

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 36

March 2010

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THE HOLY SPIRIT

Genesis 1: 1, 2

1 Corinthians 2: 10-12

Luke 3: 21, 22; 24: 49

Acts 2: 1-4

GMcK Our readings are special opportunities to look into some of the fundamental truths of Christianity. What the Lord has given me is that we should have a reading about the Holy Spirit. God has made Himself known to us in the three Persons of the Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Each Person of the Godhead has distinctive glory and I think that God intends us to learn them. He intends us to understand and to know Him in these three Persons. The Holy Spirit is one of them, one of the glorious Persons of the Godhead. He is God. The brethren will know that it was not always the case that those that we walk with worshipped the Spirit of God in the service of God. I do not remember days when we did not, but it was not always the case. As far as I can make out it was quite a long exercise with the brethren. I read a letter which was written in 1942 from Mr Taylor who was encouraging that we should praise the Spirit. If a person was an adult then and can remember that, it would put them in their 80s today. Most of us who are younger have grown up with the idea that we worship the Spirit in the service of God. We have grown up with the idea that it is normal. I do not say routine, it should never be routine, but it is normal. Most of us have not known anything else, so I wondered whether it might be profitable for us to refresh ourselves about the glory of who the Spirit is. It must have been something to go through that awakening time when the Lord showed that worship was due to Him.

With that in mind I suggest these scriptures, and they are well known ones. In the beginning of Genesis there was nothing there but God - "In the beginning God", nothing there but God. Then you have this reference to "the Spirit of God". It does not say that God hovered over the face of the waters, but "the Spirit of God". There

must be some meaning in that for us, all that God was going to bring from the earth, all the potential of it is implied in that scripture.

I thought the verses in Corinthians might help us with our enquiry, "For who of men hath known the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? thus also the things of God knows no one except the Spirit of God".

Then we know that the Spirit was active in the old dispensation in many ways, mainly in prophecy, but then there came a time when He moved - He moved into the scene of testimony Himself and He came on the Lord Jesus. In Luke 3 you have, "the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form as a dove upon him". We could speak about what that dwelling was, the complacent rest in a vessel where there was no struggle, and a vessel that could contain Him.

Then just to speak of the wonder of wonders that the Spirit then moved again after the Lord had been glorified. He moved into the scene of testimony again, and came on believers, "parted tongues, as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them". I wonder if we know what it is that this glorious Person has taken up His dwelling place in us and what it means for God too.

I read the short verse at the end of Luke 24 because I think it is very salutary for us, "remain in the city till ye be clothed with power from on high". We are authorised to move forward in the testimony in this power and in this power alone. It is vital for the continuance of things here. For me to take up my true place, it is vital that I understand that.

DJH I would just say simply as to being recovered to the truth of our having liberty to speak to the Holy Spirit, that I have retained ever since the thrill, the experience, when I first spoke to the Holy Spirit. It is something which I carry forward to this day. I am sure we need to realise that in speaking to Him.

I have often thought of this first chapter of Genesis, it is wonderful the place the Holy Spirit has taken in this dispensation which we are speaking of, where we are, that He should be the one Person of the Godhead who is spoken of distinctly, personally, in the

Old Testament. It seems striking the way He has taken such a place now in dwelling with saints, in dwelling with believers, and we often speak of it as a lowly place in view of what we are in ourselves, but He is spoken of distinctly all through the Old Testament and personally. Does that bear on your enquiry?

GMcK I think it is very helpful to see that and I hope that in our enquiry we might get some idea of why that is. Why it is that the scripture marks out the Spirit of God, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters".

I would like to take you up on what you said first because you remember what that experience was to be awakened to the fact that the Spirit is due worship as God.

DJH All I can say is as to the experience, which was not when I was in the service of God but alone on my knees in my bedroom, but I can recall the experience of what it was, something I had never done before, although I had grown up to maturity at that time, but nevertheless I feel that something of that should be with us. I am thankful for what you have suggested that we should consider the Holy Spirit, because I am sure we should have greater regard for the presence of such a One among us and in us and with us still. Those feelings of joy and reverence should not be missing from us now.

GMcK I think that is right and you see some scriptures which were used in the teaching such as Numbers 21, as to the well, it says, "Rise up, well! sing unto it", v 17. The truth was brought out that we should sing to the Spirit. The scriptures are helpful, but we should think too of the idea that if God has shown Himself to us in the Father, Son and Spirit, that is how He should be responded to. There should be a fulness about it so that if I believe and know that He is God, surely worship is due to Him.

DJH Mr Darby said, 'all are God, all one God, God all three', Collected Writings vol 32 p15. There is no question of limitation in relation to any of the divine Persons.

GMcK Also we talk about the Spirit taking a lowly place in service and we know what we mean by that, but let us not misunderstand

the glory of who He is. Errors have come in teaching about the Godhead that they are parts of God. The Spirit of God is not a part of God: He is God. For that reason worship is due to Him. It is a full and intrinsic part of the way that God has revealed Himself to us that we understand this glorious Person in His distinctiveness.

HAH You would know that there was liberty for hymns that address the Spirit among those of our brethren not with us at the time, going back into the profession as we speak, perhaps not always intelligently, hymns referring to another coming of the Spirit or such like, but I remember a sister said, 'Why ever did we not do it before?'.

GMcK That is very attractive. If we can just touch something of that in our spirits today that would be my desire. Why would we ever think of not doing it? I think that is good.

DAB The reference in the second verse of the Bible is very clearly to the Person of the Spirit. We think more of our knowledge of Him in relation to things that He does, and maybe even think of Him simply as a power or comfort; but speaking very simply, there was nothing at this moment to do. The presence of the Holy Spirit as a Person is drawn attention to. The passage in the beginning of Luke is the same.

GMcK I suppose we have to take care speaking about Persons of the Godhead before it was fully revealed; the Spirit in a full way was revealed to us at the Lord's baptism. But I think what you say is right - for some reason in this scripture, right at the very beginning, the Spirit of God is picked out. You get the idea of enormous potential in this scripture. There was nothing there, "the earth was waste and empty", and the Spirit of God hovers "over the face of the waters". You get some sense of what would come from that scene. His mission was going to be earthward. You get some feeling that He is contemplating all that He would bring out of that scene that was waste and empty for God.

DAB It is all of God. Contrary to scientific assertions it is not possible for living things to generate themselves from this condition;

God did that. The means of sustaining it was here in the water, but the doing of it was God's.

