

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 43

October 2010

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MJW Reference was made this morning to the hymn -

God manifest in flesh, O wonder of His universe!
(Hymn 400)

It is because of that wonderful movement which our hymn describes that God will see to it that every created thing - and certainly every man - will acknowledge the greatness of Jesus. It is because of the *wonder* of what happened in the Word coming to make God known, and coming into conditions of flesh and blood in order to die. This has led me to this thought of response, of which there was a great deal this morning. I selected these scriptures because they are some of the high points in God's activities, beginning with the creation when He founded the earth and had the response: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy". Is that not a beautiful reference; God had those who were sympathetic with what He did? What it must have meant to His heart when He thought of all that He was going to achieve in the creation! It has been said that the creation is the sphere of God's purpose. So we need to include in our thoughts the greatness of what creation involves. It obviously involves the heavens and the earth; and those are the areas where God has operated and where He will get His response. Heaven and earth will be in unison as a result of the wonderful things that He has done. So we could perhaps start off with the creation, and what caused these morning stars to respond in the way they did.

DC We were reading in Luke 1 last week and what we get there when Zacharias comes in, “of the course of Abia”, v 5. There is a connection with 1 Chronicles where you get the fulness of Israel’s response, but there is a link back to that here. Exodus 15 is the beginning of Israel’s response - because it *is* response. You have the song of Moses, but it is the song of Miriam here. It is a response to that song of Moses.

MJW That is exactly what I had in mind. We have the creation; and then the response flowing to God; and then we have the people that are delivered from Egypt and the response then from the subjective side (I did not read what Moses said). Then we have the high point in Israel with the house filled and the priests not able to stand. That response must have been very wonderful. David established the service of song, but Solomon was privileged to complete the house and all the glory that attached to that. Then we have the incoming of the Lord Jesus - what a wonderful moment - and this heavenly host fully in accord with it! How thrilling it is!

I read about the lonely “grain of wheat” because everything that God has done has depended on redemption. How touching it is that the Lord should use that expression, particularly when the Greeks came: “Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit”.

I read in Hebrews because we have often been shown that in Hebrews we have the Apostle, who comes out from God, and we have the High Priest, involving what goes back to God from Christ and from man. We have often been reminded that the response is equal to the revelation. Christ was the Apostle; but there is response, because of Christ in His priestly capacity having the breastplate and the shoulder-pieces, with the saints on His heart and on His shoulders. He goes in to God with the saints there, but it is because *He* is there, as well as the saints, that the response is equal to the revelation.

And then I read in Ephesians 3 because you get that mighty section at the end of the chapter where it is glory to God in the

assembly, that unique vessel fitted peculiarly to serve God.

DC In the scripture that says, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy”, how far do you think they had any knowledge of the purpose of God? They could take account of creation, but could they take account of what God is going to do in Christ and then in the assembly even at those very beginnings?

MJW When God starts to work in the creation, He makes the expanse. It is an index to His thoughts and the extensiveness of them. I like the thought that the creation had in view the whole extent of the thoughts of God involving His pleasure and His purpose. Did they know His heart, and what would flow out of it? The morning stars “sang”, but the sons of God “shouted”. Ours is a much greater privilege because we can sing as knowing something about redemption. And we *love* singing, do we not?

WMP So immediately in Genesis 1 He brings in the thought of the “great lights”, v 16. That would link with our brother’s suggestion for us this morning, the supreme place that Christ has. God does not wait to introduce that thought, does He?

MJW That is beautiful, and all the result of the sun shining. We know that photosynthesis happens because the sun shines; and if the glory of Christ shines, it operates mightily, does it not?

WMP Psalm 19 says, “and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof”, v 6.

MJW It is “heat” there. Why is it “heat”?

WMP Well, it would be beneficial for us, do you think? It is connected with the thought of blessing, and maybe fruitfulness too, leading to what is responsive.

MJW I am sure that is true, but it has often surprised me because in the east the sun is very powerful and they do hide from it; so I have often wondered about that scripture. I am not trying to contradict what you are saying because the great light - lovely, is it not? - is for fructifying power, inspiring power, all that will come to light for God. But do you have any more thoughts about the heat?

WMP I was thinking of our brother's thanksgiving this morning in suggesting how creation is introduced as a platform for God to develop these wonderful thoughts in His purpose. Maybe he has more in mind about that.

JAS I enjoyed taking part this morning. It is a wonderful thing to have part in this response. These sons of God must have had feelings as to what God was now putting in motion, shall we say? I think there was something there that they knew of them. They realised something of the heart of God that was beginning to operate with a view to securing a full answer for Himself.

MJW Well, that is beautiful, to trace it to the heart of God; because I suppose the more that is known of God, the more can be understood about the scope and blessedness of what would flow from that heart, those 'deep affections', as one of our brothers referred to this morning. I enjoyed what you said because at the end of the meeting we had a number of references to 'universal adoration'. There is a universal response. That is why I read the Psalm because you get that sense there. I know it is limited there because it is Israel, but it has in mind that all these creatures, and all these instruments, all join in; and it gives me an impression of the whole creation joining in this response to God. It is a wonderfully exultant note, is it not? I think it is the closest I can get to thinking of the ascription of universal response.

JAS From the very beginnings of God's workings, right through to the eternal day, what an accumulation there will be of the knowledge of Himself and of His ways. It really touches our hearts; it goes beyond our minds.

MJW I liked what you said that they knew something about God's heart, but what has come from it!

DMC So what we touched this morning was not local; it was universal.

MJW Very good. I am sure that is important. When do you feel that we started touching that, because the breaking of bread is in the wilderness, is it not?

DMC I think the Lord Jesus takes up His place as the Minister of the sanctuary, and touches a chord in our hearts which leads a response in the power of the Spirit. And it is a wonderful thing that God is satisfied with what Christ has secured in the saints. We are just a small part of it, but, nevertheless, in a sense, we are unlimited.

MJW That is why I like the thought of the response being equal to the revelation, because it *must* involve Him as on the side of the response. He leads in it, and He goes in to God as representative - but not just representative - of all the people He has secured through His death. He has them all with Him. I think that is wonderful. Do you notice as the meeting goes on how you forget yourself and just join in? A wonderful change takes place, does it not, when the Lord comes in?

JB Does the thought of “all the sons of God” bring in what is universal? There is nothing partial in what is said there: “all the sons of God”.

MJW That is very interesting. “All the sons of God”: that is beautiful. It reminds me of Hebrews when the writer speaks of the things we have come to. We must not forget the angelic host because they must feel for God, and one of the things he speaks of is “the universal gathering”, Heb 12: 23. I love that. Is that “all the sons of God”? What a thought that is: “myriads of angels” - “all the sons of God shouted”.

