

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 35

February 2010

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THE LORD'S SUPPER

1 Cor 11: 23-29; 10: 16, 17

DCW What we have in chapter 11 indicates the value the Lord places on the remembrance of Himself during the time of His absence. As we know, only two of the gospel writers were present at the Supper, and of those John gives us scarcely anything. Matthew gives us a fairly brief account of what the Lord said; Mark gives us much the same as Matthew. Luke apparently draws on what we have here and its importance is underlined by the fact that the Lord Himself delivered this to Paul, and Paul in turn has recorded it for us in its fulness and richness. I think I would be right in saying that, in historical terms, this was the first account, and the fullest account of what the Lord seeks from His own in this interim period. So that we have details, and fulness and richness here that we do not have elsewhere. I thought there might be help in speaking over these things together as something that the Lord values on the part of each one in the time when He is rejected publicly. We should bear in mind His desires, and also that we should have our part in the showing forth of His death until He come. It is His own coming that is to be before us.

DJH I am sure that is right. There is a danger - speaking for myself - that matters are so familiar to us that we tend to lose the import and the value of them. We should always be concerned as to what we partake of week by week being maintained in its freshness. I think it has been said that it should have the freshness of the first time, and yet the urgency that it might be the last time. We get some fresh impression each week, do we not? The Lord is so great that throughout this whole time of His absence He has been sufficient for something fresh on each occasion.

DCW Yes, I am sure that is the experience of each one of us. It is not just a ceremony, but there is something living as the Spirit would help us. He would come in, and no doubt each one of us derives satisfaction and confirmation; and we trust that there is something

special for the blessed Lord Himself. Paul was not able to draw on his own experience, nor did he draw on the experience of others, but the Lord communicated this directly to him. It is significant too, I suppose, that it comes into such an epistle as this, where there is so much about breakdown, so much looseness, so much deviation from the truth; and yet there is this wonderful standard which is set, which has been preserved for us right down to this time.

DJH I am sure of that. I am freshly impressed with it in view of what you say. It says here that the Lord Jesus gave it in the night in which He was delivered up: so concerned was He that it should not be given up, that He gives it again from the glory, does He not? So there is no doubt. We might have said that it had been given to the twelve at the time just before His death, and it was for them; but this leaves no doubt that it was for us. That He gave it from the glory shows how dear it is to His own heart that there should be those who remember Him in this way at the present time.

DCW This is largely a Gentile company to which Paul writes. Paul had obviously gone over all this with them before, but he thought it necessary to reiterate it, that it should be placed on record.

DJH Well, that confirms our going over it again, that it should be reiterated. We should never lose the power of what it is to the heart of Christ.

HAH As you say, he had delivered it to them verbally, but it seems perhaps in view of what we have said - the familiarity and looseness in relation to it - He brings in this emphatic “I received from the Lord”. Do you think there is an indication there that they should realise that it really came from the Lord Himself?

DCW I think so. Do you think the title “Lord” is important? He says, “the Lord Jesus” - which is appealing to us - “in the night in which He was delivered up”. It would be good to think of that: He could speak of it Himself, could He not, “the Son of man is delivered into the hands of sinners” (Matt 26: 45); and they have done with Him what they would?

HAH The gospels makes it clear that He was delivered up three times. Judas delivered Him up (Matt 26:21); the High Priest delivered Him up (Matt 27: 2); and then Pilate delivered Him up to be crucified, Matt 27:26.

DCW So we might say that he was rejected at every turn. He went through unsullied, with determination. “*He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*”, Luke 9: 51.

DAB I am interested in what you say about the placing of this account in relation to the history of the church. The writers of the books of the Bible are not particularly careful to date them, but this revelation that Paul is writing of here must have occurred before his visit to Corinth, which places it very early, as you say. So, when he was in Corinth; he would have taken the Supper in accordance with the way he had been shown, would you say? And the breaking of bread in Troas (Acts 20: 7), for example, where it was held on the first day of the week, that too we can assume followed the Lord’s direction to Paul, can we?

DCW Acts 20 would be subsequent to this, would it not?

DAB And therefore in the light of it.

DCW In the light of it. So the Lord had said to Paul, “I have much people in this city”, Acts 18: 10. I suppose there is nothing that draws the Lord’s people together as His own appeal, “this do in remembrance of me”.

DAB I was just thinking that this may have been before any of the gospels were written; and we know that the believers began to break bread from the beginning of the Acts. Maybe they broke bread every time they assembled - I do not know. But the Lord gave this heavenly guidance as to it, apparently placing it on the day of His resurrection, and in this form. I think what you say is very precious. It was not simply something that we could take ownership of as if it was ours, but it remains - as Paul says here - “the Lord’s supper”.

DCW Here he had to chide them about taking their own supper. So the Lord’s supper is wholly distinct, something unique, something

peculiarly for His own heart. We, of course, derive satisfaction and confirmation from it; but primarily it is for the Lord, and for the maintenance of His interests. It is also for a demonstration to the world that the One that they rejected, the One that was crucified and slain, is alive and is remembered, is honoured, is respected, by those who are His own.

DAB I had wondered recently whether the thought you have in mind may explain why John does not give us the order of the Lord's supper. He might not have thought it necessary to go over things that had since been established from heaven. And, since it was so established in the heavenly light that we read about here, he does not give the earthly account of it that we have in the other gospels.

DCW That is what I had thought. John, as we know, was the last. It is reputed that John's gospel was the last of the New Testament writings. What is here is so sufficient that he could not add anything to it; nor could he take anything from it. Things that have come from the Lord Himself are inviolable.

DAB If I could just add to that, it is quite interesting that there are things that John was a witness of that he does not include in his gospel, and this is one. On the other hand, if you take his reference to the blood, it is unique. I have had it pointed out to me that the blood is not actually mentioned in any of the preachings in the Acts, but it is in John's gospel. It is as if he is very much filling up what is needed for the continuance of things.

DCW Yes. So he is the only one who refers to the blood, and he speaks as an eye witness. Then, of course, in his epistle, he speaks also of the witness of the blood.

PMW You mentioned in your opening comments the showing forth the death of the Lord as distinct from remembering Him. We are going over the witness of the fact that the Lord is alive, but the meeting for the breaking of bread is not announced. What is happening at the breaking of bread is not all evident to the world. Say something more for us as to how we can show forth the Lord's death.

DCW As to the announcement, I suppose that the Supper itself is the announcement. We “announce the death of the Lord, until he come”. Then we have to think of the angels, do we not? There are certain things that they desire to look into, so that I suppose there is an angelic observance of what is taking place. The very fact of the continuance of the remembrance is part of the showing forth.