GMcK We should carry that through the whole reading because we will see that there is no other explanation for the things that God has been able to do, but the fact that it is of God; and the Spirit is involved in that very especially.

DJH This hovering and waiting here would be answered to when He came down at Pentecost would you say? He was looking on to that, waiting until that time when He would find a lodging place here on earth.

GMcK At this time there was no resting place for Him. There was nothing worthy of His dwelling, but at that time you speak of there would be a wonderful dwelling for Him. Think of the earth as it was, waste and empty: for the moment it did not bear the reflection of God's nature, but it would do. I think the Spirit of God is especially linked with that, the fact that God's own nature will be proclaimed, demonstrated and even established on the earth. I think that is the Spirit's work.

DJH It peculiarly relates to divine feelings.

RHB The scriptures you have read refer to beginnings, the beginning of time, the beginning of the Lord's public service, and the beginning of Christianity publicly. In each case the Spirit of God is prominent. I was struck as you had these scriptures read that they speak of beginnings and the Spirit of God intimately involved. Other scriptures would show that if there is to be a beginning with us inwardly it must be through the effective and quickening action of the Holy Spirit. It seems something significant that this divine Person is peculiarly associated with the outset or the commencement of something.

GMcK It intensifies in our minds that everything begins with God: He is the originator of everything, but then a little bit deeper than that, what is at the root of everything is God's own nature. I think that is what the scripture suggests to me. It is the Spirit of God, it

was God's own Spirit, it is what He is like. That is what He will bring to shine out of this scene.

RHB The ultimate of that will be the heavenly city having His glory, Rev 21: 10. That will be the issue of what you are saying.

EFW I think raising the exercise is of vital importance because we tend to accept things as they are. You spoke about the Holy Spirit being worshipped. During the war (1939-1945), I think that was generally accepted, that was to be so, but the exercise that took some time was, when? Should it be at the beginning of the Supper? Should it be when the brother goes to the table? When should it be? It is clear enough now when it should be, but going through the exercise helps us to appreciate what is due and when it is due to the Spirit.

GMcK How did you arrive at when it should be?

EFW I think the Spirit, when He saw that we were exercised, indicated the answer. The urgency is to be exercised about these things and then He would indicate, as He can, when and where He should be worshipped. The same goes to the end of the morning meeting when we speak to God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I wondered whether that might be contained in the titles that you have read of as to the Spirit. The Spirit of God to start with, distinctive as the Spirit of power, but when you come to Acts it is the Holy Spirit. We need to bear that in mind.

GMcK I suppose that has in mind God's own holiness which is complete, and that has a special bearing when we apply it to ourselves. If He is to have a dwelling place with me then it raises a question about conditions where He can be free.

EFW It does and that is very exercising. I think that covers our associations too, that they should be in keeping with the Holy Spirit.

GMcK I am sure that is right and it is a very real exercise. I thought that what would help us in all of this is just the simple conviction that we are speaking about God. He is no less than God and there can be no more. I was struck by the fact that we grow up with these

truths and I wonder whether it is worth sometimes reiterating them, looking and pausing a minute and considering. The Holy Spirit's lowly place does not mean that He has less glory Himself, but when we go back to the beginning of things we see that He was there.

PM Is it to impress us that He is spoken of here before there was time? Whilst His mediatorial service is alluded to here, yet in His Person He was there before there was time. I think we got help that He becomes an object of worship as we see Him objectively in the glory of His Person. He is greater than what He does and greater than what He secures.

GMcK That is a help to carry that with us. Reverence should come into our spirits as we think of Him and speak of Him.

PM I am sure of that. We are to be careful in His presence but He becomes an object of worship because of who He is.

HAH As to the 'when' that has been referred to, I think we were helped to see that immediately at the Supper it is the Lord's Supper and the Holy Spirit would be jealous that the Lord should have His part in the enjoyment of the assembly. Then we were helped to see that the Lord Himself would recognise the Spirit's part in that, and that would suggest a suitable time to address the Holy Spirit, especially in view of our moving on in the liberty and joy of sonship.

EFW That is very helpful. I am glad you have put into words exactly what was behind our coming to the present time, when I do not think that anybody has any doubt as to when the Spirit should be addressed.

DAB I remember these things being called into question and there was a suggestion - which might lie behind the idea that the Spirit would be addressed at the beginning of the meeting - to link any response to the Spirit to what we knew of Him in our circumstances and our exercise. There is more than that; the Spirit of God is not worshipped simply because He stands in relation to my exercises but on account of who He is.

GMcK And what He has done, is doing and will do, but in a very wide sense. I think the scripture in Genesis is very wide because it shows us that the Spirit of God's mission is earthward and that is the whole earth.

DAB We have been impressed in reading the early chapters of Luke to see the way the Spirit of God comes forward, because the nation of Israel had been in the guardianship of angelic ministry. The Spirit of God had moved in prophecy, but there was a ministry of angels. We see them in the beginning of Luke speaking to some of the characters in the early chapters, but then He starts to make divine communications to Simeon and as the Holy Spirit begins to make communications, the angels recede and leave the activity to the Spirit of God.

GMcK If we just thought about the fact that He is God, this is all clear because God Himself is active; so why would any other minister want to put themselves in front, even an angel? It is interesting to me how simple things, such as accepting that the Spirit of God is God, help us. If we really think about it, things are very clear. The fact that we should worship Him is clear because He is God. Speaking for myself I do not think deeply enough about it very often.

RMB When you say that the mission of the Holy Spirit is earthward, are you thinking that the earth has been the sphere of His operations?

GMcK I hope you would go with that. Being God we cannot limit Him, but what is implied in the scripture where He hovered over the face of the waters I think is the whole earth, and what He would do in it. I thought that in this scripture you see that His mission is earthward and then when He comes on the Lord you see that His mission is manward. The expression of God's nature was going to be taken up on the earth and then in men, first of all in one glorious Man, but then in men.

RMB I suppose we could say that from another point of view the Holy Spirit's mission has in mind securing what is for God so that

from that point of view it would be Godward.

GMcK That helps, but what I am trying to get at is that I think God's desire has been to implant His own nature and make it so that His work in the earth will reflect what God is like. That is an amazing thing. When you think of what the world's system has become, God is working on another line altogether and what He sees in it is the reflection of His own nature and that is attributable to the service of the Spirit.

EOPM The translator often has difficulty in using a small or a capital 's'. I was following your thought as to the Spirit's service, so effective has it been that the Spirit of God and the spirit of men can become something of the same character. The scripture in Corinthians brings that out, Mr Darby's note there as to the difficulty of what to use shows how the Spirit is seeking to form what is of God in the spirits and souls of men.

