

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 58

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GOD'S ORDER

Genesis 1: 14-19; 26, 27

1 Corinthians 11: 2, 3

James 4: 5-7

WSC We should continue our enquiry concerning the structure of the pious Christian's household. In the first reading we considered the subject of love, by no means exhausting the subject; but we touched on it because it is perhaps first in the structure of the household. And that subject continues with us as we go through these readings. In this reading I thought we might consider God's order, because unless there is order there is no fruit. Nothing can be produced where there is disorder and chaos.

I have read these scriptures in Genesis, not that we necessarily need to go into each line, but the general idea is that God set up the lights, God made the two great lights, "the great light to rule the day, and the small light to rule the night", the thought being - "rule". Then in the second scripture the key word in v 26 is, "them" - "and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea ...". The scripture in 1 Corinthians 11 defines God's order in the finest way. It becomes the pivot point in this subject of God's order; and then the appeal by James to "Subject yourselves ... to God". That should be the question at the end of this meeting; will we subject ourselves to God?

The matter of God's order involves subjection, obedience, and the kingdom. The kingdom is the subject that in our day underlies the subject of the assembly. We cannot really have a functioning assembly unless we have kingdom principles maintained. This is a subject that sometimes centres too much upon the sisters. They may deserve it, but I think that the brothers perhaps deserve it more.

I think the matter of headship, lordship, kingship, are all critical to the subject we have in hand, the matter of the believer's household, because if they are not kept in their proper order, then we find that there is unrest. Children are not sure about what they should do, what the directions are, who is giving the directions, what is being said - which way is this household going?

So that, where we begin in Genesis - and we did mention Adam and Eve in the earlier reading - we have this great matter brought in, and we might wonder why the lights are to rule. Then, when God makes man, He says - "Let us make man in our image" and then He says, "let **them** have dominion"; and later when it speaks about the male and female, it says, "God blessed **them**; and God said to **them**, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth", v 28. I think when the matter of dominion comes up that raises the whole matter of God's desire that man should not be alone. It raises the whole matter that man, if I could be understood in saying this, could not do it alone. It required "a helpmate, his like", chap 2: 18. We spoke a bit about that in the first reading, the matter of lordship in relation to marriage, but this comes in in the very beginning of scripture, and should be given due consideration because of that fact, that God brought it in early, even before Satan brought anarchy and chaos into the race. He brought up this whole matter of order and if we ignore it then we ignore God's whole system in creation. It is not only order between men and women, it is order between husband and wife. When Paul speaks he says that the, "woman's head is the man". That does not mean a 'brethren woman', that means woman - any woman. That principle is there, that is a definite principle, and I think we need to understand that, there is no discussion. God says, 'I give you this, and I expect you to honour my command'.

DJK I am interested that you mentioned in this reading, and also in the first reading, the pious believer's household. Could you help us as to that? You obviously have an exercise in relation to what is pious.

WSC Well, how else would you title this? We could use the word 'godly', and I think the King James Version uses "godly" instead of "pious". There are many households, the world is full of households, there are many Christian households, so called, and some of them are pious. I think the aim is that we have a household that furthers the testimony of God in it.

DJK I was impressed by each of these scriptures that you had read. A pious household would know how to judge between light

and darkness. It would also know what subjection is. These scriptures just impressed me in relation to that.

WSC We could say much as to this verse in Genesis about the sun ruling the day; and we are in the period when it is morally night around us, but there should be day in our households, the bright and morning Star and the Sun of righteousness.

JAH What impresses me about the sun and the moon is that they work together. They have a balancing effect on each other, as a husband and a wife will also have a balancing effect. The man has his place and the wife has that gracious, modifying effect sometimes. God's mind is that that is the way it is to be in the ordering of things.

WSC I think that is good, and we know from previous ministry, that the assembly is like the moon and it derives its light from the sun. That is where our households shine - in the night and in the darkness.

DH Our brother asked a question as to the significance of piety in the household: it would be the household that God listens to? The Lord had that feature of piety: it is said He was heard "because of his piety", Heb 5: 7. The roots of a household like that are in the death and resurrection of Christ.