DAB I heard of somebody saying something about this recently, but the remembrance is the inward side; that is the private side - because I cannot tell the world what He means to me. But I show forth His death - that is public, is it not? I remember that my father used to say that, if anyone was enquiring, you would bring them to the Supper, because they need to see the showing forth, do they not?

DCW It has been said that, if a person is interested, you should bring him or her to the best occasion. That is where things are seen at their sweetest, and at their height and in their intimacy. I suppose it is an occasion for intimacy, is it not? The Lord manifests Himself to His own.

DJH We are announcing His death, too. We are not announcing that He is alive in glory, are we; but it His death?

HAH I was going to ask a similar question. I was wondering whether the announcement is in the fact that the loaf and the cup - that is what speaks of the body and the blood - are separate. That in itself is an announcement that He has died.

DCW I think that is a good way of putting it. The fact that the cup speaks of His blood means that He Himself has died. John draws attention to the blood. So the life is in the blood. But then we are not exactly remembering a dead Christ, but we are remembering a living Person - including perpetuating His memory. We are also recalling what He has done, and where He has been, and where He now is.

DJH So it implies that He is alive, does it not? And He has broken the power of death. We are announcing His death but we are

remembering a living Christ. The object is a victorious celebration, is it not?

DCW So the emphasis is that in the beginning of the Acts he presented Himself living with many proofs.

DJH Well, that is what we had this morning - many proofs!

DCW Yes.

FSP I would like to ask why, when the blood is so important - redemption hangs upon it, the whole history of man - it only appears in the gospel of John; and that was written long after it happened?

DCW I could not exactly say why that is so but, as you say, everything depends upon the fact that the blood was shed. It is the blood that makes atonement; the blood is what has paid the debt that we owe. There is that which is the assurance of our salvation.

FSP No, it just interests me - why so little is mentioned, and yet it is so important.

DCW Peter speaks of the "precious blood, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish", 1 Pet 1: 19. God's purpose requires that the blood should be shed. Abel for his part had some apprehension of that, what was essential, what was pleasing, what was vital.

AAC Following what has been asked, would you say a little more about what has been revealed after the Lord Jesus has gone into heaven? I suppose in a sense if everything in this dispensation was only what was set on at that time, it would be somewhat stale; but there is that which is fresh, that which is living. As you said, this was revealed after the Lord Jesus had gone into heaven. It is set out here as revealed to Paul, and there is that in the way we take the Supper - we have been helped as to it - in quite recent times. Is that an evidence of the way that the Lord Jesus is revealing these things to us, and the truth as to Himself?

DCW It is a question of spiritual formation: "He shall receive of mine and reveal it to you", John 16: 14. "It is profitable for you that I go away", John 16: 7. That may seem a little difficult to understand, "profitable for you that I go away". "For if I do not go away, the

Comforter will not come to you". So we have to value increasingly the work of the Holy Spirit, taking of Christ's things and showing them to us.

AAC So these things are progressive, are they? God answers the desire of a soul seeking after Himself in simplicity and faithfulness.

DCW Yes, we come to what is basic. This is basic; this is definitive. We do not add to this. We can think of what men have done, the way they have embroidered and tried to embellish this precious memorial. We speak reverently about these things but the Lord made it extremely simple, did He not? It is a simple matter, using elements that are readily available - bread and wine. You think of what the great false system and others have made of it, the way in which they have surrounded it with ceremonial and liturgy and much also; all of which must be so obnoxious to Him and something the Lord could not possibly honour.

DJH In a sense it could not be more simple outwardly, and yet it could not be more profound when you think of what is involved in it and its precious meaning to those who love Him.

DCW Just so. I am often impressed with that.

PFE If we speak of simplicity, we have the breaking of bread, but it speaks of Him as well.

DCW Yes; nothing is to obscure that. Ceremonial obscures everything, and detracts in men's minds from the truth - from the personality - of the Lord Himself. When He came in He said, "it is I myself", Luke 24: 39. When the Lord comes into circumstances, everything becomes plain, everything becomes real, everything becomes confirmed.

DAB And, as you have yourself proved, it can be taken by two. That is how simple it is. And it would not be different if it was taken by two thousand, assuming that was practical.

DCW Yes, that is so. The Lord has made it so available to us. Of course, we do not overlook the fact that we have the sisters with us. But very often we have been just literally two.

DAB I was thinking too that, when the Lord gave this, we could not say it was corrective. Paul puts it in this letter correctively, but we do not know that it was corrective when Paul received it from the Lord. It is not that things always have to be adjusted; the Lord gives it in the simplicity in which those who love Him would seek to take it up.

DCW These - if you will - are the great headlines. This did not have to change.

HAH You referred just now to the Holy Spirit; does His power enter into the announcement? And into the ability to discern His presence as He makes Himself known in the breaking of bread?

DCW I think it must be so. After all, "no one can say, Lord Jesus, unless in the power of the Holy Spirit" 1 Cor 12: 3.

HAH And it is significant that the first thing a brother says when he goes to the table is normally, "Lord Jesus".

DCW That would not be a mere formality, would it?

DJH So it is introduced here, "the Lord Jesus, in the night in which he was delivered up".

DCW It is the Lord Jesus who has given us this, it is a personal touch, something that is to be cherished.

ARH We had recently in London that sometimes the things that are the simplest are the most profound. I was speaking to someone recently who said, 'It is my exercise to keep things simple'. We spoke for some time and at the end of it I said, 'Well, what could be more simple than that the Lord has asked me to remember Him; and that is what I do'. We have those emblems there, and it is just such a simple thing that the Lord has asked us to remember Him; and that is what I would seek to do.

DCW I am glad that you bring that in. It is something that even a young believer can do. We have had some experience of that recently locally, young persons asking to remember the Lord. They have simple, and yet real, impressions of what should be done. One young sister said it was her desire to honour the Lord. That should be the desire of each one.

GHH It is interesting that the Lord links remembrance here with both the loaf and the cup - "in remembrance of me".

DCW Quite so. We do not have this in Luke's gospel. We do not have remembrance linked with the cup in his account, but we do here. It shows the equivalence of the two emblems.

GHH Would we be affected by that? He laid down His life for us and gave His body; and also that He shed His precious blood. Each week we should be freshly affected by these two things.

DCW Just so.

PMW Say something about what the Lord says, "This is my body which is for you". Then in verse 25 it speaks of the new covenant in relation to the cup. Would you say something about the new covenant?

DCW The new covenant is properly that which is made - which He will make - with His earthly people. That will be enjoyed in its fulness in the millennium. But then, as being of the present dispensation, we are partaking of something of the joy of these things.

