly in Luke's gospel, the instances in which He is found in prayer here. I think He is a pattern for us in that.

MGW Would it be a help to refer to Matthew 17 in this connection, as Peter "was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them", v 5? Is that something like what we have here in Hebrews 9?

RB I think so, and the voice. Heaven was expressing its delight in the One that was here in affection. I think linking it with this passage is very good and precious to us.

JSp I am thinking of the thought of partaking, "we, being many, are one loaf, one body", 1 Cor 10: 17. We partake of it. It means we allow it to come into our constitution and we are affected by it. It is not just a symbol that is lying dormant on the table; it is something we actually partake of. Do you think that has a moral effect on us?

RB It should have an effect on us as you say. How often perhaps we have taken the emblems and not allowed the full import of them to sink in, but I think what you say as to partaking is important and it should raise exercise with us all.

GBG Do you look on this scripture you refer to in Hebrews 9 as present and true in God's presence now?

RB That is my impression, but do you think that is all right?

GBG Yes. I think that is the case; therefore we should be engaged with what is in God's presence, with God's delight in Christ and what He has done. It says here, "concerning which it is not now the time to speak in detail", but we would not say that would we?

RB I did not think so. I thought that was true in the time it was written, but in our time I think we would do well to speak about it at every opportunity.

GBG This is an elementary epistle, and these Hebrew Christians needed to be established in grace first of all, and then they would

have liberty to approach God. Do you think that is why he is delaying the speaking of it in detail? He is to establish them in their right to have access to God then they would enjoy what is there.

RB It seems to me he is leading them on a step at a time for their blessing but they have yet to come into things fully, but with us I think we could say the actuality of this should now be known amongst us. What I had in mind as to this setting here were the references to the manna and the rod of Aaron which would be connected with the wilderness and therefore the ark of the testimony. So I think these two sides with us would go on together. There is the fact that the will has been accomplished, but then we are still here in wilderness conditions where we have to prove God, and I thought as engaged with the ark that we would prove God as He should be proved because, really, in the wilderness for the believer, there is nothing but God there, and what He gives in His grace.

AMB Is one of the features of the will of God that it is holy? I was just impressed by that. Practically every scripture that you have brought before us refers to what is holy. The first one as to sanctification would relate to that, and here the ark was obviously in the Holy of holies. I just wondered if you could say something about that.

RB I would rather others opened that out, but it is an affecting thing that it is in the “holy of holies”, and we can go there and take account of it, contemplate it, and allow it to work in our affections so that there should be something that is corresponding to the ark in our own hearts.

AMB God’s will must be entirely according to Himself. He is a holy God: His will is holy. But then He has so provided through the work of Christ and His priesthood, as you are bringing in here, that there should be a response to that holy will, and holiness should be found among His people, really conditions that He can associate Himself with or can be associated with Him.

RB That is my exercise. I feel at times how far short I come and I am sure that most of us do but nonetheless there it is in all its glory

and we are to go in for these things.

RG I was just going to ask you if Aaron's rod that budded should not be an encouragement to every generation. We do not leave anybody behind today when we are talking about this. How wonderful the will of God is and how great it is, but there was the blossom, and there was the budding, then there was the fruit. Do you think that we should encourage one another to go from one point to the next?

RB We should, and I trust that what is being said is not beyond anyone. I would seek to make it attractive so that the younger ones are perhaps attracted to look at it in a way that they have not before. This should be something that we should all desire, to get into the presence of God to see the Man that has so delighted God there, and to prove Him in our day to day pathway as well. It really encompasses everything that we hold.

JSp The Lord, in a unique way, encompassed everything related to the will of God. That would be like the ark carrying these different items through the wilderness. We are in that position. Can we encompass them in our affections and our intelligence, and hold them in regard to God?

RB That is the test. We know our own hearts, but is more room being made for this? Are we seeking to go in for this in an increased way as we move nearer to the time of His return? Do you think the Spirit's work would be to that end that the work that has been going on in the dispensation should be moving towards a culmination, and the affections of the saints must be key to that?

JAG In Romans 12 there is a community of persons working out the will of God in its perfection. There is no colliding, there is nothing going wrong. Everyone is doing what he is supposed to do: a very beautiful situation because it must reflect Christ to God.

RB I wondered that. There is what is acceptable to God. Doing the will of God is not to give us acceptance before God, but nonetheless there is something for God's pleasure as we do it. The basis of acceptance has been laid. If each of us is seeking before God to

see the Lord Jesus and what He was here as embodied in the ark of the covenant and as He is now, our own wills, as feeding on that will, must therefore be done away with. Therefore together you can see how this thing works because there is only one will operating.

JAG Because everybody is after the same thing. Consequently you are beginning to see assembly features develop.