WSC I think so, there are many aspects to our households and God's pleasure is to be seen in relation to a godly, pious household and He blesses it. It is not necessarily with money, that is not the point of blessing, but God is pleased with such a household; and I think we would all desire to have a household like that, that God would put His approval upon.

KAK There is wisdom seen in a household that takes up this order, "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps 111: 10); and respect for God's commandments in regard to it.

WSC We see it throughout scripture, there are many examples, and we see households doing both things. You have the thought of David the king, and Michal. She was making light of him, and she was barren until the day of her death. That does not only mean no children, but the spiritual idea is that there was no fruit from her.

While we get others where there is much fruit produced. Leah and Rachel, “which two did build the house of Israel”, Ruth 4: 11.

APD Although she was not his wife, Abigail balanced David - she was a remarkable balance; she brought in an influence that really maintained the character of the throne.

WSC That is very good. He says, “who hast kept me this day from coming with bloodshed”, 1 Samuel 25: 33. She was a modifying effect. She helped David.

GDR God “hath set apart the pious man for himself”, Ps 4: 3. It preserves us from seeking greater things in this scene. He has set us apart to be here for Himself. That would preserve us from strenuous seeking for more here.

WSC His people are special in His sight. While He is working in a broad sense in relation to others and in relation to the nations and so on, He takes special delight in His people.

SWD It is interesting the way that piety comes into expression in Acts 11 in view of the taking up of the Gentiles: not only was Cornelius said to be pious, but he had a pious soldier, Acts 10: 2, 7.

WSC What can we say about Cornelius? He was a Gentile, he was a centurion, he was a soldier and he had a house and a household. And the Spirit fell upon them all, really based on that man's piety. That is a remarkable thing to think of that here was a man who had all the strikes against him, and yet God moved in that blessed way, baptising them with the Holy Spirit, even before they were baptised with water.

PDS Can you say something as to God creating them male and female? Man and woman were intended to be God's image bearers. What in the Christian family is the unique role of the male and the female? Can you give us a little bit of vision of that, the unique role today? Women are seeking a greater role, and there is complete confusion as to the genders, but God sees, as in the scripture here, that being a female is a gift from him, and being a man has a role; and this is all confused today.

WSC That is key to our discussion this afternoon, I think, the place of the man and the woman. The man is under Christ. It must start there. He must be under Christ, and then his wife, under him. That is God's order. We could not say it any more plainly, any more simply, yet we may violate it any time, especially because it is violated in the world. Then we take our cue from the world, what is happening in the world, the place of women, what they do. It is not that a woman is inferior; she is created in Genesis 1: it is, "male and female created he them". Then, in chapter 2, He goes into the detail of how He did that. That in no wise detracts from chapter 1; so therefore the female is no less important than the male, but she has a certain role, a certain place and, when she keeps to that place, God blesses her. Personally, I have seen it over and over again, and I am sure others have as well, that there is blessing in that. When she goes outside of that place there is disaster. Now, when a husband accepts his place before Christ, there is blessing equally. When he goes outside of that and assumes the place of Christ, there is disaster.

PDS What you say about assuming the place of Christ is interesting. Where the husband goes out of order - is that where he is not subject to Christ?

WSC Exactly. One place where it is seen is in assembly disorder, assembly difficulties. When assembly difficulties arise, where is the Lord in the matter? Often the brothers have their own idea about what should be done, but where is the Lord? That is just one place, it is not a household, but we do not need to go into all the examples.

DH In revelation it says, "Her shining was like a most precious stone", Rev 21: 11. Mr Darby's footnote as to that is very interesting; she is a light bearer, and what is seen in her are the glories of Christ.

What should be seen in the wife, in that way, is the glory of her husband.

WSC That is good that you mention the thought of the light bearer, because that is the place of the husband in the house. He is to lead the house, to lead in spiritual matters, not to dominate as a lord. When it says "head" it means "head", not "lord". But he leads in the

direction that the house is to take. I think that should be easy to understand. Maybe not so easy to do.