RJC Is the intent of every divine activity to bring out a response from the hearts of His creature? God has moved from His own side towards man, but the answer now is from man towards God. I was just thinking of divine activities, as was quoted this morning: “Let my son go, that he may serve me”, Exod 4: 23. God has ever desired a response from man. Sin came in, but He has taken advantage of the very incoming of sin to bring out His own resources, to have an answer to Himself, do you think?

MJW I do. He used the very fact of sin coming in to produce in man a moral condition whereby he can know God. It is wonderful to understand that God is good and hates evil, but the coming in of sin

was used to give that capacity to man. He turned it all to account. I love the thought that you suggest of God starting it all. When He went into the garden (Gen 3: 8), He was looking for fruit, was He not? He did not find any, but He is finding it now.

PRM So there came a time when “people began to call on the name of Jehovah”, Gen 4: 26. It comes in after the incoming of Enosh whose name speaks of ‘man, as weak, mortal’, see footnote. It begins from that lowly basis but through the grace of God and His love and mercy, it widens out in response to God. Man begins in weakness, I suppose, but as coming before God in our weakness, we learn His grace and His mercy and all He has provided for us which would draw out response from our hearts.

MJW That is good. So we proved something of the Father’s Spirit strengthening us inwardly, as the hymn says:

The realms of bliss to scan
(Hymn 442)

We do feel our weakness but that is a good thing. It is like the witnesses in Revelation: God set them on their feet, chap 11: 11. We need that, and maybe when young brothers take part, it is a bit of an ordeal, when there are about twenty three brothers there, and you feel your weakness, but then God can turn that to account.

DMC We have the reference in Jude as to Enoch, “Behold, the Lord has come amidst his holy myriads”, v 14. Is that really a universal idea? That is not weakness there.

MJW No, it certainly is not. What does that Psalm say? “He goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for scattering; he cometh again with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves”, Ps 126: 6. This is like that; He brings them to God. This is the fruit of what He has secured. It is like Joseph forgetting “all my toil, and all my father’s house“, and there is a response in ‘double fruitfulness’ for God, Gen 41: 51.

BWB So in Psalm 48 it is “According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise”, v 10. Do you think the progressive unfolding of the name of God into the fullest way in which we know it now is all calculated to

fill out the service of praise? There is some link with John 4: 22 too: “we worship what we know”, do you think?

MJW Very good.

BWB In a right sense, you are familiar with the One you are speaking to, and do you think that promotes the outflow of spiritual liberty? And the more we know God, the better we will be able to speak to Him about His attributes and His love and His fulness and so on.

MJW Well, I say this with respect, but it is lovely to hear an older person speak to God, and see the result of years of experience in the knowledge of God and the richness that flows. I like what you say about the unfolding of the greatness of God, because the scriptures we have read show exactly what you have said, the unfolding of the names of God, and they are very wonderful. We ought to feel the privilege of the fact that God has been revealed. “We worship what we know”, and we could never know God otherwise, could we? Job had a remarkable knowledge of God from creation, but he did not know what we know.

AB Miriam sets something on here. It says, “And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the tambour in her hand, and all the women went out after her”, as if she is setting something on. The footnote refers to the ‘dance choirs’, something that is beginning to widen out. Would that be something that we would be interested in?

MJW What Miriam did set something on, and I found that right through the meeting this morning there was that suggestion of response. I was struck with all the hymns we had at the end to the Father and to God - ‘eternity’s serene employ’, Hymn 116. I should love to be able to highlight them, because there was a theme that ran through right from the suggestion that our brother gave in his word. That is right, I am sure. A word is very valuable, and I think often people are a little afraid to give one; but if you have an impression and you feel it is of the Lord, *give it*, because while you may feel feeble in giving it there may be suggestions in it that can be

developed infinitely. You may feel you have not really enlarged it as you would like to.

AB That is right. I am just trying to catch your thoughts. Are you suggesting that the physical creation leads us to appreciate what God has in the new creation, which is far better?

MJW I was not, but thank you! Thank you for your thoughts.

AB God “spoke, and it was done; *he* commanded, and it stood fast”, Ps 33: 9. That is the order of creation which is of God, and it is that in which His purposes have been worked out. But God has greater things than what is physical and what is material; what is spiritual is far better.

MJW Well, that is good. I see the line of your thoughts. I think a lead taken by somebody is most important. If the Lord gives the word, then the matter needs to be expanded, however feeble you may feel in giving it out. It may not necessarily be in a word. It may be in a thanksgiving, and it often is; or it could be in a hymn.

The Spirit strikes the chord
(Hymn 142)

- the hymn says, does it not?

DJR In the Psalms that you read, everybody is brought in: “Let everything that hath breath praise Jah” (Ps 150: 6), but prior to that there are a number of different vehicles of praise.

MJW Exactly. That is what impressed me. I suppose what the psalmist brings in there is literal: so if we apply it spiritually, how rich it is. You get the expression “the abundance of the seas”, Deut 33: 19. I do not know whether every representative of creation is there in that Psalm. Will that actually take place, the sun and moon praising? They were involved in the bowing down to Joseph. What do you think about the literality of that, or do you think it is just figurative?

DC We get “The heavens declare the glory of God”, Ps 19: 1. It is not quite the same thought as this; this is a further thought. “The heavens declare”, so man can take account of it. So that man is

inexcusable, because “the heavens declare the glory of God”, but this is a further thought. It is response from creation.

MJW I think it is wonderful. You get in Revelation the living creatures. Creation will have its own part in responding to God.

WMP That is the order in Revelation, that there is response in relation to creation, but chapter 5 brings in “a Lamb standing, as slain”, v 6. That brings in redemption, and how full and complete that thought is: “thou ... hast redeemed to God, by thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation“, v 9. You might say there could not be anything more universal than that: “every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation“.

MJW Thank you. That is beautiful. And you have the twenty-four elders. You have the experience that is drawn from different dispensations there in activity round the throne. So you have the twenty-four elders, and you have the living creatures, and you have that little Lamb in the midst of the throne. It is a wonderful picture.

DMC We had a number of references this morning to the many families. That is a wonderful thing too, the many families, of which we are the nearest. That is a very blessed thing, is it not?

MJW It is a very blessed thing; and I love to think of some of the circumstances out of which those families will be secured. In the great tribulation, the awful time that there will be, there will be many secured. I think it speaks of a company “which no one could number” (Rev 7: 9), that come out of the great tribulation, probably as a family, that will yield for God. Will that not be a sweet touch?

DMC There is what is special for the saints of the assembly, “I go to prepare you a place”, John 14: 2. That is distinct for the assembly, is it not?

“I am coming again and shall receive you to myself”, v 3.

MJW It is beautiful: “that where I am ye also may be”. The saints are taken to where He is. We have the same thought in relation to the assembly: Isaac is not brought back to the bride; the bride is taken to Isaac, Gen 24.

DWS When the Lord comes in, He wants us to be with Him where He is. He comes to us, but not to go on with us where we are. He is gracious, but He wants us to go and move with Him into a place where He is the Centre.