GMcK The scripture in Corinthians helps us. Again if we would take time to pause and think about what Paul is saying, his reasoning here is very clear, "who of men hath known the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?" That is clear. How could I really know what you are like without being you? The spirit which is in you is the only one who knows your mind and your things. Then he says, "thus also the things of God knows no one except the Spirit of God". If we think about this it is very clear, the Spirit of God is the only One who is able to truly and really form the nature of God anywhere because He is the only One who understands it.

EOPM What you are saying is helpful because only this week we were speaking of what really introduces us to the body; it is the Lord's work. There is the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Spirit, and baptism. The gift of the Spirit gives us the reality of what we have been brought into in the work of Christ which must involve what we get here in 1 Corinthians 2. The Spirit wants to make that not only attractive to us, but formed in us.

GMcK This is the key point; this is how the divine nature is formed. How can there be another way? It is not something I can do; it is not something that an angel could do. God Himself works and it is the Spirit of God - I think the explanation of why it is the Spirit of God in Genesis 1:2 is that what God is like is what is in mind. It is His nature, and therefore in Luke 3 this becomes a very holy subject, the Spirit of God coming on a Man.

PJW Are we helped when we consider the way the Lord Jesus speaks about the Holy Spirit, particularly in John's gospel? He speaks of Him in various ways; the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, and he speaks of "when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you", John 15: 26. But then he says, "who goes forth from with the Father" which would guard His deity, that while being sent, yet it is His own act; He "goes forth from with the Father".

GMcK So we can say quite freely that God moved. When the Spirit came God moved. As we were saying before, as well as His mission being on the earth, it now comes concentrated in a Man and the life of the Lord Jesus. We need to tread carefully, but He moved in the power of the Spirit of God. I think that is what is meant by dependent manhood. That is how I understand it.

DAB He says expressly, "But if / by the Spirit of God", Matt 12: 28.

GMcK You might ask, 'How far does that go?'. But we have the scripture, "who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God", Heb 9: 14. These are holy things and are a wonderful contemplation. It would help us to honour the Spirit to see His part in this holy concert of the life of Jesus.

DAB How precious it is to see. I have seen a distinction made between His having offered Himself and His having offered up Himself, because in a sense there was something very personal about the way that the Lord Jesus submitted to that sacrificial work, but the Holy Spirit was there at the climax of the life of Jesus when that offering was made and accepted by God.

RJF Do you think that the corresponding passage in John is helpful where it speaks about the Holy Spirit, "abiding on him", John 1: 33?

It conveys to me a sense that there was no distance, no difference, a perfect place for His abode.

GMcK You get the idea of rest. If you think of who the Spirit of God is, as we have said, and then you think of a vessel that could contain Him fully and complacently, that was Jesus. So that in a very special way the divine nature is starting to come out. The divine nature did not really come out in prophecy in the Old Testament, it was suggested, but the divine nature is demonstrated on the earth in the life of Christ. Look at Christ and the way He walked, that is what God is like because He was empowered by God's own spirit.

JW It is suggested that at the baptism of the Lord here the economy was seen for the first time, the way that God has come out in testimony towards men, to make Himself known.

GMcK Why was it that it waited until He was thirty years old until the Spirit came?

JW The anointing, which this involves here, involves God's committal and God committed Himself to Christ after He had been proven in these secret years, the perfection of His manhood, He says, "*Thou* art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". Do you think in that kind of manhood, God made His choice known in a Man, a proved Man; it was at this point that the Spirit came upon Him?

GMcK That is attractive; so the dwelling place was proved before He took it up?

JW It is a public committal on God's part to Christ. It is with the testimony in view and it awaited this time, when the Lord was about thirty years old, to enter into His public service, but He had been proven before, the Father's delight was in Him.

GMcK Now it is going to come out, it is going to be demonstrated. The Lord says when the Comforter comes, "having come, he will bring demonstration to the world", John 16: 8. The Spirit has that in mind, that the divine nature is demonstrated. How perfect it is in Christ Himself.

JW It has been said that it is like the gold being put upon the acacia wood on the ark, the way that God has come out Himself in His Person and the Spirit's coming upon Him has that in view.

DJH So the next chapter is full of references showing the result of this, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness" (chap 4: 1), and then "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit" (v 14); you can see the effect of this on that blessed Man. From henceforth everything was related to the power of the Holy Spirit.

GMcK I think it is a really important thing for us to understand that the Lord, when He was here, did not generally rely for power on His divinity. What was demonstrated was dependent manhood moving in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Again, if we just consider it, we will realise that it is clear because how else could we accept that He has left us a model that we should follow in His steps?

AM In this account, when the Holy Spirit came upon Him, He came upon one who was praying, "Jesus having been baptised and praying". Does that confirm what you are saying as to the dependent manhood that the Holy Spirit could associate Himself with?

GMcK Do you think that is part of this divine approval? There was that kind of Man that He could come upon. There are some differences between this and Acts 2.

AM The most apparent is that the Holy Spirit came in Acts 2 as "parted tongues, as of fire"; that was on account of the condition of those to whom He came, but here there was total complacency with nothing that was out of accord with the holiness of that One.

GMcK That is one of the big differences, and it is another important thing for us to understand; there was no struggle here. When it comes to us the Spirit has things to overcome, but this is a perfect demonstration, a divine demonstration of what manhood according to God is meant to be, empowered by His own Spirit.

DJH You could barely think of a greater contrast between a dove and “parted tongues, as of fire”, could you?

GMcK It is the same Person, the same power, it manifests itself in a different way and it must do.

DJH And yet it is pointing out the distinctiveness of the blessed Man on whom He could descend, “in a bodily form as a dove”.

DJW Do you think there is a contrast between Genesis 1 in the Spirit of God hovering, where there was nothing settled; and the scripture in Luke 3 where the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, where there was that which was settled? I wondered whether one of the distinctive services of the Spirit to us is in distinguishing Christ here in manhood, as Luke 3 would bring out; and then coming in Acts 2, He distinguished that same Man in the glory.

GMcK That is one of His services to us which is continuous, to distinguish Christ. I think that is why these verses which we have read help us. The Spirit coming upon Him distinguished Him; it did not come on anybody else here: He was marked out. There was a Vessel that that was worthy of Him.