DAB Yes. I think if you look at the way the matter is presented in Jeremiah, for example, or in Hebrews, in relation to the covenant that God will make with Israel, there is no blood there. What we have here is "in my blood". It bears on what was being said: it is not just that the whole ground of redemption is secured but the whole entrance into part with Him where He is, all rests "in my blood".

DCW So He has entered in. The high priest entered in with blood not his own, but the Lord Jesus has entered in with His own blood into holy places not made with hands.

DAB And I think it is important also to see - and this is underlined by the way He ministered this to Paul - that His sufferings are presented as over. "This is my body which is given", He says, "my blood, which is poured out", Luke 22: 19, 20. The work is done. I am not saying there is not a vicarious element to His burial but the work is complete. And we are not exactly asked to remember what He was about to pass through, but to remember Him where He is.

DCW It is a completed matter. The Lord left nothing undone. It is good for us to get hold of that. There is nothing that we can do, or could do, but this is a means by which we can express our appreciation and admiration of what He has done not only for Himself but also for us; and also, of course, for the Father.

AAC I wonder if you would say another word about the Lord coming in at the Supper. We look forward to the Supper on Lord's day morning. It is often to be with the Lord, and His coming, that strikes our hearts. Of course we gather on other occasions. The Lord does not bring it out here, that we will prove His company, His companionship. That is not brought out here at all. Can you help me as to that?

DCW The Lord said "this do". The Lord has made many promises. He is not exactly putting this forward as a means by which we will be rewarded. It is something we can do *for Him*.

AAC I think that is good; it helps us as we look forward to the Supper to have that in our minds. It is an occasion with which we are privileged to be familiar, and there is nothing wrong with that; but we need to have this simple point in our minds.

DCW This is the special means by which we can demonstrate our affection for the Lord. It is on account of affection; it is not because we have a commandment; or because it is something we must do, but it is drawn out from the hearts of those that love Him.

DJH What has just been said bears on what was said earlier as to verse 20. It speaks of the Lord's supper: it is His Supper, is it not? It was what we are doing for Him. We value it, we enjoy it, but we are never to lose sight of the fact that what we are doing we are doing for Him.

AAC That is what I was thinking, and it helps to have that a bit more in our minds. In His faithfulness, what we enjoy is very, very precious. But we should think of what His request to us is.

DCW So there is no prescription as to what might follow. I suppose there are few subjects on which we have more ministry than that

pertaining to the Lord's supper, and there is a certain pattern; but there is no prescription as to how events proceed, or how the service may develop. The Lord may give us impressions underlining or reinforcing these things.

AAC We may speak to some who just do simply what the Lord has asked us to do. They do not have that privilege that we have, but the Lord still honours their faithfulness in doing what He asked them to do.

DCW He does.

DAB Does this link with what the apostle goes on to here? I was thinking of the state of things in Corinth, and he says "I, brethren, have not been able to speak to you as to spiritual", 1 Cor 3: 1. At the end of this chapter, he speaks of other things he has got to set in order. He had not been able to go over the whole matter here. But then he says, "concerning spiritual manifestations, brethren, I do not wish you to be ignorant" (1 Cor 12: 1); as if that spiritual side that has been referred to could only be recovered as they had re-established the Lord's supper in its true place in their gathering.

DCW An all-important point to notice is that there is no excuse for *not* remembering the Lord: "let a man prove himself". He does not say, 'do not eat'. He does not give any grounds for a person absenting himself or herself from the Supper, does he?

DAB I think what you say is important, that the Lord places emphasis on the "remembrance of **me**". Can I have an occasion in which the Lord alone is the focus? He speaks about Himself here in a way that could be said of no one else: "my body, which is for you": Of whom else could that be said? These things are intended to make Him a focus in the way the Corinthians really needed to arrive at before they could enter into spiritual manifestations.

DCW Quite so; so there has to be respect. We should not come casually. We should examine ourselves, as the Authorised Version says. We should not come empty either, should we? It is an occasion for participation on the part of those able so to do.

DJH I am trying to link with what has been referred to that follows. It begins with what belongs to the person of the Holy Spirit. What follows the Supper, what we look for, is spiritual manifestations. The Holy Spirit is essential in that regard; so it goes on in the next chapter in that respect.

DCW I believe that is so. Paul, of course, was uniquely fitted, "an elect vessel" (Acts 9: 15), and the Lord used him to bring these things to record, so that they would remain for our instruction, our comfort, and our edification.

DJH So really what we have at the Supper is a spiritual manifestation. We do not have Him with us corporeally but it is a spiritual manifestation. You can see the way that Paul goes on to the matter of right relations with the Holy Spirit.

DCW So it is a living matter. It is not a dead commemoration of some common thing as in the world. They often remember persons who are dead, who have long since departed from the scene. Perhaps some have been quite unworthy persons. Here we have One who is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners" (Heb 7: 26) a real, glorious, living and ascended Man.

DJH A brother was asked how did he know that Jesus was alive at the present time and he said, 'Oh, I was speaking to Him this morning'. It is as real as that.

DAB If Paul had been able to go on here to speak about the order of the service, the ceremonialists would have fed on it, to establish an occasion in which neither the headship of Christ nor the leading of the Spirit were needed, because they would have had it in a book. The Lord in His wisdom has given the Supper in a place where that was not opened up, so that we remain dependent in that respect?

DCW As far as we know, in the established churches they have a set order for each Sunday. They can look it up in a book, and it can be read out, and it is all there for them; and they do not need the Holy Spirit. They read something out. Similarly, of course, anybody can read the Scriptures, but then it is the Spirit that gives the

Scriptures a present living voice, and opens up their import to us. I suppose we will never exhaust what we have in the Scriptures.

DAA I was only reminded of what we had in Newport yesterday, as to the sensitivity seen in relation to the type in Genesis 24; and the way that the work of God is to be formative in the saints. I was wondering if it linked with what we have been saying in relation to the Spirit, and how we proceed in the service of God that follows on from the Supper; that we are developed in sensitivity as the Spirit is made way for with us, do you think?

DCW Yes, I think so. We could think of Rebecca showing that sensitivity. The servant said, "That is my master! Then she took the veil, and covered herself" .. "and she sprang off the camel", indicating that she was now wholly for another.

DAA We get the wilderness journey preceding that. She was sustained in that whole area, so that she was in vitality when she met Isaac. It is a challenge with us on the Lord's day as to whether we are in vitality and energy in relation to Christ.

DCW You made reference in your thanksgiving this morning to the Spirit as typified in Genesis 24?

HAH Yes, and you gave out that hymn -

The way of love how blest
(Hymn 106)

He says, "I being in the way, Jehovah has led me to the house of my master's brethren", Gen 24: 27. That suggests what the blessed Spirit has found, as we respond to the Lord. He is the power for that, but we know that the Lord takes us on as His brethren, as I think we had this morning. These things flow together, we might say. As you say, it is not prescribed, but we get these touches in Genesis.