MJW There was a reference this morning to the bride in the royal apartments, Ps 45:13, note. That is where we go: the royal apartments. I would love to get a richer impression of that, the place where Christ is in glory.

RJC Miriam's response is an answer to the redemptive work of God, bringing His children out of Egypt, taking them through the Red Sea: "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea", Exod 15: 21. There is an answer to that in Miriam and those with her, do you think? So every divine activity has an answer to it.

MJW Divine victory was referred to this morning.

Evil's challenge, long permitted -
Met by Thy supremacy.

One of the most wonderful things that has ever happened is redemption, and there is a response from it, and it is immediate. But why do you speak of Miriam in the way you do?

RJC As has been said, there is a real deep appreciation of God's activities in redemption. It is a very deep response, is it not, in the appreciation of God's activities in bringing His people out of bondage into liberty?

It takes you right through: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance", Exod 15: 17. It takes you right through to the presence of God, and the enjoyment of what there is in the divine presence for the people, do you think?

MJW That is beautiful. It links again with what was said about the sons of God getting a view of the whole expanse. I love that: "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance". It a whole view! Is that the view from Pisgah, Deut 34: 1?

RJC Moses saw it all.

MJW Exactly. Think of God showing him. Poor Moses did not go in then, but God showed him. I should love to have heard what He said, showing him the whole scope of the land.

RH I just wondered in connection with what has already been said about the thought of “Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron”. She knew what to do. There is a certain intelligence that marked her in what she did. She “took the tambour in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambours and with dances”. She knew how to act. Would that suggest that there should be intelligence with us in order to respond and to move in relation to the headship of Christ in the service of God?

MJW It is good to bring in what is prophetic because we often link what is prophetic with what is negative, but if a brother gives a word or says anything in his thanksgiving or in a hymn, it may be a prophetic touch; and, priestly intelligence is such a valuable thing. How God loves it! It is the result of formation, is it not? The priest in the Old Testament links with spirituality in the New.

RH Sometimes we are hardly conscious of how we are in the service of God. We are not occupied, as it were, with our own place in it, but under the headship of Christ - under His blessed touch and under the control of the Spirit, we are able to function in God’s service. Christ is the One that we make everything of, but we have this link with Him. I wondered whether the thought of “Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron” suggests that there was this close link so that all the women were able to do what she did.

MJW I think that is a very beautiful suggestion.

CE At the time of the tabernacle being constructed, it says “every one whose heart moved him”, Exod 35: 21. They had been inspired in bringing in gold, and there was so much that they had to be stopped. We experienced that this morning.

MJW I thought that. Who did the stopping? It is important what you raise because how do we end the meeting? How do we know when to end the meeting? We need, in a collective way, to be sensitive as to when the Lord goes out. It is not up to one brother to close it.

CE We have to do with heavenly things. We are dealing with real things, and the Spirit would help us to close as well as to open. Someone has said that it does require us to be sensitive spiritually to detect when to close, and there are times when we have failed, but I would say generally we do know when to close. This morning was superlative and we kept going and it was something that was real in our hearts, something that we all enjoyed.

MJW Absolutely, and what I was interested to notice was that Mr Darby obviously observed that, in response to God, there are high points, and then as it were low points, and then high points again. If you look at the hymn, *The Endless Song*, you get a spiritual sense there of a point of power, and then perhaps a lull, but then another point of power; and I noticed that this morning. You might have thought the meeting had ended, but if there is more power, it continues and it continues in power, and then you can say that the Lord has left, that is what we look for, whether He has left.

BWB According to the word to Philadelphia, there will come a time when we “shall go no more at all out”, Rev 3: 12. Do you think we should in a sense make way for that? As you say, it is not for us to close the meeting. There will come a time when it will not close. That should not be out of our minds, or out of our hearts, but I think if you are restful, the Lord gives a fairly clear indication that the summit has been reached, and perhaps we have not enough strength for any more.

MJW Well, that is very, very helpful.

WMP Where you read in Chronicles, “the priests could not enter”; so what is official is not in view at all, is it? It is really a spiritual experience. In order to have a spiritual experience, what do we require?

MJW Well, we need the Spirit: and “that which is born of the Spirit” which “is spirit”, John 3: 6. Is that not important in anyone that takes part, that new birth has taken place, and, more than that, they are born of God? “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit”: it is like God, spirit. “God is a spirit“, John 4: 24.

DMC Do you think the hymns generally carry the saints? It is like the waves of the ocean. We often find here locally that our meetings end with a lot of hymns and we find that that is a very rich response.

MJW You are very good singers too. Music is a vehicle; it is a form of transport. The spiritual sphere is so wonderful. Spiritual things are real. There is a difference between what we experience and what we anticipate - it *will be* actual when we are there.

AB As to what we were saying about Miriam, she is setting something on. I was thinking about the service of song and how important it is. Linking with what our brother said about waves, the Lord Jesus in Hebrews 2 is referred to as saying, "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises. And again, I will trust in him", v 12, 13.

MJW "And again, Behold, I and the children which God has given me".

AB It is as much as to say that there is another wave. Would that be fair?

MJW Excellent.

IEP I was just wondering whether finally there will be a response in relation to every detail of what God has done. We had the sense of variety in the response, and we respond in relation to what we know. I was thinking that God really does everything in view of response and praise and glory to Himself. So He will not have done anything that will not finally have a response from someone in that great song that will continue through eternity, do you think?

MJW I do. Do you not think the judgment seat of Christ will make us realise this, as the hymn says:

With Him look back on all the way;
To learn the meaning, at His hand,
Of every deed in every day!

Think of that!

Clearer than ever shall we see

The grace which God our Saviour showed
(Hymn 299)

Do you not think that all the things that God has done, and the detail of it in our lives, will be clear to us then? How much richer will the praise be then, do you think? I am sure you have more in your mind as to that, but I often think of that as being “then I shall know according as I also have been known”, 1 Cor 13: 12.

IEP I was not even just limiting it as to what might be subjective, but also the great objective things that God has set before us. We were speaking about the creation; the great detail of that, which mankind does not know and so cannot give God glory for. Perhaps these sons of God understood the creation better than we do; but whenever it comes to the spiritual realm, the Spirit will unveil and make these things all known, so that everything will result in response to God, do you think?

MJW I do. Do you think that is how the eternal day will be filled out?

IEP It will be always fresh, will it not?

MJW Wonderful!

Perpetual freshness marks th’ eternal day,
Abiding peace, joy ne’er to fade away
(Hymn 173)

WC In these Psalms which you have read almost every verse is “Praise”, or “Let them praise”. Do you think that, in the eternal day, while there will be something from the assembly which is formed, some of these praises which come into this Psalm will come from other families? I was just thinking from what we enjoyed this morning as to what there will be in the assembly eternally, in the eternal response, but there will be these other families, do you think, which will praise?