BES Could you say something about the difference between the Spirit coming upon the Lord here, and having been always with Him from the moment of conception? I was thinking of what we get in the type in Leviticus, the oblation, the fine flour mingled with oil is mentioned first, and then anointed with oil, Lev 7: 12.

GMcK I found a lot in the scriptures that the Spirit is linked with demonstration. He is linked with prophecy, with testimony, and then with demonstration. I think that is something we could think about, that His intention is that the divine nature comes out, becomes seen and known. What you have said would be more the private side; what comes out seems to be of special importance.

BES We have referred to the thirty years of the Father’s pleasure and that would include that He answered to the type of the fine flour mingled with oil; and that then could come out publicly in the descent of the Spirit upon Him.

GMcK That reference is helpful, there is a holy concert here between the power of the Holy Spirit of God and a dependent Man that I think is worthy of our contemplation. It helps us to honour the part that the Spirit had in that.

JRW I wondered whether the thought of power is involved in the testimony of the Spirit. In the next chapter it says, “with authority and power”, Luke 4: 36. The scriptures that you have read at the end of Luke say, “till ye be clothed with power”. I wondered whether the thought of power was a particular feature of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

GMcK I think it must be, especially when you come to His ministering to the saints because of the things that have to be overcome. Would you agree that going along with power is the nature of what He is doing? He is bringing out the nature of God so that when you look around the saints you learn what God is like. That is the Spirit’s work, so that going along with the power there is the kind of thing He is doing.

JRW Say more as to the nature - where do we see that and where is it demonstrated, where does it come into evidence?

RHB Does that thought, what God is like, come into expression in what the prophet says in Isaiah, “the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him” (chap 11: 2), and then he lists certain features, “the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. And his delight will be in the fear of Jehovah”, v 2, 3. It speaks of the Spirit coming upon Him, but also the way that that was manifested publicly in the words that He spoke and the deeds that He did and the way that He did them.

GMcK That was what was in God’s mind. It was not that the earth should just be a place where He could demonstrate His power but where His own nature is revealed. That is what I should praise the Spirit for, and I think the way to get to it is to see it in Christ first because there it is perfect. But, although there is a difference

between the dove and the “parted tongues”, it is the same Person, the same power. It is an amazing thing.

DAB You have spoken of differences between those two occasions, but there is a similarity that the Holy Spirit was then expressed. In Luke 4 it does not say they wondered at what Jesus said, but, “wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth”, v 22. In other words they wondered at the outward expression of what was inward, and then in the Acts it was as the Holy Spirit gave to them - not just to speak or to say, but to “speak forth”, to give expression to what He had in them.

GMcK It is all coming out then, it is starting to come out immediately. In Acts 2 it did not take time to settle or to get ingrained in them, immediately they spoke in all the tongues.

What you have said brings out another difference which is interesting, that there is one Man in Luke 3 and there are many in Acts 2.

DAB I was thinking in that connection by way of contrast about the anointing of David, when seven other people were considered first before David was anointed. When the Holy Spirit descended His destination was known and there was no question of Him coming upon anyone else; He came where that fine flour was mingled with oil.

GMcK There was one Man there who was worthy of His rest and was able to contain that power perfectly Himself. When you come to Acts 2 it “sat upon each one of them”; it takes the company now. It is an important thing for us to realise that. It takes the company, “it sat upon each one of them”. I think that happened all at once.

PM In Luke 3 a Man became the centre for heaven here upon the earth, but in Acts 2 heaven became the centre because there was a Man there, and the Spirit was the link between what was here and the Man who was there.

GMcK So Christ remains the object. None of what we are saying changes any of that, the Spirit’s delight is to distinguish Christ and

that remains.

RDP-r He comes from heaven because that is where Christ was.

GMcK He saw Him glorified.

RDP-r I think we have been helped lately to see that, in those days between the Lord's ascension and the coming of the Spirit, the three Persons of the Godhead were together in heaven.

GMcK I have heard that there have been several meetings where the Spirit has been prominent in the subject. I think these things are interesting for us; these things do not happen by co-incidence, God speaks and we should listen. If He is indicating that the Spirit needs to have His place with us, then we should heed it.

RDP-r I would go along with that because my experience has been that where the Spirit of God is given His place then He is free to bring out the glories of Christ.

GMcK It must be because divine power is released. He is God. Let us remember that. Then divine power is released.

As to Acts 2 where the Spirit comes, I wanted to refer also to the scripture in John 20 where the Lord Jesus says, "as the Father sent me forth, I also send you. And having said this, he breathed into them, and says to them, Receive the Holy Spirit", v 21, 22. We have asked about the way the divine nature is formed and I wonder whether having that scripture in our minds helps us. It was the Lord Himself who breathed into them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit". I think that if the Spirit is given His place in the saints what comes out is the life of Christ, really and substantially. He breathed into them.

JRW What is the difference between that in John 20 and the scripture you read in Acts 2? The Lord said, "Receive the Holy Spirit"?

GMcK I wondered why it was there because it can confuse us. We might think that this is when the Spirit came, but He did not come then, He came in Acts 2. I think the reason it is there is to show that

it is the life of Christ which is meant to come out. That is God's intention and it is also made abundantly clear to them, that when the Spirit came, who it was He came from. It was the Lord Himself who breathed into them.

JRW I think it is beginning to help us in relation to the divine nature. I know it is in a slightly different context but the Lord said to Philip, "Am I so long a time with you, and thou hast not known me, Philip?", John 14: 9. There seems to be something in that in relation to the divine nature and how we can identify it and appropriate it.

GMcK We learn it in its perfection in Jesus and that is a life long lesson.

BES Mr Darby said they had not the power of the Spirit, but intelligence of the word, Collected Writings vol 25 p324.

GMcK They certainly did not experience the power. In fact, the Lord restrained them. He said, "remain in the city till ye be clothed with power from on high"; they had to wait for it.

BES Yes, He did, even though they understood a good deal. That comes out in Acts 1. Peter could speak intelligently about the scriptures and their fulfilment but they had not the power to act until the next chapter.

AAC One thing that has often struck me is that, in our Christian history we have received forgiveness of sins - we pray to God for that; but then we learn that God Himself, in the Person of the Spirit, has indwelt us. That is a very great time which causes us to give worship to Him. What a wonderful thing that such a One has actually taken up a place in me! The result of that should be towards God and towards the Lord Jesus. What God has given us is, as you have drawn out, in view of what He is seeking Himself, His own nature, to be returned to Him, and that is a very real exercise.