DCW So the great point for Rebecca is, "Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go", v 58. That involves separation from much that she had cherished and perhaps had grown up with; because something more precious and special was opening up for her.

HAH This is like the start of what we enjoy.

AAC Could you say something as to eating and drinking unworthily? He brings that in here: could you help us as to that?

DCW I think that would raise with us the state in which we might come to the Supper. We might be out of sorts with another brother, another sister. We might even be out of sorts in our own family circumstances. So, if we come along to the Supper with such burdens resting upon us, we could not fully enter into or appreciate the import of that to which are committing ourselves. Do you think that?

AAC I do. He puts it very strongly here: "shall be guilty in respect of the body and the blood of the Lord". That is something very serious, is it not?

DCW It is a solemn occasion. There is liberty in it, there is enjoyment in it, but there is a solemnity and a dignity in it that we should observe.

AAC And this therefore places considerable responsibility upon me, and my relations with the Lord and my brethren.

DCW Just so. It requires me to prove myself.

PMW What is being referred to is in chapter 10: 17 where you read, "we, being many, are one loaf, one body", bearing on the fact that we are linked together in the one body.

DCW Quite so; so are we together? Are we all one? Is there unity, all thinking the same thing, thinking one thing? It raises challenges with us. Each of us is presented with a very special privilege, and an occasion when we can make a fresh start.

FSP The body and blood, as was said, both have remembrance attached to them. Here in chapter 10 the body and the blood both have the word "communion" attached to them. I wondered if, as we are all together remembering and contemplating, that brings about a communion between ourselves.

DCW I think so. The word means a common sharing. We are referred back by the footnote to Acts 2: 42 where they were all together and they had everything in common; there was an entire identity between them. Of course, that state changed soon afterwards but it shows what was - and is - possible. There is a common object before each one, and that object is the Lord Himself. So we have this touch in chapter 10, "the cup of blessing which we bless". It may make us think of the cup that the Lord had to partake of (John 18: 11), that bitter cup; but the blessing remains for us and it is something that we would honour as observing what the Lord would have us to do.

DJH I think, in that reference to the bitter cup, we have it in the hymn:

That bitter cup - love drank it up;
Left but the love for me.
(Hymn 415)

That is what we prove at the Supper?

DCW So it is a love feast.

DAB I wonder if there is a testimony in verse 17 to what we have been saying about what is living. The loaf before us on the table speaks immediately uniquely of Christ. We cannot put ourselves into what was "given for you". But then, in the company, there is a representation of His body, which is living. There are other ways of viewing His own which encompass those who are with Christ already, but the body is specifically a reference to the expression of Himself among the living.

DCW I think that is helpful; so the bread itself is an inanimate object. The body is a living organism. The body has various parts and each part is essential to the functioning of the body.

DAB I was thinking of what was being said, that to partake - not only to put my hands to the loaf, but to appear to be part of that unity - is a solemn thing, is it not?

DCW The word 'partake' is something we do.

JSH I was just contemplating the matter of responsibility; our relationships with our brethren and all that are His. It puts a responsibility on me throughout the week, does it not, about how I am doing my daily duties here? How am I amongst my brethren, that I might be in the right spirit as we come to the Supper? But there is the responsibility too actually to be there to remember Him, because He said it was until He come. There might not be another opportunity. I was affected by that as we came to the Supper, that there might never be another opportunity when we come together.

DCW I am glad you bring that in, because time is short. We cannot say when the Lord's return will take place. There is every indication that the time is short. We see around us the manifestation of things of which the Lord spoke, and the opportunity is passing. I appeal to the younger brethren particularly that these things may not slip away. They should not keep themselves apart from the privileges that are connected with remembering the Lord. There is a responsibility, as we have been speaking about. There is a great privilege too, in the remembrance. We need to take account of how people regard us; they take note of our conduct and actions and expressions. It is a challenge as to whether we are worthy of that which we profess to be.

DJH It strikes me - I had not seen it that way before - but does that all enter into the proving of ourselves? There is the side as we approach the Supper, that we would be before the Lord as to our readiness, and anything which may have come in; but proving ourselves in a sense would relate to our pathway during the week, as to whether everything is in accord with what we are to do?

DCW I believe that to be so. So something should enter into our constitution. We cannot take high ground. We are all human, with the same feelings and emotions as the rest of mankind, but then there is what is imposed - not in any arbitrary way - upon believers to confess to belonging to the Lord Himself.

DJH I think we have been told that Mr Raven was asked on a Monday morning where he was going, and he said he was going to

the Supper. In that sense, he would be concerned all the way to be proving himself.

HAH I notice that, at the end of the second epistle, we get the thought, "prove your own selves" (2 Cor 13: 5), and it seems to be the evidence that Jesus Christ is in you. So it is a question of the manifestation of Christ in some way, is it not?

DCW I think so. So Paul starts the first epistle by saying early on that they were to be "perfectly united", 1 Cor 1: 10. The footnote tells us that it is related to the mending of a net. Then, towards the end of the second epistle, he brings out the same thing. We might say then these two epistles are enshrined between those two desires on the part of the beloved apostle.

London

4th October 2009

Key to Initials

(local unless otherwise stated)

D A Alexander, Twickenham; D A Burr; A A Croot; P F Eagle; A R Hutson, Bedford; D J Hutson; H A Hutson; J S Hutson; G H Hurt; F S Pittman; D C White, Londonderry; P M White

STEADINESS

John Speirs

**1 Samuel 1: 22-24; 2: 11, 18, 19, 21, 26; 3: 1, 19; 6: 10-12, 14
Mark 4: 20**

What our brother has said confirmed me in a simple thought as to how steadiness should mark the life of the believer. I thought that our spiritual growth should be steady, our walk should be steady, and the increase of our fruit-bearing should be steady. I would seek help from the Spirit of God to say something about these things. I love this account of Samuel; it is encouraging to read these references to him growing. It is sad to see that there are no children here tonight. We are used to seeing them often at the meetings, and it encourages us to see them. Many of them are set aside by illness just now, which is unusual; often it is the older ones amongst us who are ill. When the young are not here, we miss them and it would make us realise and appreciate what spiritual life there is in our young ones.