RB There may be a reference to that in Ephesians 1 as to the mystery of His will which is involved in “to head up all things in the Christ”. That must relate to the assembly sharing in headship with Him to some degree.

JS Do you think this would be intended to be the normal result of the glad tidings getting into our souls? “I beseech you ... by the compassions of God, to present your bodies.”

RB That is a very affecting reference. You think of the extent to which the compassions of God have gone for us individually.

AM There is a verse in Psalm 119 which starts one of the sections, “Oh how I love thy law!”, v 97. Do you think that shows that the soul is making progress? We have been taught that Psalm 119 is the filling out of Psalm 1. Psalm 1 is only six verses. Psalm 119 is longer, but I was thinking about what you said as to the different generations. We do not drift into this. There has to be genuine soul exercise, but there are tremendous encouragements along the way.

RB Each of us has found that in different ways but it is all tending to the same end, and I think what you say is very helpful.

GCMcK So that the will of God required a vessel in which it was carried out. The ark was that, and in Romans 12 you need vessels, do you? The bodies of the saints become that.

RB Yes. I wondered if feeding on the Lord as the One who came here and had a body prepared for Him would lead us on to this, to present our bodies a living sacrifice as we see what has been worked out by Him. What else would we want to use our bodies for if that has really taken hold of our affections?

GCMcK You spoke of the will of God in its detail being carried out by Christ, and the idea of the will of God connected with our bodies makes it very practical. It brings it down to every possible detail you would say. Again it is “holy, acceptable to God”, which would link on with what we have been speaking about - what is pleasurable to God.

RB As was said earlier, it is not an arbitrary thing. You come into it because you delight in it. You see the One who embraced the whole of the will of God and made it honourable, as has been remarked, but you come into that and therefore you would accept an exhortation “be not conformed to this world”. The manna and Aaron’s rod that budded would help us in this matter of not being conformed, but being transformed.

RG-y Do you think that is one of the ways in which we learn what is acceptable to God. We find that in the holiest. We find what God has retained before Him for His presence, and as we go in there we see in the golden pot that had the manna, that it is not what the manna is to us there; it is what it is to God. And we gain something from the understanding of affections that divine Persons have for each other.

RB What you say is absolutely right. It is what these things were to God, but the wonder of it is that they are available to us. So that in our experience we can prove them in our measure and what is involved is bringing us into correspondence with the will of God ourselves.

GBG We all might feel we are not up to this but we can feed on it.

RB Yes, and you would encourage us all to do that, to be engaged in these things. Even if we feel that they are beyond us, nevertheless we will get something, and we will begin to make progress on these lines.

JMcK What is your thought as to “your intelligent service”?

RB I think the reference to intelligent service has been linked with the scripture, “I speak as to intelligent persons” (1 Cor 10: 15), and I

believe it is linked to what is priestly. So we have the service of God and His pleasure before us.

JMcK There have been various references made to development and growth. We do not come into this immediately, do we? I think we become spiritually intelligent as we become occupied with certain things.

RB I think that is the key. So it has often been pointed out in relation to this portion of scripture, that having presented our bodies we do not take them back. We have placed them on the altar and they remain there. Our appreciation of what is for God Himself should grow as we are engaged with these things and as we seek wholeheartedly to come into them in a fuller way.

JD Do you think the love of God then introduces us to what abides, which would be a great encouragement to our souls to go in for it, do you think?

RB I was thinking of that: "he that does the will of God abides for eternity" in 1 John 2: 17, and I think you can see that as you are engaged with these things, as you are engaged with Christ where He is, the One who "has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified". These are the things that are going through.

JW The Lord said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God", Luke 4: 4. That was His food, was not it? He says "morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear", Isa 50: 4. He fed really on the word of God, did He not?

RB And in that He is pattern for us, do you think?

JW Yes. I was thinking that. We do not just fill out the will of God because we know it is the right thing to do, but I was thinking of what was referred to where the psalmist says "O how I love thy law".

RB I think that is good; so "morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear" (Isa 50: 4) shows He was here as a dependent Man, and we should be exercised to be found here in that character. I think what you say is helpful and what you quote is what He said in relation to the devil tempting Him, quoting from Deuteronomy. I think it has

been pointed out that in Luke's presentation of the temptations the first temptation is really the will of the flesh, JND Notes and Comments vol 6 p102. He hungered, and Satan sought to tempt Him in that way, and move His thoughts off the will of God, but the Lord overcame that, and then, as to dominion, that may relate to the mind of man in relation to "who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God", John 1: 13. The Lord Jesus was perfect in all these things and it should affect us and help us in what we have to face here.

JAG We are affected by the compassions of God, and how deep and great they have been to us. How God has shown His compassion. It should really affect us in depth.