GMcK Not only am I safe in the future, but there is going to be a change. Where is the power for that change coming from? It is not coming from me, nothing of that will last, but it comes from God

Himself. It is more than that, it does not only come from God, *It is* God. Do you think we need to let that sink in?

EOPM God is not going to change the power in which the testimony is going forward. He had it in Christ, He is going to have it in the saints; and the Person and the power of that testimony is exactly the same. I think we need to be reminded of that, that the Spirit has been the power for the testimony these two thousand years. He has seen the Dark Ages, He has seen the declension, He has seen the recovery. He has seen all those states of the church in Revelation, but He is still the power; and if I am going to be in the testimony rightly, as you say with others, it has got to be in the power of the Spirit. If it is not, then the testimony in that sense, or the area available for it, is going to be diminished.

GMcK It would be good for us to remember that. That helps us to understand why the Lord Jesus said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" when He did. He breathed into them, that is the continuing line, showing where it came from.

EOPM I think what we have been considering should strengthen us in that, that however weak and feeble we may feel - and outwardly the public position is very weak, feeble and fragmented - the Spirit of God is here and His power is undiminished. What may have been diminished is the place that the church publicly and believers individually have given to Him for that power to be effective.

GMcK What came out in the life of Jesus was a Man who allowed that power to have its full freedom, and that is a test for us. That power which has taken up its residence in me, through grace, should have its full way with me. You get the end of it all, the objective when Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, *I*, but Christ lives in me", Gal 2: 20. That is the objective; the Holy Spirit of God is so dominant, so free with me, that what is seen is not really my life at all, it is Christ's life.

DAB The Lord Jesus in John 20 gave His own authority to remit and retain. It is a very sober matter that His own should have that responsibility because we might think that that was a prerogative of

God Himself; but exercises arise in our lives and among us that challenge us repeatedly about whether we exercise that authority and that power. He acted with authority and power, and to exercise those things spoken of in John 20 as God Himself would exercise them is a very sober thing. They are not things that were committed to the church in a pristine condition that cannot be maintained now; they are committed where they will be exercised in the power of that Spirit.

GMcK It is a testing thing. We need to be maintained in our faith about it because if the power is the same and the glorious Person is the same there ought to be the ability to carry these things through rightly. I think the verse in Luke 24 is helpful. The disciples were there, they were subjects of the Lord's own ministry. There was no failure with that ministry; it was perfect. They had seen Him risen from the dead; they were going to see Him ascend into heaven. You would think they were fully prepared, and I might think that I am fully prepared. I might think I have read all the ministry or I am well taught, whatever it is, but the Lord says, "remain in the city till ye be clothed with power from on high" - you are not ready, you are not prepared and you are not authorised, until that time. We have authority, but only in this power.

DJH It is "clothed with power", it is not imbued with power, but "clothed with power"? If you are clothed with something it is evident, but there would be some evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit as they were moving out into the testimony?

GMcK Think about how it came out in Peter's preaching. He was clothed with it. It was there through and through. Then it says of Stephen that he was, "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit", Acts 6: 5.

DJH It is good to see men in power; that power was evident outwardly and effective in what they did to that man in raising him up.

GMcK There is meant to be a demonstration of this power and not only of the power but God takes delight in there being a

demonstration of His own nature. I think that is what the Spirit contemplated when He hovered over the face of the waters.

London

19th September 2009

Key to Initials

R H Brown, East Finchley; R M Brown, East Finchley; D A Burr, London; A A Croot, London; R J Flowerdew, Sunbury; D J Hutson, London; H A Hutson, London; G McKay, Manchester; A Martin, Buckhurst Hill; P Martin, Colchester; E O P Mutton, Walton; R D Painter, Yeovil; B E Surtees, Colchester; J R Walkinshaw, Maidstone; P J Walkinshaw, Gillingham; D J Wright, Havering; J Wright, Havering

THE LOVE OF JESUS

Garth McKay

Romans 8: 37-39

Luke 22: 14-20, 27, 28

John 15: 9-17; 13: 1

Sometimes the greatest things in our Christianity are very simple things and I would like to speak to you for a moment about the love of Jesus. Sometimes the simplest things are the most profound, and the wondrous thing is that this can be taken hold of by the youngest, by all of us, the wonder of the fact that Jesus has loved us and that He does love us. I hope you are conscious of the love of Jesus which is towards you. It is one of the simplest things that you can understand, the children sing of it -

Jesus loves me, this I know

- but how profound and how limitless that love is. I have felt the effect of the drawing power of a Man who has loved me. I want to say a word about that to you. It is not complex; there is no complicated reasoning in it. It is a matter of the heart, and it is a matter of the heart of Jesus, that Man from whom the love proceeded. It did not start with me, it started with Him. He loved because He wanted to love, there was no other reason, and that love is beaming toward me now and toward you.

Paul speaks of it here in Romans. It begins with the love of God; he starts by speaking about the love of God. That is where it begins because it is the love of God. The love of God is a great force in the universe which has been made known to us, it lies behind everything that God has done. We spoke in the reading of God's nature; God's heart is so full of love that we can not only speak of God's love coming from Him, but John writes, "God is love", 1 John 4: 8. It is inextricably linked with God. That is this love that Paul speaks about. What is this love like? One thing, it is unconditional. Paul says, "God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us", Rom 5: 8. It sets it apart

from any other kind of love. That is God's love. He loved me when I was unlovable, loved me when there was no reason to love, but because it was His sovereign will to do it. That is what this force is.

The Lord has directed me to speak about this in a personal way. Are you conscious that you are loved with a love like that?

Paul speaks here about how great it is; he reels off this long list of powers, and it is almost as if he lists all of the powers he could think of, "death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature"; things that he knew, things that were present or things to come, things that he did not know about. All the powers he could think of, none of them would be able to separate him from the love of God, this great unconditional force of love that is towards you. Then the other wonderful thing that we can say about this love is what he adds, "which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". That is the way it has come to us, that is the way that it has been made known, that is the way I have learned it, that is the way you have learned it no doubt. You have learned that it is, "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". That is how God has shown it to us, that is how He has demonstrated it, and I believe that is how He gets to you in your heart because it is the love of a Man, and it has not remained distant. How can you sit in the gospel and say that God's love has remained distant? How it has flowed out in the life and the actions of Jesus. I want to talk to you about the love of Jesus, about a limitless love. Have you come into contact with love like that? The love of a Man, love that His disciples learned when they were with Him, love that John learned by leaning on His breast, how near He was to Jesus. He describes Himself as one "whom Jesus loved", John 13: 23. Have you a consciousness of that? Are you one that Jesus loves? It was a love that the children learned. When the children came to Jesus there were those who would have forbidden them. They said, 'No, stay back', but He says, "Suffer the little children to come to me ... having taken them in his arms ... he blessed them", Mark 10: 14, 16. How real this love is, the love of Jesus, "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". The love of the good

Shepherd who having lost His sheep left the ninety and nine and went and found that sheep, put it on His shoulders and brought it home, Luke 15: 4-7. The love of the Saviour. Do you feel that He has sought you like that? How deep this is. You say, 'How simple, but how profound, that Jesus should love me like that'.