I thought of this scripture as to the boy Samuel in relation to steady growth. What a good start he had. Probably all of us here, as having been brought up by believing parents, can say that we have been given a good start, an excellent start. "And the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him." The care and nurture of parents would be with a view to normal growth and development in children, not only naturally, but spiritually. The world looks for and makes much of spectacular growth, what is amazing, but I think the spiritual growth in a believer's life is not to be like that; it is to be steady and normal. What our brother has said about being properly rooted would cause that to happen, it would lead to steady, normal growth. That is what we would desire to see in our children. We would not expect to see what is not appropriate to their age. We would not expect them to say things that an older person would say in the meeting, because they have not had the same experience as the older ones. How thankful we are to have the older ones

amongst us too - like our brother has said, those who would represent “full corn in the ear”, Mark 4: 28. So Samuel is first nurtured by his mother, but there comes a point when he is weaned and ready to make spiritual progress himself. It says that she brought him to the house of Jehovah. What a wonderful privilege it is for us to be in the presence of God, in the temple; what a privilege to be able to come to the meetings. Let us not undervalue these week-night meetings we have. This is where we can grow, where we receive spiritual impressions, spiritual food that would cause us to grow steadily. As we appropriate what comes to us by the Holy Spirit in our meetings, it would cause steady, normal growth.

These are interesting references to Samuel’s growth. It says that “Samuel did not yet know Jehovah”, 1 Sam 3: 7. How could he minister to Jehovah if he did not know Him? I wondered if we see something of this in how the children of the saints serve the brethren even before they fully understand doctrine or the truth, or have a full appreciation of what they have been brought into. They set out the chairs and help to clear up the meeting room afterwards; they are serving in the presence of God. God’s intention is not that they should stop there, but that normal spiritual growth should proceed in a steady way. It says “Samuel ministered before Jehovah, a boy girded with a linen ephod.” What a beautiful sight, and his mother brought him a little coat, from year to year. Much has been said about this by others before, but the growth was normal and followed an expected pattern. It is like the height and weight charts you are given when the children are born and then you see how, as they grow, their progress follows the expected curve on the chart. Samuel’s mother was expecting growth, normal growth, and it would be right to expect our younger ones to grow and develop normally in spiritual things. We should be looking for it, and we should be providing the conditions in which they can grow. She came up year by year. It was not happening overnight, it was not mushroom growth, to speak carefully. In nature, things that grow quickly often do not have much substance. A fast-growing wood does not have the same substance; it is not as dense as a slower-growing

hardwood. So also in spiritual things, what grows normally and steadily brings about substance. It says, "The boy Samuel grew on, and was in favour with Jehovah and also with men." Not only was he growing, but there was starting to be a testimony that others could take account of. Further on in chapter 3 where we read it says, "And Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him." Think of that - the reassurance of God being with him and letting none of his words fall to the ground. It is a wonderful thing to hear young believers speaking words that God would find delight in and that have power to affect others. How often, when perhaps we should know better, we are arrested by something that a young person says.

My simple impression is that steady normal growth will be brought about by keeping ourselves in the presence of God, especially in our occasions of gathering. In one sense when it comes to growth there is nothing that we can do ourselves, because it is God who gives the increase. But there is a responsibility on each of us to be in the place where the spiritual food supply is, whereby we can grow. There is also a responsibility on those of us who are heads of households to provide spiritual food in the house - to read the scriptures and provide what would be of the character of the manna. The manna was to be gathered by those responsible for the household: "ye shall take every man for those that are in his tent" (Ex 16: 16). Each day the household would have eaten of it, and if they had not they would not have been able to grow, speaking simply. I feel the test of this myself. It is good to read at least a verse of scripture daily as a household, especially one that speaks of Jesus. The children pick it up and they grow. May we be encouraged to do that.

I read in chapter 6 because I was thinking about steadiness of walk. As they grow, children get stronger but they do not walk immediately. That is not something we would expect. But we do expect them to walk in due course and we are glad to see it when they do. Spiritually it is the same. We are glad to see them walking. The walk of the believer is to be by this one high way. There is to be this steadiness and purpose, there is not to be an attitude of 'I'll stop

here for a little while, or take this side road and see what interesting things are there, and I will catch up later and get back to the main high way'. No, there is to be a steady, straightforward walk in the path of the believer. I feel tested because I do not think this marks me as it should. One thing that helps us to walk straight ahead is to have an object in view and to have purpose of heart. I was thinking about Daniel.; He "purposed in his heart that he would not pollute himself with the king's delicate food", Dan 1: 8. The result was that ten days later there was clear evidence of normal progress there. And to have an object in view would help us to walk by the one high way. The object must surely be Christ, Christ in glory. Not anything historical, or anything that we have settled down into here, or that we hold in our minds in a merely intellectual way; but a real living link by faith and in the power of the Holy Spirit, looking on Christ where He is in glory, looking steadfastly on Him there. That would result in us walking properly in the testimony, I am sure of it.

"Loving as they went": it has been said before that these kine felt the loss of what was natural, they felt it keenly, but it did not change the way in which they were walking. It would be normal to feel the sorrow of giving things up that naturally we are attached to, but let us leave them behind knowing that there is something better ahead of us and that the pathway of the believer is to be straight on. At the end, there was suffering and sacrifice for these kine - they had to lay down their lives. That would be normal in the life of the believer - we are to lay down our lives, our bodies are to be presented "a living sacrifice", Rom 12: 1. How hard these things may seem to do, but God has given us full provision, has given us power by the Holy Spirit, to walk in this one high way, not stopping and then going quickly or going back, but onward steady movement. I was arrested when I read recently in Mr Stoney that 'A step in the right direction can be a snare', vol 4 p 274. You might think that that was an unusual thing to say, but I think what the brother was bringing out was that we might make a step in the right direction and that is just enough to satisfy our own conscience, enough to put our mind at ease, and then we settle down for a little. To take only a

step in the right direction may be a snare to us. Only one step is not what God has in mind for us; it is steady, constant movement towards Christ that is intended in the believer's pathway - that is the will of God. Reaching the end may involve suffering, indeed there may be suffering all the way, but God would find pleasure in it.

I read in Mark's gospel because it speaks there about the fruit. Fruit would be what God finds pleasing in the life of a believer. I would not go over what our brother has already said. "These are they that have been sown on the good ground". The seed, God's word, is perfect, but we are responsible to make sure that we cultivate the good ground. We need to avail ourselves of the early rain and the latter rain, the constant supply of the power of the Holy Spirit, that there should be steady increase in the bearing of fruit - "one thirty, and one sixty, and one a hundredfold". In another account the fruit-bearing declines, and that perhaps would be like the public position. But in the individual believer's life God would be looking for steady increase in fruit-bearing. In one sense we see all of these features perfectly in the Lord Jesus. We must be very careful what we say, for the Lord was always, absolutely perfect. Mr Coates describes the life of the Lord Jesus growing up as "the beautiful development of perfection", vol 10 p 45. I think that is something to ponder. As we ponder Luke chapters 2 and 3 as to the Child Jesus and the Boy Jesus, what an object He is for our affections! As we are occupied with Him there will be steady fruit-bearing in our lives for God, for His pleasure. That is what God is looking for in us, features of Christ. Let us be occupied with these things and be exercised to be more steady - in growth, and in walk, and in bearing fruit.