MJW I think that is right. I think the assembly is a vessel that has been formed by the Lord Jesus in order to praise. You cannot think of a more fruitful, blessed Man than Him, can you? The vessel that He has formed and He has built will take character from Him. You

might say the potential in the assembly through the Spirit's indwelling is immense. It is not infinite, but it is immense, and eternity will be filled, will it not?

DC In connection with what our brother has been saying about the response being equal to the revelation, do you think we get some touch of that from what you read in Luke: "Glory to God in the highest"? So we have earlier revelations of God; you have Almighty God; and you have Jehovah; but as soon as we come into the fringes of this dispensation, when there is a heavenly Man brought into view, it is "Glory to God in the highest", do you think?

MJW Well, that is why I think the remark that was made about the creation being the area for working out the purpose of God is so important because, while there is what is above what is created which the Lord has entered, there are the created heavens. We do not know much about them, but I think there is glory to God there. Stephen looked into heaven and he saw a Man there; Jerusalem was no longer the centre, now heaven was the centre, and a Man in it. Wonderful! "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men".

DC Do you think the response is connected with progressive relationship as well; so you have Almighty God, you have Jehovah, the covenant names; but in this dispensation there is sonship so there is a greater response from that. When you come to Revelation, it is tabernacling with men, chap 21: 3. It is an intimate relationship for men. There will be a response involved in that, do you think?

We have been taught that sonship is the nearest relationship, but the tabernacle is a close idea and God tabernacling with men is His final thought.

MJW That is beautiful. It is like John 1: 14 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (see note 'c' - lit, 'tabernacled'). Think of the thirty three and a half years of Jesus being here. There was no hurry. It was wonderful, and that gives a clue, does it, to the

closeness and the intimacy of that wonderful day when God can get so close, and even wipe tears away? Wonderful!

DWS Does it suggest perfect harmony between God and His creature?

MJW It is good to the musical ear that there is harmony, and harmony is of God, is it not? I think it reflects the Creator. He has created harmony, and He is going to have it in His universe. Heaven and earth will no longer be alienated. That is another interesting thing. In Psalm 19 that you referred to, it says, "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge", v 2. That is response. It is almost as though they say, 'Have you heard about this?' and 'Have you heard about this?' There are fresh glories opening up.

DMC The sisters add to the harmony and to the response that is going out in the service of praise.

MJW What an essential part they fill.

DMC The singing would be the poorer without the sisters.

MJW I am sure the fact their voices are unbroken, whereas men's voices are broken, is all part of God's creatorial skill to get a range of sound.

DC There is more to it than just the sisters' voices. They very much are a part of and support what the brothers are able to give voice to, and they carry in their thoughts and their hearts what the brothers give voice to, would you say?

MJW Absolutely. Who are the ones that stood by the cross? Who are the ones that followed the Lord? They were the women, were they not? It shows the quality of what is in a woman. Although it may be silent in the assembly, it is there and it is essential.

RH Really the sisters rely upon the brothers to function, do they not? I just thought how necessary it is that we keep sight of Christ. Would it be the secret of buoyancy in God's service that we keep sight of Christ?

MJW That is very fine.

RH Otherwise there would be many troughs.

MJW There was nothing wrong with the lulls I mentioned, because in that hymn of Mr Darby's there seems to be a wave of power.

RH It is just that we cannot go anywhere without Him.

MJW No we cannot. You look at the sea from your window and you see the waves and the troughs, and you enjoy both, seaman that you are.

JB You referred to harmony in 2 Chronicles, "when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one voice to be heard ... then the house ... was filled", chap 5: 13.

MJW Exactly. Did God not enjoy that? "As one": it was like that this morning, was it not?

Warrenpoint

1st May 2010

Key to Initials

A Buchan, Kirkcaldy; J Buchan, Peterhead; B W Burton, Taunton; R J Campbell, Glasgow; W Clark, Kirkcaldy; D Crozier, Warrenpoint; D M Crozier, Warrenpoint; C English, Glasgow; R Hodge, St Ives; P R Mason, Warrenpoint; W M Patterson, Glasgow; I E Purdy, Warrenpoint; D J Roberts, Gillingham; D W Scougal, Edinburgh; J A Shearer, Aberdeen; M J Welch, Newport

SUFFERING

Neil McKay

2 Timothy 2: 3

Exodus 27: 1-8; 30: 22-29

I seek help to say a short word in regard to the matter of suffering. It was not my thought to say much on the character of sufferings that we have, but that it is a necessary matter; maybe it is not one that is the brightest subject we could speak of, but it is a very necessary one. God has great things in mind for us. We may be content with the salvation of our souls, our eternal salvation, but God has greater things in mind. He has in mind, dear brethren, that we will reign with Christ, that we will be with Him, a morally suitable counterpart to Him. God has foreseen the need before time was that He should be set forward in such a way by persons of moral worth. He does not have in mind that we should reign with Christ and not be suitable for that position, or not be able to fill out our place eternally with Christ in glory publicly. God does not have in mind to have us there with Him in some sort of sufferance, or some unsuitable way, but He has provided a way in which He is going to make us absolutely suitable for that; and that includes suffering. When we are younger and have exercises in Christian life - maybe we get married and maybe have children, and so on, we trust that things will go well with us, and that we will enjoy the meetings, and we will enjoy our Christian life; but God has another way in mind for every one of us. It is not that our Christian life it is not to be enjoyable. The Lord could say, "take me not away in the midst of my days", Ps 102: 24. Think of the delight the Lord had in His life here. But God has a way: He is going to form us, and form us through suffering, because it is the only way that will make us suitable for His thoughts for us. It is not to be avoided, and we are not to be downcast when it happens. And what Paul says is that you should take your share in it, 2 Tim 2: 3. You do not look for it, but it will come, and when it does come take your share in it. God has that in mind, not to belittle you, not to bring you down, or to discourage you.

It says of Abraham that there came a time when "God tried Abraham", Gen 22: 1. We can see the feelings of God in that matter, finding something in Abraham that showed a tremendous moral worth. There was moral weight and power that Abraham had, able to command his men, three hundred and eighteen servants, chap 14: 14. So God tried him to bring to light what was found in him. I think this touches on the line of faith. When man came in and took up matters in his own hands he established a system in Babel that was against God, chap 10: 10. God then established His own system, the faith system, and called persons out to it. It does not say much about the saints before the flood; it just says they lived and begot sons and daughters, and then they died, but God had worked something out in these men, chap 5. It says of Enoch that he "walked with God", v 24. It does not say much of what happened in his life, but turn to Jude and we can see what his prophecy was; and see how he must have suffered in the midst of an evil world. He must have suffered here as a result of the evil which he was passing through, and from the message which he had from God as to the ungodly, "the Lord has come amidst his holy myriads, to execute judgment against all", Jude 14-15. What a message to men! How they must have reproached him for that. Noah lived at the time when God repented that He had made man; how Noah suffered preaching for all these years, building the ark and preaching to men, and yet they would not heed him, 2 Pet 2: 5. Then you get Abraham called out from the Babylonian empire, from Nimrod's empire; did he not suffer? It speaks of them in Hebrews 11, "All these died in faith, not having received the promises", v 13. It says Abraham went out after the God of glory appeared to him, Acts 7: 2. What did they get? They got the promises. Did they get the actuality? No, it says, "having seen them from afar and embraced them". What they must have gone through. Job, no doubt concurrent with Abraham, went through much personally and in regard to his family. What happened at the end of Job was greater than the beginning. God reached His end in a man there. He was unerring. Jacob wrestled with God and becoming a prince, Gen 32: 28. What does that mean? It means there was a certain moral worth worked out in Jacob's soul through