PDS Ephesians 5 says, "Husbands, love your own wives", v 25. Men would rather be respected than loved if we are given the choice, but it is the other way with the woman, she wants to be loved more than anything. God calls on us husbands to "love your own wives". That is a challenge. She is subject to a loving husband; there is a balance there.

WSC Exactly.

APD The pattern is that Christ is head of the assembly, which is His body. That means that she shares in his headship. That would be the pattern for us, would it?

WSC It definitely is the pattern, and should be the pattern overall in these meetings, that Christ is head of the assembly, "Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it", Eph 5: 25. That should be the husband's motto. It would be remarkable if he could say that.

APD I understand that it means that she shares in His headship. It is not that she is personally inferior, but she has a place alongside of Him in headship.

RG The end of Ephesians 5 says, "This mystery is great, but / speak **as** to Christ, and **as** to the assembly", v 32. Does that support what you are referring to? Here it is "I speak as to Christ, and **as** to the assembly".

WSC I think what our brother has said is right, the pattern of headship should be found in Christ and that translates back - I do not want to say the 'chain of command' - right down from Christ to man, to woman, it comes down that way. What you have called attention to is that she shares in that. That brings up a big question for us, particularly for brothers, as to how administration in our localities proceeds; because if Christ is the Head, then the question is whether we should make our own mind up and decide what to do, or whether His feelings are to govern. It must be that He is Head, and then what is done in an assembly is done as Christ would do it, with the

same love, with the same affection, and yet the same principles of holiness.

HJG The word out of heaven was, “*This* is my beloved Son ... hear him”, Matt 17: 5.

WSC He must be the Centre.

HJK I would just like to get your thought as to a scripture in the Kings, when there was a good king it is sometimes said, “and his mother’s name was...” (see 1 Kings 15: 10; 22: 42). I wondered whether you had some thoughts as to the woman and the idea that she should guide the home?

WSC I almost read the scripture that she is to “rule the house” (1 Tim 5: 14), and she should. It has been said that the mother has the most to do with the children; she spends the most time with the children. What does she impart to them, what does she give them? Moses’ mother made him an ark, “and plastered it with resin and with pitch” (Exod 2: 3); she preserved him. I think that is a wonderful principle. It says of Solomon that he was “a son unto my father, tender and an only one in the sight of my mother”, Prov 4: 3. That is what Solomon remembered, great king that he was: he remembered his mother’s affections, he remembered what she said to him, and we may under-estimate the importance of the mother.

HJK To go along with that, the home needs to be established in love, but without the affections, a home or the assembly will not go on in righteousness.

WSC I think that is true generally. We make allowance for correction and for repentance and so on, but you often wonder how Solomon knew to say, “Bring me a sword”, when it was the question of the baby. Because he knew his mother. He knew what a mother’s affections were. So he says: “Bring me a sword ... And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. Then spoke the woman whose was the living child to the king, for her bowels yearned over her son”, 1 Kings 3, 24-26.

JAH We have Christ set apart on high, and we have the Spirit resident in the assembly; how does that work out in the

households? We have Christ there to give us the balance of anything that comes up so that we do not become extreme one way or the other, and that can be worked out in the power of the Spirit. I would like more help as to how that works out in a household. We see how that works out assembly-wise, but then the household is a bulwark of the assembly; so how does it work out then? Is the husband to be sensitive to where Christ is and to be balanced in that sense? How do you see that?

WSC I think it is the other way around. I think it works out in the household and then in the assembly. I do not think it is the other way around. We often speak about the Spirit, but if it were not for godly households locally, at this moment today, what would we have? We would have nothing, and I think that is part of the question that has been asked, that the husband is to lead in that. He is to seek the Spirit's guidance for himself first, and then for his house.

JAH I can see that. It is easy for a husband to be extreme sometimes; so he has to arrive at a balance from the Head in heaven. Then that works out towards the assembly as a balanced household.

WSC The Spirit would not tell him one thing and tell his wife another. Therefore they become one in the Spirit.

GH The jailor in Acts came to something and his whole house was moved, they all went the same direction, Acts 16: 30-33.