There is love in His hour of greatest need in the garden when He prayed. He came to them and they could not remain awake with Him. He said, "Sleep on now and take your rest", Matt 26: 45. His love cared for them like that, and then when men came to take Him, He said, "if therefore ye seek me, let these go away", John 18: 8. It is a love that implored the Father for them in the hours before He was taken, love that implored the Father in His prayer to take care of them -

The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know.
(Hymn 279)

Can I make an appeal to you today, freshly, about the love of Jesus? This great limitless force which is towards you, which has no limit, no end; the love of a Man, "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord". What Paul must have come to when he wrote, "the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge", Eph 3: 19! Why me? Why does He love me? It is an unanswerable question, but He does. Thank God He does. Thank God for that love which has flowed to me in this way.

Luke 22 is the provision of His love: while He is absent He has made a provision for us. I would like you to see it as a provision of His love. It is His commandment, that is true - "this do in remembrance of me" - that we should take the Supper. It is His commandment, but it is the provision of His love. Why is it? I think it is because in His wisdom He brings us back every week to these symbols of the love of a Man. You go to the breaking of bread every week; I am glad if you do. You see the bread and the cup on the table; what do they mean to you? They are symbols of the greatest love there has ever been. In God's wisdom He brings us back to

them, week after week after week. How are you going to begin your week? By reminding yourself that Jesus loves you, and by reminding yourself how deeply He loves you. How can we look on those emblems on the table without being strongly affected by His giving and that unfailing love that He has for us? It is a provision of His love and it goes on. He gave it here that it might be with us while He was absent; it is a provision of His love. He wanted to show them how much He loved them; He wants to tell you today freshly how much He loves you. He will remind you of it in the morning; He will remind you of it next week if we are left, and the week after, in the bread and the cup. He says, "With desire I have desired"; He stresses His love. How His love was stressed in the giving of His body and the shedding of His blood. I am not now talking about you being a sinner. That is another subject. I am talking about the Man who gave Himself for you. He not only gave something that He had, but He gave Himself. His love, it is a great force which is towards you. May you be freshly affected by it today and every time you look at that bread and that cup, reminding us of that sacrificial love which proceeded from Him.

Then He speaks in the atmosphere of His sufferings that were about to come upon Him. We cannot really measure what was about to come on Him, what was in His spirit, what He was carrying - who could speak rightly of it; and yet He says, "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves. But ye are they who have persevered with me in my temptations". He commends them at such a moment. I want to appeal to you about this, that no one loved like Jesus loved. How He loved them and how He loves you; and how He loves every little thing that you have done for Him, and every little thing that you will do for Him, "ye are they who have persevered with me in my temptations". He knew how they would leave Him; He knew how weak they would be. He knew that Peter would deny Him; He knew that they would all forsake Him and flee; and yet He says at such a moment, "ye are they who have persevered with me in my temptations". It is what you mean to Him, and I think He would commend us, and would encourage us with this word, commending

us. He would say that to every one of us, the big things and the small things that you have done for Him, “ye are they who have persevered with me in my temptations”. Take courage that Jesus loves you. He is not looking on you with a critical eye, He is looking on you because He loves you, and He loves the things that you do for Him. May you have a fresh sense of His commending you. He would commend you because He loves you; the might of His love is behind that.

In John 15 Jesus speaks of abiding in His love and I would that it was the portion of us all to abide in this love. I think we get a sense when we are together that we are abiding in His love, His love is towards us. But also He raises a question here. He wants us to abide in His love and He wants our joy to be full; but then He says, “If ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love”. He might give us this word today, “If ye shall keep my commandments”. You might say, this is becoming conditional then - I do not think it is. I do not think this is a condition, there is no mention here of His love being withdrawn. I am not talking to you today about the love of Jesus being withdrawn, but Jesus would put this word upon our shoulders lightly: “If ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love”. I think there is a responsibility laid on us lightly by the Lord about whether we earn His love, whether we are worthy of it. There is no question of it being withdrawn but He promises it especially to those who keep His commandments. There is a responsibility raised with each one of us that we might take up, from One who has loved us so well: surely He is worthy that we should walk in a way that He can support. It is a question of finding His support in everything and abiding in His love.

I was looking at the scripture where the Lord's natural brethren were outside and they said, 'They call for thee'; and He would not go. We do not know why, we are not told why. Instead He points out those who kept His commandments, and He says, “Behold my mother and my brethren”, Matt 12: 49. I thought of those who should have had the right to His support, should have had His full support, should have had access to that love; and He withholds it and He

points out rather those who kept His commandments. I do not say any more but I think it is a word for us: what a thing it would be if I could earn such love. The idea is that the love of Jesus has an effect on me so that I want to earn it, I want to be pleasing to Him, I want to earn His support and to be able to say that I am abiding in His love.

Then you might ask what His commandment is; and almost as though He anticipates the question He says, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you". There is a test too. When this question is raised about abiding in His love, and about keeping His commandments, the commandment that He picks is that we should love one another, "as I have loved you". What a commandment and what a standard! These things are testing for us, that we should "love one another" How? Unconditionally, that is how we should love one another, as He has loved us, and deeply, and without limits. This is His commandment. I do not know why He chose this one, I cannot explain that, but He did. Now, dear brethren, a miracle is working because now the love of Jesus is going to begin to be seen among His people. See how this power of love starts to work if we take it up rightly as received from Him. It will be the case that among His people, "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" becomes visible among His own, so that He could say, "By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine, if ye have love amongst yourselves", John 13: 35.