these exercises. God worked something out in these men. Then you have the judges - what they suffered, Samson, Gideon, and others; how they suffered. None of them could avoid it. They were all brought in, called by God into His system, this line of faith. Did they lose anything? No, they lost nothing: they gained God. You get the children of Israel; think of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. It says Moses esteemed "the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt", Heb 11: 26. They were no sooner out of Egypt, than it appeared they might stone Moses, Exod 17: 4. He suffered at the hands of the children of Israel, as well as suffering with them. He went out, outside the camp, suffering, bearing the reproach, chap 33: 7. Think of what these persons went through, what was established. God "spoke with Moses face to face as a man speaks with his friend", Exod 33: 11. What God reached in that man through it all; something substantial, something real. Then you get the kings, and David sets out that matter in a full way. He was anointed at the very beginning, anointed to be king, but he was not made king immediately, 1 Sam 16: 12. God said, as it were, 'I am going to make you suitable for this position'. Was there anyone suitable for the position like David was? Was there anyone who suffered like David did in the path of the testimony: from Saul, and from Jonathan who loved him but turned away from him back to the house of Saul? Think of when he got Goliath's sword from Ahimelech, when Doeg the Edomite told Saul, and slew all the priests, chap 22: 9 - 19. Did he not feel that? Then Ziklag, when the city was taken, the wives and the children, and all the goods were taken and they thought to stone him, chap 30: 5, 6. David was a feeling man. One of the reasons God took up David was that he was a feeling man; he felt these matters. What did he do? He said, "Bring near to me ... the ephod", v 7. He learned to trust in God; he learned to turn to God in extremity. Did that not serve him well when he got to reign? Did he not learn absolute obedience and dependence on God? Did he not learn, as Moses had had to when he put his hand in his bosom (Exod 4: 6), that turning to the flesh was of no use? Did he not learn that? He learned. They said of David, "even aforetime ... thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel", 2 Sam 5: 2. That is, he

was a royal personage before he became king. He was suitable to the position which God gave him. We can see the wisdom and the greatness of God in working with these men. What a great cloud of witnesses we have. Think of the prophets. Peter speaks of them, "Concerning which salvation prophets, who have prophesied of the grace towards you, sought out and searched out; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them pointed out, testifying before of the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these", 1 Pet 1: 10, 11. They did not learn the sufferings of Christ in an external way: "the Spirit of Christ which was in them" testified of the sufferings of Christ. There was something *in* these prophets, some feeling, some suffering that went on in these prophets which testified to the greatness of the One who was to come. What a matter! These men were formed by suffering. God is working out substantial matters. Think of the feelings of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel at the time of the recovery, going back to the ruin of Jerusalem. Think of Jeremiah and Ezekiel seeing it, one remaining with the children of Israel in Jerusalem and one taken into captivity, feeling the captivity and feeling the breakdown. How these persons felt these matters. Then we have Daniel and others; think also of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, "see if here be any sorrow like unto my sorrow", Lam 1: 12. Finally, we have those in Malachi at the end of the dispensation: God speaks of them, "he will ... purge them as gold and silver", chap 3: 3.

Then we come to our dispensation. Is this dispensation to be any different? Are persons to be formed by some miraculous means in this dispensation? No, this is the greatest dispensation of all. Think of the pearl, and formation of the assembly through suffering, that which is a perfect whole. Paul presents himself as marking out something of a delineation of the sufferings, things set out in a man. "I will show to him how much he must suffer for my name", Acts 9: 16. Things are not to be any less in this time. Dear brother and sister, God has marked out the way in which we should walk, and that way involves that we are formed in these matters, to be feeling persons. When we reign with Christ we are going to reign with a

certain moral weight and moral glory, and a certain sympathy that has been worked out in these things, and a certain power. These things are real. Look round the room and see what has been worked out in brethren, and is being worked out. We need to value that, to value the brethren, and to value what has been worked out in them.

Exodus 27 speaks of the altar, “thou shalt make the altar of acacia-wood, five cubits the length, and five cubits the breadth; the altar shall be square; and the height thereof three cubits”. The first article the children of Israel would come to in approaching the tabernacle system, approaching God, was the altar, and it speaks of the person of Christ in a particular way. It was made of the same material as the ark, acacia-wood: durable, dense, suitable wood for the wilderness, one that would not wane or rot. It could go through the wilderness, and you could have confidence in that. It points to the kind of manhood that was there in Christ that was incorruptible, could never be overcome. The altar was covered in copper; that is a metal, which can endure intense heat, and we can see that in the Lord’s manhood, particularly at Gethsemane, and moving on to the cross, and these first three hours on the cross. We can see One here who went on in power and was able to endure suffering at the hands of men. It says, “thou shalt make for it a grating of network of copper; and on the net shalt thou make four copper rings ... the net shall be to the very middle of the altar”. Think of the copper right into the middle of the altar, the very inwards of the Lord, all that He was was absolutely durable, indestructible. We see perfect manhood in Him, and enduring not in an unfeeling way or a stoic sort of way but enduring in a feeling way. Think of Him there at Gethsemane saying, “Abba, Father”, Mark 14: 36. How He felt that, the cup which He would have to take moving into death. He felt matters as to Israel, but He was entirely cognisant of and intelligent about all He was taking up, and suffered in His mind as to all He was taking up in going into death. He would not be turned aside. So it says it was “five cubits the length, and five cubits the breadth”, four square, universal, that is it is available to all. We have to see and accept that the basis has been laid in the death and suffering of Christ. “And

thou shalt make its horns at the four corners thereof" what power there was in Christ. Think of the psalmist saying, "bind up the sacrifice with cords, - up to the horns of the altar", Ps 118: 27. Think of the Lord being bound there, speaking reverently, in His love, to the Father's will, the will of God. The sacrifice and the altar, one, bound together. He would not give up anything, not one iota. He went on in preparedness and willingness to suffer for the will of God. What a blessed Man for our affections. So when we speak of the matter of suffering we have to see that the Lord Jesus is pre-eminent and a model in all these matters. "No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends", John 15: 13. We will never arrive at anything greater than Christ. Paul says to the Philippians that he was exercised to "know him", chap 3: 10. I do not think Paul could ever fully understand all that was in Christ; Paul did not think so. Paul acknowledged that he would just love to know Christ more. It says in Hebrews that God has made perfect the Leader of our salvation through suffering in bringing many sons to glory: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings", Heb 2: 10. I understand that to mean that, if He is bringing many sons to glory, then the Leader is the One who has set the matter out; He is in glory, and made suitable to His office in glory through suffering. Now if He is a leader in it, then we all must be followers. So if we are going to glory and be made suitable for glory with Christ it must be through suffering. The saints of the old and new dispensations are going to be taken up together. How great the aggregate of all that God has in moral worth in the saints of these dispensations, "what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints", Eph 1: 18. It is inward; it is *in* them, not something outward; it is something that is worked out in the hearts and souls of the believers.