RB You see the length to which the Lord Jesus has gone that that should be so, as a Man here, but the perfection of His Manhood required His death to fill this out to completion; "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. He had to go into death and lay down that perfect life in the body in which the will of God had been fully manifested. Really, the matter of death was the fullest expression of it, do you think?

JAG Think of God who "has not spared His only Son, but delivered Him up for us all", Rom 8: 32.

RB Yes, what you say would affect us all to have our hearts softened so that the contemplation of these things should produce a result in our own hearts for Him.

NJH So it is the way that God looks at matters that governs us. The mind of God is to regulate us in divine things, is that right?

RB I think that is very important, that the mind of God has to regulate us, because the only thing that is suitable for His presence is Christ. The flesh and man's mind have no place there, hence the reference to intelligent service. There is something that is suitable and pleasurable to God.

JS Is that where the renewing of our mind comes in, do you think?

RB I would be glad if you would say something about what that would involve, please.

JS You come to a different way of looking at things, looking at things from God's standpoint instead of from the human standpoint and prove then what is the "good and acceptable and perfect will of God", Rom 12: 2.

RB So we will not prove anything of this without a renewed mind, will we? There is the fact that we submit to the divine will, and that is good, but the proving of it seems a positive thing and an active thing, that we relate ourselves to the will of God in order that we may know that it is good and acceptable and perfect.

DTP Is this when the spirit of grace and priestliness is operating in our hearts? The renewed mind sets you on a different path, does it not, and when priestly grace is operating there is forward progress and development in the soul and committal too, and it becomes very precious to the heart?

RB I think so, and do you think formation results from such a path?

DTP I think it does. I think it alludes to what you referred to as to Aaron's rod budding. That is where you see it in its development. And it was through that really that matters were secured and held at that point, and it is needful that that spirit is operating amongst us.

RB I think so. So what came in in Aaron's rod was life, and we covet to have life, to be in touch with the One in whom indissoluble life is.

DTP When you are transformed you are in life, are you not? And when the line is renewed, these are all the activities of life.

JSp You refer to priesthood. One of the prime features of priesthood is you are under charge. David says, "was it not laid upon me?", 1 Sam 17: 29. Things are not optional. You do not just take them up and drop them as it suits us; you are under an obligation of love, but nevertheless it is an obligation.

RB So you would link that with presenting our bodies, and leaving them on the altar as it were. You would want the divine charge to lay

hold of you permanently. As you say, it is not something we take up and lay down as it suits us, but it is to mark us really.

MGW Is this the way to some happy discoveries. The will of God is good; then I discover it is acceptable; then I find it is perfect.

RB We can relate to the will of God being good because it emanates from Him, and perfect, but acceptable is perhaps where we may struggle at times, but as we lay hold of what is available in the grace that comes from above in the provision of the manna, and in the priestly support of the Lord Jesus as shown in Aaron's rod that budded, then we come into this matter of it being acceptable to us, because our own will has gone and therefore what is acceptable must mark the will of God.

JAG After Numbers 17 there is no more murmuring. In chapter 18 the priesthood is charged with the sanctuary, and chapter 19 is provision in the water of separation, and then they begin to journey.

RB So Aaron's rod was put in the ark as a testimony against the murmuring, and that should lay hold of us. We know what we can be at times if we have complaints, or we are murmuring; then look in the ark, and see what is before God for His pleasure, and I think that would change our outlook, transform us as is set out here.

DS Does God want us to prove His will? It would become food for us. I was just thinking of what you were saying as to growing up to God's will. Initially it is not natural to us, is it, but does the proving of God's will show really what is there substantially to build up the believer?

RB I thought in that way that the manna is not beyond any of us, what we can get by way of gracious provision. Think of the children of Israel going outside their tents in the morning, and the manna transforming the wilderness. Each of us, no matter how young we are, needs to find the manna attractive, and I think that develops a constitution in us as you say. We feed on it and become formed after the One who was here.

DS I am just attracted to what was said earlier as to how God's will forms a believer, and God loves us to prove Him, does He not? There is resource with God in every situation that we fall into and that is really God's will for us, but sometimes we do not take it that way. God loves us to prove Him because the resource is there so that we become more like Christ.

RB That is good. "Prove me now herewith", He could say in the prophet, "if I open not to you the windows of the heavens, and pour you out a blessing, till there be no place for it", Mal 3: 10. So God, as you say, loves us to prove Him.

GBG Is the renewing of our minds a constant thing. This is not only for young believers. This is for all of us, is it not? We may get our minds set as to persons and things, and think the way we do things is the right way, but we have to be sensitive. The renewing of our mind goes on all the time.

RB What you say is right and something that exercises me. I feel that the remedy to it is to get into the presence of God, without any mindsets and preconceived ideas, but just to go in, as David did, go in and sit and see what God would say to you rather than what you would say to Him.