May the Lord bless the word.

Grangemouth

6th October 2009

THE BELIEVER'S PORTION

Jim D Gray

Psalm 51: 5

Romans 3: 21-26

Hebrews 9: 27

Genesis 47: 31 from "And Israel"; 48: 1-2, 15-16

The first three scriptures I have read relate to the common lot of men, that is, "in iniquity was I brought forth, and in sin did my mother conceive me"; and, in Romans 3: 23, "for all have sinned"; and then, in Hebrews 9, "it is the portion of men once to die". That is the common lot of everyone in this room and you can do nothing about it as far as that goes, but God has a proposition to make to you. It is His glad tidings, and it concerns His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God requires righteousness. He cannot bypass sin or sins, and He has not. You and I could do nothing about righteousness. The whole of the Old Testament is a time when God gave man an opportunity to see whether he could establish his righteousness to the satisfaction of God by works of law, but he failed and we come into that failure. God says, 'I have a proposition to make. I have glad tidings. It is my glad tidings concerning my Son, the Lord Jesus Christ', and the glad tidings is that He has secured a righteousness that makes men and women, boys and girls, suited for His presence. It is a gift, and it is towards all. It is only "upon all those who believe", but it is "towards all". It is because He has given His only-begotten Son, in whom the matter of sin and sins was dealt with on the cross. "Him who knew not sin", Christ, "he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor 5: 21. That is available to you, friend, and to everyone in this room, by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour. So that is what He has to offer to you. "All have sinned", but in Christ Jesus "God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood". If you have faith in the blood, God can justify you.

Now then, in Hebrews 9, "it is the portion of men once to die". That is true but Scripture adds more than that, "and after this judgment". Our dear brother whom the Lord has taken will have to face the judgment too, and so will we all. I am not at this moment discriminating. The judgment is not in death. The judgment is in resurrection. "It is the portion of man once to die, and after this judgment", the judgment is in resurrection. Scripture speaks about "the resurrection of the just", Luke 14: 14. Does our brother have to fear the resurrection and the judgment? No, he does not have to fear that. Why? He made Christ his Saviour in his lifetime and God gave him as a gift the righteousness of God. When he awakens in the resurrection, he has that righteousness. It is secured in time; it is valid for eternity. If I may be simple dear friends and brethren, it is like the visa to heaven. If you go to another country you need a visa. He has his visa secured in Christ here in time. His sins have been forgiven and he has a righteousness of God that is yours today if you lay hold of it.

Now I want to speak about Jacob. Jacob has a portion that is not the lot of all men. Where I have read, it is the crowning touch of the life of a believer. He worshipped on 'the top of his staff' (note). He finished as a worshipper. Our dear brother finished as a worshipper. His life included moments of toil. He proved what a toilsome life was. I want to allude to the fact that in his early life he went through bitterness. He never lost his faith in his God. He went through sorrow, deep sorrow. Not everyone has faced that kind of sorrow. I will tell you what I read in a letter written by a Christian brother who went through similar exercises in his early life. He says "feelings of unutterable pressure and loneliness, known only to those who have passed through them". In those moments, only one blessed Man can be with you all the way. Friends and brethren are with you, and that is a great comfort, but only one blessed Man goes all the way. That is Jesus. He found Him as his Friend. He walked with him through that valley and He brought him forth to green pastures. Our dear sister who has been with him is now going that

way but Christ can be the Friend all the way to succour and sustain her in these hours of sorrow.

For this man, Jacob, at the close of his life is a family man. This scene is a family scene, the scene you would be acquainted with when our brother was sick, and here the son goes along with his two sons; a son and grandsons. He takes his grandsons into the presence of this dying believer. What did he want? He wanted to put them in an area where they would hear about God, hear about the God who had shepherded his father Jacob all his life long until this day. That was a characteristic of our brother; God shepherded him all his life long, brought him through, brought him through all the exercises of life, and there were many after the one I have spoken about. God brought him into blessing, gave him light as to the house of God, "Arise, go up to Bethel" (Gen 35: 1); that is the word to Jacob. He gave Jacob light as to the house of God which he followed through, and then as departing he desires that the generations that are following on may come into blessing. He says, "bless the lads". What a heart he had for the testimony as every father, every grandfather, every brother, every sister would have for the generations coming on. Come into the Christian fellowship; come in to the Christian circle! He says, "let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the land!" What did he have in mind? Not that they would make much in this scene. We need our bread and butter to get through, we need to do our work, we need to exercise prudence. There is another life, dear brethren. Our brother knew another life. He had a link with a Man in heaven, a real and living link with a Man in heaven, forgiveness of his sins, and he received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Christianity is real. Conversion is real. A real change takes place in the soul of a believer when he is converted. He lives in the real sense of the life of a blessed Man in heaven and he meets with Christians and he enjoys the life that is called eternal life. That is not future. There will be a future life with Christ, but this is a present thing. It is a sphere of life. You and I are living persons, but we have our life, a sphere of life that we live in. What sphere of life do you live in, friend? This dear brother that we

are burying today lived amongst his family. That was one side of his life. He had a sphere of life there, but he had a greater sphere of life amongst the circle of Christians because he had a link with a Man in heaven, and what they spoke about was not the life in this scene. It is life that is to come, but not only life that is only to come, life that is present, knowing the blessings of what they have in Christ, “inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me”, Acts 26: 18. What is this inheritance? For these persons here literally, Jacob had in mind they would enjoy the promised land, but for the Christian it is the circle of affection amongst believers where the presence and blessing of Christ is known, a peace that surpasses understanding, a bond that is not broken in death.. As belonging to the family of God we have a link together as believers that is not going to be broken. We can enjoy that living link now because each believer is in touch with the Man in heaven. It is a real matter. There is a real sense of joy in the soul, a real buoyancy. It draws you to where believers are. The Bible is not a dead book, you know. It is full of life. You are linked with a glorious, living Man and that attracts you to that sphere. You are drawn like a magnet to where life is. May it be the portion of all here today, for the Lord's Name's sake.

Edinburgh

11th June 2009

(At the meeting for the burial of Mr David Scougal)

SACRIFICIAL LOVE

Reg W Flowerdew

Genesis 22: 1-3, 7-12

Ephesians 5: 25-27

Romans 12: 1, 2;

Revelation 22: 1-5

Unremarkable as it might seem, I have in mind to speak of love. However, I wish to speak of a particular aspect of love which seems to me to be most important, indeed essential, but which is referred to fairly infrequently.