I just want to touch lastly on this matter in Exodus 30, "And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, And thou, take best spices - of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon the half - two hundred and fifty, and of sweet myrtle two hundred and fifty, and

of cassia five hundred, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of olive oil a hin; and make of it an oil of holy ointment, a perfume of perfumery after the work of the perfumer". We see something of the Lord's own operations and work in view of sustaining us in suffering. In a previous chapter, we have the clothing in which the high priest goes in sympathetically to God with the saints on his shoulders and on the breastplate, Exod 28. But here we get something that is for God, and it is "a perfume of perfumery after the work of the perfumer". There is skill involved in the work of the perfumer. I think the Spirit is operating now in view of the adornment of what is for God; skilful work. Things are mixed, blended together; there is something very fine intimated in this, I think. It says, "And thou shalt anoint the tent of meeting with it, and the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its utensils, and the lamp-stand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt-offering and all its utensils, and the laver and its stand". Everything was to be anointed with this oil. It tells us in Hebrews that "almost all things are purified with blood", Heb 9: 22. That means that the value of the blood was on the whole system. Young believer, the system now is seen in the people of God. It consists of the people of God and their approach to God through Christ. What I understand this to mean is that everything in this system, this whole system of which we are part, is to have the savour of this holy anointing oil. We come to the meetings, or come among the brethren, and we should smell this oil: something of the savour of the Spirit of Christ in the saints, something worked out by the Spirit, "the work of the perfumer" in the spirits of the saints. They are dignified persons. In Philippians Paul speaks of that, "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ", Phil 1: 19. If we are going to be here in a suffering path, be here true and faithful to Christ, we need something of the Spirit of that Man, the character of that Man. God is not working in an outward way to establish some hollow outward edifice. There is something inward; He is working to establish the character of Christ in the saints. "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" means we will walk here animated and characterised by the same Spirit which characterised Christ when here. Is that not wonderful!

So it says, “of liquid myrrh five hundred shekels”. Think of the suffering love of Christ, the One who was prepared to suffer and endure. He loved us and He suffered for us, He delivered Himself up for us. It came to the point in John’s gospel when He was being taken into the hands of man and He said, “let these go away”, John 18: 8. He would suffer for them; *He* would go on. What a suffering love was Christ’s! Smyrna, I suppose, gives us one answer to this. Smyrna means 'myrrh', and there is not an assembly like them; they are not upbraided at all, there is no correction, “I know thy tribulation and thy poverty; but thou art rich”, Rev 2: 9. They were prepared to suffer, and that suffering love of Christ was worked into them - what riches. The Perfumer had been operative there, and the Lord says, “I know ... the railing of those who say that they themselves are Jews, and are not, but a synagogue of Satan”. I know what you have been through. He says, “Fear nothing of what thou art about to suffer”, v 10. The Lord would say, 'I am with you in the suffering; you are going to know Me in a way you have never known Me before, but I will be with you in it all that you might be formed like Me'; that is the myrrh.

Then the cassia and these other spices; I do not know that I could say much about them. Cassia, I understand, is a fragrant root, something that would involve depth of feeling, deep feeling which is so pleasing to God. Joseph dreamt of the cluster of grapes pressed into the cup, Gen 40: 11. It speaks to us of the depth of feeling that was there in Christ and the appreciation of God as these grapes are pressed; the pressure of death coming upon Christ; what a delight to God, what a joy to God, in the Lord as suffering in that way. Well, God is going to work out depth with us, that we may be deep persons. I feel the need not to go on with things in a formal outward appearance of things. God is going to work out something deeper; and, more to the point, we have to leave ourselves open for that. You have to feel things yourself, to go before God about them. If there is some difficulty you have in your soul, have you been before God about it? Have you been into His sanctuary, such as Asaph was, Ps 73? Have you been before God about the matter? Is there

trouble in your work, trouble locally? Have you seen what God sees about the matter? Have you seen things from His side? Have you seen and felt the way God feels about things? You say, 'There is something not right in my locality'. Well, who of us could say there is not? How does God feel about that matter? I believe "the work of the perfumer" means that the Spirit would bring in feelings. The Spirit would enter into these things with "groanings which cannot be uttered", Rom 8: 26. What a blessed service the service of the Spirit is. And then there are these other spices; the cinnamon came from the bark of a tree. It has been said it speaks of something outward that can be seen. Much of this matter belongs to inward exercises but in measure there is that which may be taken account of even by the brethren.

For the myrtle, the place that comes to mind is in Zechariah, where a man "stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the low valley", Zech 1: 8. It seems to be somewhere where they would come, down in a low place, to get God's mind in regard to the world. God had sent the horseman out to see how things were, and everything was at rest. I suppose we would have God's mind and God's interest even in regard to things that are outside; we would feel matters in the world and in Christendom. God feels that His creature is getting more and more entwined in Satan's wiles. Modern technology is bringing man further and further into Satan's grasp. How thankful we are for the gospel, it is God's power to extricate men from Satan's power.

And there is the "olive oil a hin". It must be the Spirit Himself as He enters into these matters. The older brethren no doubt often feel matters in a more spiritual way, and we should respect that, and see the feelings that come out in the older brethren. They have been brought up in an age, no doubt, when this was a more godly country, and immorality was less prevalent than now; and I have noticed older brothers suffering in ways that maybe we do not realise. They may feel a wrong state while I may not be so sensitive; or when a wrong line is taken, or the wrong man is promoted in a way to which maybe I would not be quite so sensitive. Dear

brethren, let us appreciate these brethren whom the Spirit has had a long work with, and that have a spiritual sensitivity.

Well, I just leave these things with us. May we leave ourselves open to the work of the Perfumer. What a blessed work has been worked out through this line of suffering. What a beautiful savour God is going to get through all the ages, through the blessed work of Christ, and through His operations involving the sufferings of the saints. These things are very precious and they are for God. It says, "Upon man's flesh it shall not be poured, neither shall ye make any like it". It is not to ingratiate, or make anything of, man after the flesh; there is nothing else like it. You cannot imitate it. Christendom has tried to imitate in a certain sense, but there is nothing quite like this, "the work of the perfumer", it is *holy*, "holy shall it be unto you", v 32. There is something holy and precious about the work of God in the saints. We can see it in Christ, but we also should take account of it in each other. May we do so, for His Name's sake.