GBG Part of God's will in this setting is that we are part of the one body in Christ; therefore the necessity of our minds being renewed in view of sitting together.

RB I think what was referred to earlier about everyone working together in the same direction is key to this.

RG Moses brought the will of God to bear on the people. Aaron then comes into the picture as the one, in his priesthood, who could open that up and help us to understand it and answer to it. But Nadab and Abihu were outside the scope of what was under way: strange fire, no renewed mind, and therefore unacceptable. Do you think we want to keep in the company of the true Aaron, who is the Lord Himself?

RB I think that is essential, and should be an increasing exercise with us, that that should be so. So that regarding anything that may be even hidden from the brethren, we get into the presence of God and it is exposed there, and it needs to be judged in the light of the death of Christ. As such we are found here amenable to the compassions of God, and amenable to the will of God.

RG-y We often connect this rightly with priesthood. Would you allow that there is some suggestion here also of sonship? There is the thought of compassion that you refer to, but then there is intelligence which would be a feature of sonship. That would begin to develop with us, do you think, as we have to do with these things?

RB That is good. You could open that up further, please. Sonship and priesthood go together in many ways. Sonship underlies priesthood.

RG-y Well, is it not in the line you have been setting before us? God said, "Let my son go, that he may serve me", Ex 4: 23. And the affections proper to sonship really underlie what is suitable in the way of service to God, do you think?

RB Yes, that is right and good.

RG That is good, because priesthood is for time. It does not go into eternity. Sonship goes into eternity, but we need this priesthood so that we might understand and answer to the will of God. But then, when you come to Chronicles and Ephesians, it is sonship, is it not, as we enter into the blessedness of what is in the holy of holies?

RB I felt that. There is no need of priesthood then, is there? We are beyond the contrary scene in which we need these supports. So it says there is nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put there at Horeb. The reference to the staves is a reminder that this ark has been carried, though the staves are now drawn out, but it speaks of a place of rest, final rest. How pleasurable to the heart of God.

RG This is John 17, is not it: "that ... they may be with me, that they may behold my glory", v 24.

RB Very good.

BL The ark is in its place here. It has been in other places; the staves that you refer to would allude to where it has been. It has been carried through the wilderness; it has been in the bed of the Jordan but now it is in its place.

RB Go on, say what that would mean.

BL I think what you say is right. Its finality has been reached. Everything has been carried out and accomplished, and now it is in its place.

RB It is the place that the will of God always had for it, do you think, and that will has been brought through perfectly without any hindrance? As you know, when the ark was in the wilderness it went ahead of the people to search out a resting-place (Num 10: 33), but this is finality. This is the ark in its own place.

JSp-s The will of God has an end in view. We might think of doing God's will here in time, but there is a glorious end in the will of God, is there not?

RB I think that is right, and that being engaged with the will of God, even when we are here, is a wonderful matter for us and helps us in our pathway. Just to be engaged with the Lord Jesus before the Father for His own sake, without any need, without anything of ourselves intruding. How quickly we bring ourselves in, but just to see where He is for the pleasure of God, the will of God completed in that way.

GCMcK John 17 has just been referred to; "I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world", v 24. Does that enter into this? It is a glory that is peculiar to Christ as the One that has completely accomplished every thought of God, brought it all about. Is that touched a little here, do you think?

RB That is very fine: I appreciate what you say. I could not add to it but I see that beautifully here.

JSp Do we anticipate finality in the service of God?

RB I felt that. This is not theoretical. We know this ourselves: in privilege we do touch this. We get to a point in the service where, you might say, the staves are drawn out, and there is complacency there which relates to the final condition. I think that is a real experience and a very blessed one. What a stimulus it is to our affections as well and what a spring of worship. You get to this point and we can you do nothing but worship and respond in the light of all that has been accomplished, in the light of what we come on to in Ephesians 1: 2; “according to the good pleasure of His will”, the “mystery of His will”, and then the way that He has taken, the “counsel of his own will”. The way all these things have been brought to pass bows your heart in worship, does it?

JAG The sacrifices “could not be counted nor numbered for multitude”, (2 Chron 5: 6) is the answer to this.

RB Very good; then the glory fills the house. When the priests cannot stand to do their service it is a wonderful culmination of all of that.

PAG I am just wondering: you mention these three aspects of the will of God. What was your impression about them?

RB You could help us about that.

PAG Does it suggest the scope of the will of God? The good pleasure of His will relates to what is beforehand, the mystery of His will relates to the fulness of times, but the counsel of His will relates to the present operations of God; so the will of God, in that sense, we can see from these scriptures, covers everything as to time and as to eternity.