Believers have a very great advantage in the circumstances of life, in sorrows and in joys. In sorrows they can look to God for comfort, and find it; they can look to the Lord in whom they believe for sympathy, and find it. In joys they can remember that their joy is soundly based upon the work of Christ, the redemptive work of which we have been reminded in our hymn (No 1). The believer in his or her joys is not to forget God who made provision for that enjoyment into which they have entered. That is something we need to remember.

In the circumstances of life, whatever they might be, the believer finds that there is resource in God and in particular in the love of God. That love has been fully expressed in Christ. It could have been expressed no more fully than it has been, in Christ. It is a love that is made good in us by the Spirit, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us", Rom 5: 5.

I want to speak a little of a particular characteristic of God's love. If I speak of God's love I am not referring to natural love. We must dismiss from our minds what in this scene is generally called love, which very often is lust, and we must dismiss all thoughts of what is romantic and superficial. What we discover - and I trust we discover it for ourselves - is that God's love is holy, it is infinite, it is eternal, it is deep and constant, it is gracious and powerful, it is

tender and faithful. Much more could be said. How much we can find in God's love!

What I wish to speak about in particular is the fact that God's love is sacrificial. It is a love that gives. However, there is more than giving conveyed in the word sacrifice. We think of giving as 'giving away' but there is also in God's love what is 'given up'. This is the character of God's love that I desire to speak about.

As we know, the first expression of love as presented in scripture, is found in Genesis 22, the love of a father for a son, "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, Isaac", v 2. The Spirit dwells upon those words as if to reinforce their meaning to us. It is widely thought that the fullest expression in love is between a man and a woman, between husband and wife. I suppose we could understand that love was present in Adam towards Eve and Eve towards Adam, but the scripture does not refer to it. Love must have been there because the thrust of Satan through Cain was made in hatred. What was Satan doing? I suggest that he was seeking to deny, to undermine, the reality of love which was there although not described. Then there was what was sacrificial in the offering that Abel brought. And in the death of Abel there was more than a suggestion of what was sacrificial. The blood of Abel cried from the ground, Gen 4: 10. But the scripture - and the Spirit behind the scripture - waits until we have the account of Abraham offering up Isaac and, in that context, his love for Isaac - the love of a father for his son, sacrificial in character, typically the love of God the Father for His Son.

Sacrificial love, the aspect of which I speak, does not consider for itself. God is fully entitled to consider for Himself: man has no entitlement to consider for himself. The wonder of it is that God has considered for us! We will never fathom the meaning of that fact. Love in its sacrificial quality considers for its object, not for itself. God's love was prepared to go the whole way in considering and providing for its object. It was prepared to pay the ultimate price. Thus we can begin to see the meaning of sacrifice, "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all",

Rom 8: 32. What sacrifice underlies and is expressed in that verse. I would go so far as to say that sacrifice is the hallmark of God's love. I would also suggest that there is no true love without preparedness to sacrifice.

Sacrificial love has been expressed to us in Christ. Paul the apostle could speak of, "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", Gal 2: 20. Think of that! Think of the fact the Son of God loved and gave Himself for such as Paul, who regarded himself as "less than least of all saints", Eph 3: 8! Have you wondered at it for yourself? I trust all here who are able, in some sense, to understand the meaning of the words can speak of "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me". I am sure it is so with our brother and sister, newly married. I am glad that it is so. But then "Christ loved us" (Eph 5: 2) and, the scripture says, "also loved the assembly", Eph 5: 25. He has fully demonstrated His sacrificial love in delivering Himself up for the assembly.

The love that has been found in expression in Christ is a love that calls for a sacrificial answer in you and me; indeed, in us all. The love of Christ which has been expressed so fully, clearly, unmistakably and attractively will undoubtedly find an answer in the assembly. "I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly" (Eph 5: 32), the apostle Paul could say. From that exalted and glorious level, Christ and the assembly, flows all the teaching as to husband and wife, and from a level no less than that. But the answer must be found in you and me.

We can speak also of the sacrificial service of the Spirit. We have considered the Father, typically, and we have considered Christ; and we can think in a similar way of the Spirit. He has been "poured out on us richly", Titus 3: 6. He is acting for the Father and for Christ. He is acting for the assembly, therefore for us, for you and for me; He is not acting for Himself. The service of the Spirit can be seen as sacrificial. The effect is to be seen in us, in you and in me. The Spirit forms in us what is Christ-like and is pleasurable to the Father.

If we are familiar with our Bibles we understand that the fundamental teaching of the epistle to the Romans leads to the living sacrifice of which I have read in chapter 12. There is to be with us love for God, love for Christ and love for the brethren, before any thought of self. That is what I mean by sacrificial love in its application to me and - I venture to suggest - to you; it is without consideration for self. There is to be with us what was found with the apostle Paul, readiness to "spend and be utterly spent" (2 Cor 12: 15); sacrificial service, love in its sacrificial character, love therefore in true expression. And there is to be with us an underlying attitude of grace toward all men, to serve men sacrificially in the glad tidings; "carrying on as a sacrificial service the message of glad tidings of God", Rom 15: 16.

In connection with marriage and, eventually perhaps, a family, love (if it is truly love) must be sacrificial; it must be of that quality and kind. Sacrifice is greater than 'give and take'. The lack of such love is the cause of a great deal of sorrow and breakdown. We have to face the fact that these things have come close to us. The absence of appreciation and expression of sacrificial love leads to sorrow. However, the presence of such love brings stability, peace, joy, preservation and protection of the family and of the following generation. Sacrificial love in action has that result. God sees to it that it has that result because it is the kind of love of which He approves; it is the kind of love that He has expressed, and it is the kind of love that He desires to see in expression in us.

If we speak about a family, God might bless a couple with children; and it is a blessing, let us not forget - children are a blessing; they are to be "olive-plants round about thy table", Ps 128: 3. God has blessing in mind for those who are married, and it comes very frequently by way of a family. In that blessing what is in view is continuance until the Lord comes. I think that if we reflect on these things we can understand how essential sacrificial love is in us, and in those who might follow us. It has been seen in those who have preceded us; it is essential that it be seen in us in the time that is left, in our readiness to suffer for the Lord's name, until His return.

Revelation 22 speaks to us of the perfect offering. However, I think it speaks to us of more than that. If we look at the verses, which commence with reference to the day to come, at the end there is a touch as to the eternal day, "to the ages of ages". We notice in reading Revelation (and how often we have remarked upon it) that the Lord is frequently referred to as the Lamb. In this passage I was particularly affected by the words, "and of the Lamb" which appear twice, as if to say that in the day to come and, I believe, in the eternal day there will continue to be a reminder of the sacrificial aspect of the love of Christ. It will not be necessary in the eternal day for love to be sacrificial because the need of sacrifice will have passed, but I think that we will ever be conscious, throughout eternity, of the sacrificial nature of the love Christ has shown to us. We will give Him thanks for it and rejoice in the result of it.