East Finchley

29th May 2010

GIVING CHRIST HIS TRUE PLACE

Allan Wilson

Luke 6: 46-49

Acts 9: 1-6; 16: 23-31

My concern and exercise is that Christ should have the true place that is rightly His in our affections. I bring this exercise because of the line of the hymn relating to the Spirit, which says,

Thou dost know the Father's feelings
Of affection for His Son
(Hymn 121).

This occasion of the gospel preaching is all about the Father's affections. God's affections are involved in this occasion, and in expressing those affections He has in mind that your affections might be secured for Himself, so that you and I might come in reality to have some understanding of the Father's affections for the Son.

I read in Luke's gospel because the Lord brings out a necessary link at the very beginning, and right through, of being on the right foundation. Another scripture speaks about this same incident (Matt 7: 24-27), but I read this one because it says that he "dug and went deep". Have you ever dug in your history, beloved? Have you dug and gone deep? Have you got right down to the bottom in your own history, and come to the rock? Have you done that? Have you got to the bottom of things and found that there was a rock there, and that is secured by coming to Christ. Paul also says, "For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ", 1 Cor 3: 11. You get the contrast in this chapter of laying a foundation that is on the Rock. That is the purpose, that is the prime object of this time when we are here together that we might get through to having to know that our links are solid on the Rock, not on the ground of this world. The younger son in Luke 15 thought that his position was secure and safe on the foundation of the world with the money that he had. He thought he

was secure in that. We are living in a time when that has proved to be false. People have found to their sorrow that the foundation they had in their financial affairs is shallow. It is not built on the Rock. There are different instances that can be drawn attention to, and it says of that young man that he came to himself. I think that with him maybe he realised that he had nothing in himself. He realised that the Rock was somewhere else. It is secure in Somebody else, it is secure in a Man, and that Man is Jesus. He thought of his father's house. The preaching to you is about a Man who is ascended and glory-crowned.

That is what Paul came to. Paul thought he was secure in what he was doing. His activities were to exterminate what there was of Christ, and he was brought to see that the foundations of his operations were wrong, were false, and were insecure. The jailor put Paul in the inner prison. These prisons are not like what we have today. Paul was in the inner prison, the most secure place there could be, and man was building his activities around that, but God brings in an earthquake. He shakes the foundations, and He is shaking your foundations. He shook Paul's, whose name was Saul, on the road to Damascus. He shook his very foundations. He shook the jailor's foundations. They both began with a question, "what must I do ... ?"; "Who art thou, Lord?" Are we digging deep? Are we getting down to what is rock, what is a solid foundation? It relates to this matter of the Father's feelings of affection for His Son. God is drawing attention to Christ. He is not drawing attention to anyone else. He is drawing attention to the true Foundation, "For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid". It has been laid. Are you or am I in the reality and the consciousness of that in our history, because there will be things to come. It says in Luke, "He is like a man building a house, who dug and went deep, and laid a foundation on the rock; but a great rain coming ...". Many things will come in in your history, but if you are founded on the Rock you will stand. Oh, my friend, have a living link with Christ. Have a true, living link, dig deep. It is the basis of my whole exercise, the whole matter of being here, that we might dig deep, that we might get down

and understand the Father's affections for the Son. He wants you to have this link. "But a great rain coming, the stream broke upon that house, and could not shake it"; if you are on any other foundation, it does not matter what it is, it will not stand. You read of the woman in John 4. She had had five husbands. She had tried all the different things there was in this world, and each one did not satisfy. They did not bring about true satisfaction; but she came to Christ. And here He said, "And he that has heard and not done, is like a man who has built a house on the ground without a foundation, on which the stream broke, and immediately it fell". There is no great rain in verse 49. It does not need much. How fragile the things that occupy us are. Have you found that in your history? No matter how young or how old you are, tests come along and how fragile the basis of anything we have that is not founded on the Rock. Though the great rain falls and the stream breaks what is on this Foundation will stand, it will go right through, and that, my friend, is what God wants us to come into, to have a true appreciation of the love of Jesus. Think of what He has done for us! As men and women, boys and girls, we are all sinners. Scripture tells us that, "all have sinned", Rom 3: 23. We are outside of God's blessings as sinful men and women, but God seeks to bring us in, and He has in His love, in His affection, made provision in Christ. Think of the extent of the Father's affections for each one of us, think of the extent of the Lord's affections for each one of us, that He has gone this way. He was the One who took upon Himself the question of your sins and my sins. Oh the wonder of the Father's affections, and the Lord's affections, that we might come into blessing, that we might come through to this Rock, appreciate what He has done for us! He has taken away my sins, borne them in His body on the tree. He has dealt with the matter of sin and all that was involved in that. Sin has no place in God's eyes, and Jesus took it away so that God could come out in righteousness and display His affections. Think of that! This One that I spoke about was the One whom the Father sent. God sent His Son for sinners. He was the One, the One that the Father loved. He sent Him to take up your sins and my sins so that He in righteousness could extend mercy to you and me because of the

completed work of our Lord Jesus on the cross. If that had not been the case, God could not have righteously forgiven us poor sinners. God could not just bypass sin. Sin had to be met. The penalty of sin had to be met, and who bore the penalty? The penalty was yours and mine. The One who bore the penalty was the sinless One. Pilate said that about Him, "I find no fault whatever in him" (John 18: 38); there was not a thing, the sinless One. Could he say that about you or me? He could not, even after we are converted, but God draws our attention to the One who bore these sins, and He wants us to be attached to Him, have a firm attachment to the Rock. Dig deep in your history, young and old, dig deep; get to know the consciousness, the reality of your link with Christ. That is what will take you through. The testimony will be assailed time and time again, but what is going to carry me through, what is going to carry you through, is our link with the Saviour, based on this firm foundation. Paul says that later on, too, "Yet the firm foundation of God stands", 2 Tim 2: 19. Am I going to stand? I cannot stand on my own rights. I do not care who you are, you will not. You might think you can, but you cannot, and you need to be firmly attached to the Rock, and He has given us the wherewithal. He has not only provided a Saviour who has taken away my sins. That is a wonderful thing that Jesus has taken away my sins, but He is bringing us into the enjoyment of your place in the Father's affections. The enjoyment of that involves that Christ has gone on high. We are speaking about a living Saviour. We are speaking about a living Man in heaven. The Man who died is the Man who lives. That is wonderful!