RB So the mystery of His will is a mystery because it has not yet happened. We are awaiting that day, but it is not a mystery to those who, you might say, are initiated into it, and we know what this refers to. We know that all things are to be headed up in the Christ, and as far as we are concerned that has now happened, but it awaits that time to happen in actuality, does not it? As to “the counsel of his own will” - think of that: who did God take counsel with? He took

counsel with Himself, and He has worked everything out in accordance with that will: a very blessed matter.

JAG All this is “in the volume of the book”, Ps 40: 7. Well, it is very voluminous, the book.

RB Mr Darby refers to the book of eternal counsels, Synopsis on Hebrews vol 5 p231. What you say is very suggestive.

Brechin

12th September 2009

Key to Initials

A M Brown, Grangemouth; R Brown, Grangemouth; J Drummond, Aberdeen; J A Gardiner, Aberdeen; R Gardiner, Kirkcaldy; A Grant, Dundee; G B Grant, Dundee; P A Gray, Grangemouth; R Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; B Lovie, Aberdeen; A McKay, Brechin; C A McKay, Brechin; G C McKay, Glasgow; J McKay, Brechin; A Munro, Grangemouth; D T Pye, Kirkcaldy; J Speirs (JSp-s), Grangemouth; D Spinks, Grangemouth; J Spinks, Grangemouth; J Strachan, Dundee; J Webster, Fraserburgh; M G Wood, Dundee

BEING IN THE RECOVERY

Jim T Brown (Grangemouth)

Ezra 3: 1, 2

Nehemiah 2: 17-20

Revelation 3: 10-13

What has impressed me, dear brethren, is that week by week, as we come to the prayer meeting - and it is a wonderful thing to come together to pray with others who have priestly feelings - brothers frequently give God thanks for recovery, and pray that the recovery which has been set on may continue. It is wonderful to realise that we are in times of recovery. The history of the testimony has been one of departure and recovery, departure and recovery. That was so in the history of the children of Israel, and would be confirmed in the early chapters of Judges. Because of their unfaithfulness and waywardness, God gave them up. And then when they repented, God raised up a saviour, or a judge, and God was with the judge. It was a time of recovery, and the recovery resulted in great spiritual prosperity. Sadly, in the history of the children of Israel, it was not maintained; it was not sustained. There have been many recoveries in the history of the testimony. My desire for myself and for all the dear brethren is that we might be maintained in the brightness of recovery to the truth.

The time of which we have read in the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah was a very dark time in the history of the children of Israel. Because of their unfaithfulness, the people had been carried off into Babylon. God's judicial dealings were apparent, and they had been carried off into Babylon. And yet out of that situation, God brings about recovery. It was a wonderful matter. And there is recovery going on at the present time. We thank God for His grace that has given us a part in such a glorious system of things. Ezra, we have been taught, speaks of the sovereignty of God. God had done something Himself. He had raised up Cyrus, a most unlikely person to set on a recovery among the people of Israel. Cyrus was

a great earthly potentate, but God had his eye and His hand upon him. If you read chapter 45 of Isaiah you will get some idea of the place that this gentile monarch had in the divine programme. That chapter was written and Cyrus was named in it a long time before he was born. God, in His mind, goes a long way upstream with a view to effecting recovery in the hearts and souls and lives of His people. Where we read, it says, "And when the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem". That is a wonderful thing - they were united as one man in their desire to have part in this wonderful recovery.

Then it says, "Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and built the altar of the God of Israel". In this recovery in Ezra, we begin with the altar. This is the altar of burnt offering. I believe that God always begins at the top. Spiritual persons under the direction of God would begin at the top. The burnt offering would relate to God's appreciation of Christ. And I believe that, if recovery is to be set on and maintained, it is only as we are occupied with God's thoughts as to Christ. We often speak about searching out the Father's thoughts as to the Son - it is a wonderful occupation. As we relate ourselves to the blessed Holy Spirit we get some appreciation and some impression of the greatness of the Father's thoughts as to the Son, God's thoughts as to Christ. The Spirit has come from a glorified Christ. "But when *he* is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming", John 16: 13. The Spirit comes out from that sphere of love and glory and would reveal to us the greatness of the Father's thoughts as to Christ. That is a wonderful occupation. I feel tested as to how much I can say about the Father's thoughts as to Christ, and no doubt we all do. But as we give the Spirit of God scope and give Him sway in our lives He would give us some appreciation of the Father's thoughts as to the Son.