Today is a day of rejoicing. If I speak words which sound rather sober, it is not because there is any lack of joy in my heart or in the hearts of the saints whom I address. This is a day of joy, but that joy must be soundly based.

I commend these thoughts to the brethren.

Sunbury

5th September 2009

CONSISTENCY AND STEADINESS

Gordon C McKay

Galatians 6: 8-10

1 Samuel 6: 10-13

I just had a thought, dear brethren, as to consistency and steadiness of walk and exercise. These scriptures refer to spiritual exercise. The second one, referring to the kine or oxen, brings forward the animal which especially represents steadiness of walk: nothing spectacular or fast, but steady and deliberate. Other matters too enter into what the ox speaks of. Our brother has been referring to what would involve a certain patience that might be needed in view of reaping. We have had reference to reaping, and how blessed it is that we reap! We know that the labourer must have patience too, "the labourer awaits the precious fruit of the earth, having patience for it", James 5: 7. Spiritual results are not always immediate but rather involve a steadiness and continuance in things. By nature, we perhaps would tend to wish for quick results and a situation which does not demand patience, but through a patient walk something substantial is arrived at.

The question in Galatians 6 is as to sowing and reaping, and it is a question of something that in God's government cannot be changed. "He that sows to his own flesh, shall reap corruption from the flesh": it is very individual, your own flesh. We might say that the flesh is the same in us all, and yet we have each our own proclivities and the temptation is as to that, to sow to our flesh, and we will certainly reap a harvest from that, a very sad harvest, for it is corruption. You cannot get anything else from the flesh, you are not going to reap any other kind of harvest. The more you sow the more you will find that you are not finding spiritual life and blessing, you are not finding these satisfactions in spiritual things that our brother has been speaking about.

But then the great matter is to sow to the Spirit, meaning that in what we do, how we spend our time, how we devote ourselves, we

make way for what the Spirit would bring to us. He would sustain us and help us, bringing impressions of the Lord Jesus into our hearts, helping us in our spiritual exercises and in our understanding of the truth, giving us the ability to take in spiritual things (they are communicated by the Spirit and understood by the Spirit), and also helping us in our practical exercises. One side is sowing to one's own flesh, a very individual - it might be private - matter, but an individual can sow to the Spirit, for it says "he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life". What a thought that is to arrive at! One would love to understand more fully just what the Spirit has in mind in that wonderful expression "eternal life". It is not natural life, it is not bounded by earth or nature, but is a wonderful character of life that belongs to the believer. It belongs to him no doubt through faith, but it is enjoyed through sowing to the Spirit. You reap this wonderful matter in your soul, not corruption, but what a contrast, "eternal life", life that goes beyond death, and cannot be tainted by death. It involves very great blessing for our souls in the knowledge of divine Persons and of divine love. For us it reaches on to very wonderful relationships that we have with divine Persons, including collective thoughts in a special way. Here it is individual; it says "he", but then it says, "let us". Verse 9 was in mind, "let us not lose heart in doing good." The oxen plods on and is not spectacular but it keeps going step after step and there is power in its movements, not only steadiness but power: it would not be easy to stop it. And so "let us not lose heart in doing good; for in due time, if we do not faint, we shall reap". Now that is the test that comes in, "if we do not faint." How are we going to be sustained in this path of doing good and sowing to the Spirit? Is there what is going to sustain us? The Spirit Himself would sustain us, and what our brother has been speaking about, the offerings that would build up what is in us that is priestly and levitical, wonderful food, an apprehension of the death of Christ and all His perfect humanity; there is so much to sustain us.

Something else that scripture teaches us that helps us not to faint is prayer; the prayer meeting is a very important meeting. The

scripture in Isaiah says “they that wait on Jehovah shall renew their strength ... they shall run, and not tire; they shall walk, and not faint”, chap 40: 31. That is, in the prayer meeting you can draw resources from God. Not only is it a question of presenting petitions, being together in our exercises and having some sense of divine care, but I believe that that is one of the features of the prayer meeting that is so important, that as in God’s presence and bringing out our exercises there is an impartation of divine strength. In the chapter in Isaiah there is the power of God alluded to, and then power in those that wait upon Him. So there is resource so that we should go on and not faint but continue in well doing and arrive at eternal life.

The milch kine in 1 Samuel 6 are simply an illustration. The Philistine used the kine and the cart to take the ark back. They could hardly stand before the ark. They had to send it back and they devised means to do it that God accepted. These two milch kine are very remarkable, because they were walking steadily on a path they did not want naturally. Their calves were shut up at home, and every natural instinct in them was to go back to find their calves, but they did not. They just kept on “by the one high way, lowing as they went”. They were feeling the matter. Negating the flesh, denying the flesh, is a hurtful matter. If you suffer in the flesh you have done with sin, 1 Pet 4: 1. It is a painful matter not to cater for the flesh, and you feel it, but these kine did that, they went “lowing as they went”. The ark was there, you see; the ark was in the cart. It might have been a Philistine device to take it back, but still God accepted it and the ark was there. I think the kine represent spiritual instincts, spiritual power in a believer as connected with Christ in the testimony, that they would go against nature and not turn to the right nor to the left. So these are very practical matters, dear brethren, but what we have already had tonight and what enters into these scriptures sets before us blessing and satisfaction; not satisfaction for the flesh or for our natural proclivities but satisfaction for these deep spiritual instincts and desires that have developed in us since God acted sovereignly in new birth. So that there is in the believer a longing, a desire after Christ, and after spiritual things. These

scriptures help us as to the path that leads us to the satisfaction of these spiritual desires, the satisfaction of our souls, eternal life.

We did not read all of this; in fact the oxen end up as a sacrifice when they arrive and fulfil what is to be done. We sang at the beginning about the will of God which it has been given us to do, Hymn 411. It is what has been given us to do; so we do it. It might involve sacrifice, it will involve sacrifice, but then what an honour to be fulfilling what the Lord would give us to do. We get recompense presently, but there is a recompense that lies ahead and we should not forget that. It is not only what we reap now in the way of blessing, but there is going to be a recompense in future. The Lord is coming and His reward with Him (Rev 22: 12), and He would say to the faithful servant, "Well done, thou good bondman", Luke 19: 17. What a thing to have before you, that you might receive that approbation of the Lord. Well these are practical things and they test us all but I believe they are the path of spirituality and blessing, so may we be helped to take that path for His Name's sake.

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