WSC That is right. He led in that. He was going to kill himself, "having drawn a sword was going to kill himself", verse 27. Then the next thing is that he accepts salvation and immediately his whole house is baptised. He was the lead in the house. It is often, in my personal experience, that when I was not leading, my helpmate came in and helped. I am thankful for that, but that is no excuse for me.

DJK I am interested too in relation to the woman in John 4 because when she desires this water the first thing the Lord says to her is, "Go, call thy husband", v 16. I am interested that He was not merely

pointing out what had taken place in her life in that way, but order was involved, do you think?

WSC I think so and it is an important point. Even in our relations together, if a sister approaches you about a matter, would it be wise to ask for her husband? I think the Lord does that; of course, He is bringing out a point as to who her head was, and she replies that she had had all of these, “I have not a husband. Jesus says to her, Thou hast well said, I have not a husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom now thou hast is not thy husband”, John 4: 17, 18. He then became her Head. That scripture helps in this inquiry.

JB Of the woman of worth it says, “she surveyeth the ways of her household”, Prov 31: 27. Then it says, “Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her”, verse 28. She would see to what is amiss in the house because the husband is not always there, but then his rule is by influence.

WSC It is. Headship is basically by influence, as we know. It is just that he gives the direction, that this house is going to be a godly house, not in so many words, but that is what he shows. He does not bring things into his house that are not godly.

JB What we alluded to in the last reading as to Priscilla and Aquila; they had one neck, Rom 16: 4.

WSC And even Priscilla was mentioned first three times.

RG Peter was a married man. What would you say about Peter when he speaks about dwelling with the weaker vessels? It says here, “Ye husbands likewise, dwell with them according to knowledge, as with a weaker, even the female, vessel, giving them honour, as also fellow-heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered”, 1 Peter 3: 7. What would you say about that?

WSC I do not know what I would say about the weaker vessel, except that she has that place. God said that she would bear children, and her place was under rule because of the fall (Gen 3: 16); the idea of a weaker vessel does not come in until after sin.

RG You will notice that it does not say the weak vessel but “the weaker vessel”.

WSC It is on both sides. I think that the man is given the headship, he is given the place to rule in that sense, and I think Peter was referring to that when he said “the weaker vessel”.

JB Just before that he speaks of “holy women who have hoped in God heretofore adorned themselves, being subject to their own husbands; as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; whose children ye have become, doing good, and not fearing with any kind of consternation”, 1 Peter 3: 5, 6. I wondered if Peter was really referring to that characteristic of holy women: she would know how to conduct herself in the house.

WSC I think that is good; it is good to get the context of the scripture, but it ends up with “fellow-heirs of the grace of life” and they are together there.

JB I think what you have said as to headship is important. It is not lordship but headship by way of influence. We see in Eve that she got out of the influence of headship, and she listened to the serpent and disaster followed.

WSC That is right, and I think it is that to which Peter refers, that the devil knew who to go to. A question I have is, how the devil got into the garden in the first place, because Adam was told to *guard* it, and yet the devil got in. I think in a sense there is some failure with the man.

NSB Was not Satan in Eden before man was created? “Thou wast in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was thy covering”, Ezek 28: 13. That would be before the fall.

WSC Was that the “garden in Eden”? I do not think that was the garden in Eden. He was in Eden, but this is the garden *in* Eden. This is a special place in Eden.

JAH The reference in Ezekiel is to one that is protecting the throne of God in a very great sphere. I do not know if the two references are to the same place, but it is the idea.

WSC I believe that this was a different place; this was a special confined area that Adam was put in.

PH In relation to what is being said about the fall of man, the scripture that has been referred to is helpful in that way. It says, "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land", Prov 31: 23. That really helps us to see the role of the man; the thought of protection comes in there. He "sitteth in the gates", he is really protecting both the household and the local assembly. The thought of the gates brings in the thought of administration.