John 13 says, "Jesus, knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end". I would like to send every one away from this room with that assurance in their heart, that Jesus will love you to the end. Having loved you He is going to love you to the end. Having set His love on you, He is going to carry it through to the very end. He will not fail you. How simple these things are: we come back to the simplicity of it. The young children can understand about Someone who is never ever going to fail them. I can assure you of my love and maybe even of your parents' love, but I know that at some point it may waver and maybe even

fail; but the love of Jesus is never going to fail - never ever - because it is “the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”. That is how we have come to know it. The writer of the hymn says:

But what to those who find? Ah! This
Nor tongue nor pen can show;
The love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know.
(Hymn 279)

The writer ran out of expressions for His love, and we run out of expressions very fast when we consider such things, “loved them to the end”. What is the end? Maybe the end is when He comes for us. He also says, “I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you”, John 14: 18. But the love of Jesus has prepared a place for us now where He is, and He is preparing for a day when He is going to come and take us and we will be forever with Him. He will love you to the end of your pathway. Your end might be different to mine, your end might be closer or further away than mine, but one thing is for sure: He will love you to the end.

I thought of the martyrs, those men and women who gave themselves sometimes in such terrible circumstances for the Lord: what assurance of His love they must have had to get them to the end. I feel very unworthy to speak of them. What they must have had, what a knowledge, what conviction of the fact that Jesus loved them. Nothing more complicated than that - that Jesus loved them. It got them to the end.

Then Mr Darby's note here is very interesting; he says, “To the end’ does not give the full force, for it makes it refer to time, whereas going through with everything is implied”. I want to leave you with that, “loved them to the end” means going through with everything. He will love you, not only to the end, but He will love you through everything. I do not know what things there are in your life that are hard, what burdens you carry, what tests you have and what may be ahead; or what may have been behind and what may be current, but I know this, I know a Man who will get you through them with His

love. He will love you through everything. There is nothing left out of that. Can I just assure you of the love of Jesus, how blessed it is to know it? I trust you have come into contact with it, and I trust you know the power and might of it, and I know it will help you to get through, the love of a Man who will go with you every step of the way.

May He bless the word.

London

19th September 2009

THE POWER AND LOVE OF JESUS

Morrison G Wood

Joshua 3: 14-17

Psalm 127: 2 (from: ... so to his)

There are two things, which are on my heart: the greatness of the power of Jesus, and the greatness of His love. I think we would greatly benefit from the contemplation of the fact that there is a Man who has gone into death and He has broken its power, triumphantly, totally, completely. This is shown figuratively here in the Jordan, “the Jordan is full over all its banks”. It was not a trickle at that time when the people passed over; the river was there in full volume in all its power; but when the ark came and the priests’ feet dipped into the water, these waters stood. It is figurative, but it conveys to our souls the magnitude, the wonder of the power of Jesus who went into death; and He broke its power. What a scene this must have been. As the people crossed over, there was no water in sight. Not only that but we are told that they crossed over on dry ground. I like the use of the word “completely” – it appears twice in this section – I commend it to us for our contemplation and study, to contemplate the fact of what Jesus has done in His power. We have been instructed that this teaching as to the Jordan is not so much His love (although His love would most certainly be there) but it is His power. I am struck with this, the sheer blessedness of it. On the one hand what it means for God, but this is for us to pass over, because Jesus has broken the power of death. To enter into our spiritual and heavenly privileges, a way has been made through death for us.

The time is soon coming when all the saints will be gathered and brought into the light: the saints now sleeping, like our beloved sister, how precious that is. I commend this to us for the contemplation of our hearts, the greatness of His power. What I am convinced of here is the power of Jesus, a Man going into death, who broke that awesome power that had swept right down through the ages, and apart from two notable exceptions, had carried

everything away. There was one man of whom we read and we are told that “he was not, for God took him”, Gen 5: 24. We read of another one, “Jehovah would take up Elijah into the heavens by a whirlwind”, 2 King 2: 1. They did not pass through death. But beloved, the final, dark, solemn, power of death, with all the fears, and the terror that it brings, that power has been defeated and it has been defeated by Jesus our Lord and Saviour.

In the Psalm it is His love, “so to his beloved one he giveth sleep”. I think there is something very precious about this. We have been talking about the totality of the people, the entirety of the people, and there is not one single saint who will be left behind. All will pass over, totally, completely. But here we have the love of Jesus to the one individual, and for our beloved sister. He has given to her sleep. How she needed that, how weary, and worn she was. In our recent visits it was sad to see one we loved so much and who had been so faithful, so reliable, so constant. We knew something of her and her husband’s exercises, and their coming here, and she was one indeed, greatly beloved. She was loved by many, “so to his beloved one he giveth sleep”. It was the love of Jesus in its greatness, who served her and put her quietly to sleep and now He has her to Himself. He is enjoying her, and she is enjoying the rest and the comfort of that realm where Jesus is, and the presence of Jesus. How infinitely blessed.

Let us take time off to reflect on how dearly we are loved by our Saviour. For many of us it would appear, if the Lord does not come soon, that He will serve us, each one, as “his beloved one”. How He loves us, and will put us to sleep. Then the time is coming when He will wake the saints now sleeping. Take time off to contemplate and enjoy how dearly loved you are by your Saviour. Enjoy it every moment of the day. Our beloved sister certainly did and now she is in the joy of His presence and company. I commend these things to us simply, dear brethren: the greatness of the power of Jesus as breaking the power of death, and the greatness of the power of His love that can deal with each and every one of His own.

May our hearts be comforted. For His Name’s sake.

Brechin

31st August 2009

(At the meeting for the burial of Mrs Betty McCrone)

WHAT DEATH IS

Roland H Brown

Isaiah 43: 1-3 (to "thy Saviour")

2 Corinthians 5: 1-8

This occasion is not one of our regular meetings in this room. We have been called together specially because of the departure of our beloved brother and it has already been remarked in prayer that we come together with a sense of loss. This is not the first of such occasions in recent times. We have been gathered in this room several times of late to bury saints who have departed whom we have loved. We do not gather, as the world does, to pay our respects to our beloved brother; the time to do that was when he was alive. But the Lord would bring us together on the death of a saint in order to speak to us. Our affections are peculiarly softened in the presence of death, the death of one that we have known - some have known longer than others - and feel the loss of. In that condition of sensitized affections, I think the Lord would speak a word to us. It would always be a word of comfort as coming from Himself. It would also have, no doubt, a challenge with it because the presence of death is a very solemn matter, and we are to be sobered by it. We are in the presence of what is so final as regards things here, and that is to exercise us, I believe, as to what death is. I just desire to suggest a few thoughts as to that, and as to the portion of our beloved brother - not his final portion, but his present portion as with Christ.