We are speaking about a living Man in heaven, and as He has gone on high He said when He was here He would send another Comforter. That is wonderful, that a divine Person has come down to indwell you and me, that there might be a display, there might be a demonstration, a testimony in this world, that Christ is alive, that Christ has secured your soul and my soul, and that is the blessed Holy Spirit. I think that is why we have this house on the rock. The house is where the Spirit is going to be. It is not brick and mortar, it

is your heart and my heart, and that comes out in demonstration. There is a difference in the demonstration of a Christian and his pathway. We were speaking of that this afternoon, that something of these features are shown as coming from Christ, and that is what the Spirit would do in your affections and mine. It says of Him in John's gospel that "he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you", chap 16: 14. What a wonderful thing, a divine Person, where He is! He is doing that now, today, not two thousand years ago. He did it then, but He is doing it today. He is taking the things of Christ and showing them unto you. Am I allowing that to happen? It will not just be a mystical happening. It is something that is real because we are founded on this Rock. It starts there, but we need to keep going back to that. We need to keep being reminded that everything for me revolves round Christ, it revolves round the One who is the Centre of the Father's affections, and the Spirit brings us into the joy of that. He brings us to understand that I am not alone. I do not walk in my own way. I walk in relation to what is for the heart of Christ. That is why we have these other gatherings. That is why we come together. That is why we break bread. That is why these things are demonstrated. Certain things are not demonstrated to the world but they are demonstrated to Christ, a demonstration of my affection for Him. There is that positive, personal reaction and action in relation to Christ, because we know this foundation, we are conscious that that is stable. My friend, have no other foundation. Do not put your faith and trust in anything else. It will just be sand, shifting sand at that.

I only read these other scriptures, as I said, to bring out how Saul, as he was, thought he had a foundation that was going to see him right through. He thought he was doing the right thing. He was sure, he was positive. He was a very prominent young man. In his own activities he was very prominent. He was very skilled, he was very learned. He claimed certain things, as he tells us in his history, but he says that they were all just as filthy rags, all these things that he had claimed. If you think you can claim anything in this world, it is all just as filthy rags without Christ. This is what Saul had to come

to. Saul was a big man but he came to be a small man, Paul. He brings out these other things you read of in Acts and you see a different kind of man. You see the man who has his foundations on the Rock, and there is Somebody with him in the most testing circumstances that you and I have never known. We have never been in these conditions. Some Christians in days gone by went through very testing circumstances. We know nothing about that. We are tested in other ways and this is what is to come to light. In these testing circumstances, it says, "And at midnight Paul and Silas, in praying, were praising God with singing, and the prisoners listened to them". Is that my testimony? Do I find that as I go about my work, or go to school or wherever, that there is something that can be taken account of that is different? Nothing is drawing attention to yourself. Paul and Silas here were drawing attention to the right foundation. They were praising God. It is not to draw attention to anyone else; it is to draw attention to the Rock. That is what they were doing. That jailor had his whole foundation in what he was in the establishment that was here. This was a very cruel regime, the Roman regime. He had taken off their clothes and he had scourged them, and laid many stripes upon them, and cast them into prison. Think of that, the severity of what was involved in that, and this man thought, 'This is secure. I am safe. I am going to go right through; I am in a very safe position', and God showed him by an earthquake that the prison was not safe. Everything that he had put his trust in was not safe. The prisoners were all loosed, and what held them? Why did those prisoners not leave that prison? I think it was the testimony of those who had their foundation on the Rock, Paul and Silas. They were praising and praying. They were "praising God with singing". Oh, to have something of that in my own history and your history that there is an answer like this. I know Paul was special, but something of that character should be known by everyone of us, and it is. I can look around and I can see those that have set this forward. You can too. Are you one of them?

Well, may the Lord touch our affections that His might be more your portion and my portion, that there might be a greater response

to God as answering His desires to bring you into the enjoyment of His affections. Think of that. That is wonderful! God has in mind that you and I come into the benefit of His affections because of the fact that the One who was prime in His thoughts has done so much to secure the Father's thoughts, and bring you and me into them. May it be so for His Name's sake.

Port Seton (Edinburgh)

7th March 2010

APPRECIATION OF THE HEAVENLY VISION

David W Scougal

Song of Songs 4: 8

I had a simple impression, beloved, in relation to the heavenly view, the heavenly vista, that opens up as we move with Christ. On Lord's day we were looking at Mark's gospel about the "large upper room", and then "having sung a hymn they went out to the mount of Olives", chap 14: 15, 26. The disciples moved with Christ, and there would be a suggestion of the heavenly view, of what God has in mind for them that would open up to their sight as they moved with Christ, and as they moved in relationship with Him. It is a wonderful thing that God has in mind that we should enjoy here what He has in mind for us eternally, what He has in mind for Christ and the assembly, and what he has in mind in the way of sonship. These would be the things that we would see in the heavenly view - the heavenly vista.

You can go back to the early part of scripture - persons enjoying something of the heavenly view - the heavenly vista. We read of Enoch walking with God - what he would enjoy as walking with God, Gen 5: 24! He would enter into the thoughts of God - what God's thoughts were right from the very start. We see Noah too; it says of Him that he "walked with God", chap 6: 9. Think of all that he went through; he went through it and he was faithful because he had the heavenly view established in his heart. We see Moses; he went up to the top of Pisgah and he saw the whole land and everything set out, all the tribes, and the families in their place in the land, Deut 34: 1-3. That would suggest the heavenly view given to Moses. He was not allowed to go into the land himself, because of what had happened, but he is given this view - this heavenly view that was especially for Moses. He could see from the highest height what God had in mind. You go through the Scriptures and in Revelation John was in Patmos; it says, "he carried me away in the Spirit, and set me on a great and high mountain, and shewed me the holy city,

Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God", chap 21: 10. How wonderful the view that John saw there as he was transported on that occasion to see the glory of God's thoughts: the glory of His thoughts in relation to Christ and the assembly. It is interesting that, in that view, it speaks of all the glories of the city, and it tells us of all the glories of that city. It says, "And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine for it; for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb", Revelation 21: 23.

The glory of Christ is seen in that heavenly view lightening everything, lightening the city, lightening the soul, beloved. How wonderful just to come into the experience of what the heavenly view is that God would bring you to see. It says in this scripture, "Come with me from Lebanon ... Come, look from the top of Amanah". The Lord would take you up to the highest point, to have the best view of all that He has in mind. The higher you go, the more you move with Christ, and Christ's movements would always lead upwards. The higher you go the further you can see. If you go up to the top of the hills you can see a long way, a long distance, and it would be so as we move with Christ. I feel the challenge and the exercise to myself; how committed are we, that we may enjoy these things and move with Christ ever upward? The more we go in for the things that are of God and of Christ in this scene, where Christ has been rejected, the more we will enjoy that heavenly view of all that God has in mind for now, that we will enter into eternally with Christ. How wonderful it is just to have an impression of the glory of all that God has in mind in the way of blessing for each one of us. Our brother has reminded us of all we can enter into with Christ. Oh, how blessed to have that glorious view before us now to sustain us in this pathway where we are, in the place where Christ was rejected, but where His glory can be seen and can be enjoyed.

May the Lord bless the word.

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