If Ezra speaks of the sovereignty of God, Nehemiah speaks of the faithfulness of man. It is a necessity, if recovery is to be maintained, that we are faithful to the Lord and faithful to the truth - to the truth of Christ and the assembly. So in Nehemiah, we have the wall. It is like a reassertion of divine principles. Let us never lose sight, beloved, of the need to maintain divine principles. The principles of separation have never, ever been given up. Let us maintain them, beloved brethren, in all their integrity, so that there may be a greater and more glorious answer to the heart of God and to the heart of Christ. Where we read it says, "Ye see the distress that we are in, that Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach". Nehemiah had in mind the house; he had in mind, you might say, the worship of God, the area where the Father dwells and where the service of God could go on. How important it is to have a view of that! It has to be maintained in all its glory and integrity, so he says, "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach". There is a need to maintain the wall, dear brethren; there is a need to maintain what is due to God. There is a need to uphold in their integrity the greatness of assembly principles so that what is for the heart of Christ might be maintained. "They said, Let us rise up and build. And they strengthened their hands for the good work." Oh, beloved brethren, there is a good work going on at the present time. It requires strength, it requires power; and the power is there, resident in the blessed Holy Spirit. But it requires the saints. We have been set together so that the wall might be maintained, so that the truth of separation might be maintained. Let us hold to it, dear brethren.

Later it says, in chapter 4, "And it came to pass that when Sanballat heard that we built the wall, he was angry and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? shall they be permitted to go on? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, when they are burned? And Tobijah the Ammonite was by

him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox went up, it would break down their stone wall", v 1-3. There are people in Christendom who have no appreciation of the principles of separation, but let *us* maintain them, and maintain them in their fullness, in order that there might be something secured for the heart of the blessed God. "Even that which they build, if a fox went up, it would break down their stone wall." Think of the awfulness of that being said, dear brethren - "if a fox went up, it would break down their stone wall". Let us be on our guard against this nocturnal creature which works in a clandestine way, with a view to the destruction of what is for the pleasure of the heart of God. The foxes, in the sense in which we are speaking, are attacking the walls at the present time. The foxes are always attacking the walls; and the enemy is constantly attacking the principles of separation and if he is successful in breaking down the wall, his progeny will attack and spoil the vineyards (Song of Songs 2: 15) and the service of God will be hindered. Let us be on our guard in view of the glory of God.

I read in Revelation 3 because it brings it down to our own time. Philadelphia is a very attractive presentation of the truth of the assembly in days of public departure and breakdown. We know that Ephesus was the acme of Paul's presentation of the truth, but there had been departure. But Paul says "there will come in amongst you after my departure grievous wolves, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall rise up men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them", Acts 20: 29. That is what rose up from Christendom, from the public profession; and there is much rising in public profession at the present time that causes your heart to mourn and to grieve as to how low things are becoming publicly. Let us be on our guard to maintain the truth in all its integrity. Then the address to Philadelphia goes on, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial, which is about to come upon the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell upon the earth". This is written to an assembly

that speaks of brotherly love. Let us maintain love in its fullness among us.

It also says “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an opened door, which no one can shut, because thou hast a little power, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” Think of the integrity of these dear saints in this local assembly. I believe that it is really a presentation of what is normal in Christianity in the closing days of the assembly’s history here. You might ask ‘What is there to overcome in Philadelphia?’. There is a need for every one of us to overcome in order that what Philadelphia speaks of may be maintained, in all its purity and greatness. “He that overcomes, him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more at all out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven, from my God, and my new name.” I love these references to “My God”. That is Christ’s God. In Ezra we were occupied with God’s thoughts about Christ; here we have Christ’s thoughts in relation to God. The Spirit would help us to penetrate into that realm, to understand Christ’s thoughts in relation to God. He says, “I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”, John 20: 17. He would take us into an area where not only can we see a demonstration of the Father’s thoughts for the Son, but we can see a demonstration of the Son’s thoughts for His Father, the Son’s thoughts for His God. “He that has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.”

Beloved, the Lord is saying wonderful things to the assembly at the present time. Let us guard it, let us cherish it, more and more, so that there may be more in our hearts individually, locally, assembly-wise for the heart of Christ and for the heart of the blessed God, for His Name’s sake.

Grangemouth

9th June 2009

SPIRITUAL REFINEMENT

Paul A Gray

Exodus 25: 6; 27: 20; 30: 22-38

It is in mind, as the Spirit helps, to say something about spiritual refinement. I have been very struck that in our prayer meetings we hear mention of the generations among the saints, from very small children, to children at school, to young people in their teens, to younger men and women, to older ones including parents, grandparents and great grandparents. They are mentioned, in some cases, because they are suffering. That brings out body feelings. But it is intended, too, to produce in us spiritual refinement. Such suffering is not needless, and it is not punitive. –It is God's way of producing what is pleasing to Himself. The sufferings are sore ones and are not to be overlooked or taken lightly, but they are in the ways of God and under the hand of God, and are intended to produce refinement in the souls of the saints and increase in the service of God.