The Scriptures speak of death in more than one way. They speak of the state of death, which is a moral thought. It could apply to any of us that are living, any of us in this room, that we could be in a state of death; or, as the Scripture speaks of some, that they were "dead while living", 1 Tim 5: 6. The father in Luke 15 said of his son, "this my son was dead" (Luke 15: 24); he was not dead literally but, as far as his father was concerned he was dead. "This my son was dead and has come to life, was lost and has been found". I wonder

if any of us are in that state, a state of death? It is a solemn state to be in. Before the great white throne, we read of "the dead" standing before the throne, Rev 20: 12. It speaks of what they were in their life and what they are in their death; nothing in life towards God.

But then the Scripture speaks of the power of death, and him who has the might of it, who has been annulled by the Saviour, Heb 2: 14. The power of death causes men to sin. The great principle abroad in the world for those who reject the truth of resurrection is, "let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die", 1 Cor 15: 32. The power of death works in the hand of the enemy to turn men away from God, and to live in self-will away from Him.

Then there is what we have before us today, the article of death, the actual termination of a life lived here in flesh and blood conditions. And the solemnity of that comes home to us all because we are all in that condition, the mortal condition that must come to an end. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom", 1 Cor 15: 50. Death itself, of course, is the wages of sin (Rom 6: 23), and the judgment of God; and for an unbeliever it is something to be feared - and feared greatly. Indeed, the Scriptures speak of it as the "king of terrors" (Job 18: 14) because it is the end of everything in which man has found his life, everything in which he found his enjoyment as after the flesh comes to an end.

But I want to speak of what death is to a believer, because nothing could be more different than that. The whole character of death has changed completely for those who, like our beloved brother, have put their faith and trust in Jesus. And what has made the change is that the Saviour Himself has come into death. He has come into death Himself, personally. He upon whom death had no claim went into it voluntarily. It is not sufficient really to say it had no claim upon Him; it was greater than that. He went into death in order to destroy it and to destroy it for ever. Nobody else has gone into death like that, but He went into death uttering a loud cry. He did not enter into death in weakness, or in frailty as we do, but having uttered a loud cry He engaged with the power of death and with him that had the might of it; and He engaged with him in order to destroy

him, and to destroy death itself - to annul it and, as the Scripture says, to bring to light "life and incorruptibility", 2 Tim 1: 10. What a triumph, dear brethren! May the triumph of it live in the souls of those of us that love Him and trust Him, as our dear brother did.

Now the effect of that is stupendous, because the whole character of death for the believer has changed, and changed completely. Instead of something to be feared, something to be dreaded, something to be avoided at all costs, it has become the gateway into the most indescribable blessing and joy. Indeed, Mr Darby said that the point of death was the happiest moment in a Christian's existence (Collected Writings vol 27 p344); because it involves the leaving of all that has caused sorrow, all that has caused grief and failure - the leaving of all that behind to enter into the presence of Christ and to be with Him for ever.

This passage that I have read in Isaiah, although uttered to God's earthly people, bears the application I think to us, because even as believers we might wonder about death and the passage of it. But God assures those whom He has redeemed. He reminds them of that - "I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name; thou art mine". How wonderful to think of our beloved brother in that light, as one who has been redeemed at tremendous cost, the blood of Jesus in which he trusted shed for him. And God says, "thou art mine". The Lord has put in His claim, in the taking of our beloved brother, and in relation to every one of His own. Death comes upon old and young. It is not governed by laws of nature. It comes unexpectedly. It reminds us that God is in it, and yet the exercise of it is the exercise of His own claim, "thou art mine". And then He says, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee". What a promise that is, dear brethren, to reassure our hearts in the presence of death, that the One who has Himself been into it, and tasted it as no other ever will, is able to sustain our hearts in the physical and human weakness with which we are familiar, as death itself approaches. He says, "I am Jehovah thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour". How wonderful to think of the saving power of

Christ, entering even into the putting of His loved ones to sleep, "asleep through Jesus", 1 Thess 4: 14.

So the apostle says in this other passage we have read that it is God who "has wrought us for this very thing". What a word that is! Think of our brother being wrought of God. The work of God in him spiritually is complete, but wrought with a purpose in view, a purpose being a heavenly one, that he should be numbered among those that would be associated with Christ in glory when "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun", Matt 13: 43. What a day is coming for display, the day of display for Christ pre-eminently, but for those He has redeemed and saved through His precious blood. And so this passage speaks of God having "wrought us for this very thing", and the earnest of it, the present assurance of it, is that He "has given us the earnest of the Spirit". God would not do that to one for whom death was going to be the end. He has given us the earnest of His Spirit because He has wrought us for this very thing. So this passage speaks of being absent from the body and present with the Lord. We know that while we are here in the body, we are absent from the Lord. He is not here; we are living in the scene where Jesus is not, and we are in the body. But our brother now is absent from the body and present with the Lord. You think of the blessedness, dear brethren, of that portion. You say, 'How could he enjoy it without his body?'. Peter speaks in his epistle of Him "whom, having not seen, ye love; on whom though not now looking, but believing, ye exult with joy unspeakable and filled with the glory", 1 Pet 1: 8. If that is the portion of saints on earth, that they love One whom they have never seen, and though not now looking on Him, but believing, they exult with joy unspeakable and are filled with the glory, what must the portion be of our beloved brother and myriads like him who are absent from the body and present with the Lord?

Dear brethren, our comfort in the sense of loss is in the knowledge of that. Our brother is absent from the body, a body that for him had become a burden, a body of suffering and pain; and all that eclipsed in the presence of the Lord. If this is open to saints on earth in the body, what must the portion be of saints that have been

taken to be with Him? It is not the final portion. Our beloved brother, and the myriads that Christ has taken, await with us the moment of which we have sung (hymn 140), when "the Lord himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice ... shall descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord", 1 Thess 4: 16, 17. That is our hope and expectation, and so fully has death been annulled by His going into it that the apostle reveals to us the wondrous mystery, that there are going to be some that are not even going to have to pass through the article of death. They are going to be changed, but "We shall not all fall asleep", 1 Cor 15: 51. We can look upon death as a vanquished foe. We can say in the language of Scripture, "Where, O death, is thy sting? Where, O death, thy victory?", 1 Cor 15: 55. What became to us as unconverted the "king of terrors" has become the doorway into eternal bliss with Christ.

May our hearts be encouraged by it, for His Name's sake.

Twickenham

28th October 2009

(At the meeting for the burial of Wilfred Hutson)

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