Where we read in Exodus 25, there is reference to certain basic elements. "Oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil, and for the incense of fragrant drugs". As we go on in the scriptures we have read, we see certain refinement as to these things, certain details and distinctions brought out which are intended for our instruction. One of the effects of suffering, I believe, is to bring out features of Christ. We sang in our hymn,

That Name encircles every grace
That God as Man could show;
Thus only could we fully trace
A life divine below.

(Hymn 6).

We have also considered recently the coat of many colours that Joseph had from his father. It does not tell us there (Gen 37: 3) what these colours were, but it leaves us to search the Scriptures, and particularly the gospels, to find out more about these colours:

their variety, their perfectly balanced pattern, and the way in which they merge together in perfect oneness to produce what was pleasing to the heart of God distinctively and uniquely in Christ. But this variety is meant also to be seen in the saints, although none of us individually, or even as we are together collectively, could reach to what Christ fully was,

Thus only could we fully trace
A life divine below.

And so these refinements come in, first speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit. “That they bring thee olive oil” - it is not now simply “oil”, but it is a particular kind of oil - “pure, beaten”. There is a certain element of exercise goes into bringing this oil. There is activity - the footnote says that it is 'beaten in a mortar, not pressed'. Some of the circumstances we have spoken of involve pressure, but this exercise here involves activity, having in view that first of all in the tabernacle system there might be light. God has in mind that the system in which He operates is characterised by light. So it says: “But if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin”, 1 John 1: 7. He has suitable circumstances in which to operate, and suitable persons in whom to display His mind. But it is all imbued by the power of the Holy Spirit. I know that in the tabernacle system the ark was in darkness, but that is not the case now. “Whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood”, Rom 3: 25. The ark is no longer in a place of darkness; God is not dwelling in thick darkness: He is dwelling in light and indeed Scripture speaks of “his wonderful light”, 1 Pet 2: 9. That is what He would bring us into.

But we must remember the Person of the Holy Spirit. Olive oil has a particular and distinctive character. The Spirit's day has a particular and distinctive character. It is pure. There is absolutely no adulteration in the work of the Holy Spirit. It is distinctive, and unique. But then it requires exercise to maintain what is suitable to God; so the oil is beaten. It speaks about “using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit”, Eph 4: 3. Where we read it says “to light the

lamp continually". There is continual light in God's dwelling place; there is no doubt about that. But this light involves causing to ascend (Exod 25: 37, note), so that as we depend on the Holy Spirit there is what ascends to God as a result of all that He has done, and as a result of what the activities of the Spirit have produced for His glory.

In chapter 30, we come to distinctions and to proportions. Spiritual refinement involves what is proportionate. Ought there to be more emphasis on one aspect of the truth or another? The Spirit emphasises certain aspects of the truth at certain times, but the truth is to be held in proportion. Ought there to be more emphasis on the glad tidings? There ought to *be* emphasis on the glad tidings. But it is not everything. Does that mean then that it is all about ministry? No, it is not all about ministry. Is everything centred on the service of God? Everything *begins* there, but each aspect of the truth - and I do not have the capacity or the time to go over them all - is to be held in balance. Spiritual refinement would have that in view. "Best spices" - nothing but the best will do for God. It also says "of olive oil a hin". Everything, as it were, is invigorated by the presence of the Holy Spirit. I leave the brethren to go into the detail of these ingredients - the myrrh, the sweet cinnamon, the cassia - all is according to the shekel of the sanctuary. Nothing falls below the divine standard here. And this all flows from what the people brought. The basics of it are described in chapter 25, but the detail of it is given in chapter 30 so that we might see that from the heart of a willing people God secured that which was marked by variety, refinement and proportion, and it was for His glory.

So "an oil of holy ointment" is referred to. Much is said here, but scripture never repeats itself unnecessarily. So if it says, "a perfume of perfumery after the work of the perfumer" that is what it means. There is not a mistake here as to a word being repeated. There is the thought of what ascends in the perfume, imbuing the atmosphere of the place; then there is 'of perfumery', that is to say that it has a certain character that is according to the divine standard; then 'of the work of the perfumer', that is to say that skill

goes into producing it. "It shall be the holy anointing oil". Then it says, "And thou shalt anoint the tent of meeting with it, and the ark of the testimony ...". All that is within the tent of meeting is anointed with it. The whole system is drawn together and unified by this anointing oil. The work of refinement has not in mind that we have or create personal distinctions that set us apart but rather has in mind that the whole system of things is drawn together in perfect unity and all is pleasing to God. Everything there is anointed right out as far as the laver, which means that man's side is brought in. The laver is not anointed with blood, as the brethren will know. The scripture in Hebrews says, "almost all things are purified with blood" (Heb 9: 22), but the laver was not, because that was from man's side; but everything from God's side was anointed with blood and everything is anointed with oil. So everything that is for the service of God is brought in under the anointing, so that God might be served in suited conditions.

Then you find that the personnel that have their part in it are similarly anointed. So they are not separate from the system of things that God has established for His own glory. It also says that this anointing oil cannot be put on any strange thing. I just touch on this briefly: spiritual refinement cannot be put on and put off. It says in the note 'a stranger to the priesthood'. I cannot become a priest one day and stop being a priest the next and then take it up again as though it were an optional matter. It requires the character of priesthood to be there so that the anointing can be applied and we can come into the good of it. And when the scripture speaks of priesthood in the Old Testament, that is largely signified by spirituality in the New. What God has in mind is that He should have spiritual persons before Him, anointed and in dignity and consistent with the great system of glory that He has established.

And then finally there is the incense of fragrant drugs. Certain aspects could be referred to in the detail, but I just touch on this: "salted, pure, holy". This incense of fragrant drugs is not something that is going to decline, because it is salted, it is preserved, and it is preservative. Pure and holy means that it is not adulterated and it is

according to God's standard. But then further activity is required, for as the whole system is brought together and the personnel in it are unified, there is what ascends to God.

Grateful incense this, ascending
Ever to the Father's throne;
Every knee to Jesus bending,
All the mind in heav'n is one.

(Hymn 14).

I say this for the encouragement of the younger brethren: "And thou shalt beat some of it to powder, and put some of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting". If you have an impression, perhaps on a Lord's day morning, and you say 'It is not all that it might be' - well, God accepts 'some of it'. If there is something that speaks to Him of Christ, He delights to hear it. Believe me, beloved brethren, God loves to hear His saints speaking to Him of Christ. It goes on "where I will meet with thee". He meets with us, as it were, as the grateful incense of the glory of Christ arises to delight Him. "And the incense that thou shalt make, ye shall not make for yourselves"; Christ's distinctiveness to God is ever maintained, as is brought out particularly in the burnt offering. Nor were they to make it for themselves "according to the proportions of it". You might say, 'I know how to make this, I know how to do it in my own power'. No, beloved brethren, spiritual refinement means that spiritual things are communicated by spiritual means, and that is what God would insist on here - "it shall be unto thee holy to Jehovah". God loves Christ, uniquely and perfectly, but not exclusively, for the Lord says "thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me", John 17: 23. Spiritual refinement would have in mind that God receives from His saints that which speaks to Him of Christ, in all His glory. May we therefore be encouraged that God is receiving, even through the suffering of the saints, that which is pleasing to Him and which is adding to the aggregate of the glory that will be seen in a day to come. May it be soon, for His Name's sake.

Grangemouth

9th June 2009

THE BOSOM AND BREAST OF JESUS

Norman J Henry

John 13: 23, 25

These two verses have been spoken about many times, they are well known to the brethren, but it struck me as sitting together and hearing what has come to us from the Lord, that there is an order here; the bosom is known first before the breast of Jesus. We say with holy reverence, they are both in the same area of that blessed body of the Lord; and I thought that some of our brethren need special support at the moment. It has been said in the ministry that support is greater than relief. We pray that our brethren are supported.

The Lord Jesus when proceeding with the mighty work of atonement could have called on twelve legions of angels (Matt 26: 53) to relieve Himself of what lay ahead, but in Luke 22: 43 one angel supported Him. How it sets before us the perfect Man in His obedience and dependence.

But it made me think that if we are in the Christian pathway at all, we all need support. As accepting the will of God the support is readily available. We do not need to go out of our home to feel the need of support; we need it all the time. The enemy has breached many believers' homes to nullify the sense of the need of divine support.

When we recognise God's standard of manhood in Christ we have no other to turn to but that blessed Man whose bosom and breast are available to us. I thought the bosom coming first shows the provision of the love of Christ. Before you get support for what is needed here the Lord gives you something of His love. I think John relished getting into the bosom of Christ.

The Lord Himself knew as coming into manhood what the bosom of the Father was. He came into the bosom of the Father.

Here John knew the place that we are all invited into. I believe we should just bask in the love of Christ. It is a portion offered to all, that all of us would experience it. And then comes the added touch, 'he leaned on His breast' and he got support and direction for what faced the disciples regarding the Lord. I think, beloved brethren, it is a moment just to come into the bosom of Jesus. Just prove it, that you get your own portion there and then you will get the support for whatever comes into our lives and what comes amongst God's people. Some are going through much in their bodies, in their families or in their occupations. Whatever it may be, the support will come from that same blessed Person that is presented to us in this passage of scripture.

These two things seemed to strike me. I trust they are in keeping with the truth and add to what has already been said. 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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