WSC That is right. God said to Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel, "thou art this head of gold", Dan 2: 38. Nebuchadnezzar had no choice; it was not a choice he made, "thou art this head of gold". God had put him there and I believe, on a similar line of thinking man is in that place, he has that responsibility. It is not a small responsibility and each man will be held accountable in that regard. I think that we need to realise that; we have to be answerable to Christ, as Christ is answerable to God.

MJK Could you say something as to the thought of authority? You get the thought of authority in 1 Corinthians 11 and order is there too. I just wondered whether that might come into what is being spoken of in relation to the man and the woman?

WSC I think it does; it comes into what we are saying as to the man's place. If I dare say it, that is man's place whether he likes it or not. He is a man, and that is his responsibility. Young brothers and older brothers have to regard that; that is their responsibility and they will answer for it. Authority is how it functions, but it works out through love.

MJK Does it work out first in the authority of Christ in relation to man, and that is the foundation of the household? He is set as a cornerstone, not only in relation to God's house, but in relation to our own households as well?

WSC I believe that - it stems from Christ. Therefore it is vital that we go right back to the beginning. It is vital for each person to have a link with divine Persons themselves.

JAH Are there two sides of headship and rule, one is before the fall, or the pristine idea; and then the other is how we work things out in the difficult situations of the fall? We need to carry the two thoughts together, do we not?

WSC We live in an imperfect world because of sin coming in and disease, we know that, disease and weakness, physical weakness, as well as all the licentiousness of man. So we need to work on how to do that. The light is shining in the darkness; it has rule in the darkness. We find our way through that by this order, God's order, that it is from Christ. If you have any question, here is the written word, and the Spirit is here. He is here personally, a divine Person is here today, and we can go to Him for our answers.

CWW So headship would involve both protection and movement in the sense that we have a responsibility to protect the house, but also there is responsibility to ensure that there is movement towards Christ at the same time. I was thinking of what has been said as to the jailor: he brought his house with him. There is a responsibility, not only of protecting from evil influences, but ensuring that there is spiritual growth in the house as well.

WSC Do you find it interesting that the children of Israel had light in their dwellings before they were to put the blood on the doorpost and lintel and before they exited Egypt, Exod 10: 23?

CWW The lamb was there.

WSC That is true, but they had light in their dwellings; there was something there, something substantial. The darkness was so dark it could be felt outside, but here was a house with light; and then they are told to put blood on the doorpost and lintel for the protection of the household. There is no question about any of them saying, 'We want to stay behind, we think we like it better here'. They went out, they led. Headship was leading out of Egypt.

CWW There is a responsibility then on us to make sure that we are making Christ attractive in the house. Each believer has their own personal hidden history with Christ, but it is also important that we share appreciations of Christ in the house.

WSC I think that is very good.

HJK Can I just go back to the thought about there being light in their dwellings? In the land of Goshen they had light, and Goshen means 'to draw near'. So, in some measure they are drawn near to God, and so it was the land of Goshen where there was light in the dwellings. I think what you say is very interesting and helpful to see.

WSC That comes in prior to Israel's response, and prior to any movement out. I know they weakened even before they got to the Red Sea, but there was still that movement, and I think we need to give each other credit for any little bit of movement that we may make.

APD Do you think it helps to refer to Paul saying, "Be my imitators", 1 Cor 11: 1. We should proceed in regard to Paul's ministry, generally rejected around us; he has many things in mind, but one he has is order. "God is not a God of disorder, but of peace", 1 Cor 14: 33. The detail and the balance of this chapter is really Paul's ministry.

WSC I am glad you call attention to that. It is very important that Paul's ministry be recognised, and largely it is not recognised in Christian circles around us. I am not going to specify any place, but Paul's ministry is the first thing to be lost. Immediately you have one-man ministry, you have a pastor, you have something of this nature, immediately you are away from Paul's ministry and I really believe that that is critical to our time.

APD I think that we need to see the detail of this chapter, such as the cutting of hair and the matter of the token, all these things have been brought before us and are connected with Paul's ministry, 1 Cor 11: 5, 6.

WSC I believe that is very critical. Paul's ministry is not honoured in the world - we may make little of some Christian women for always wearing a covering, but they are demonstrating this scripture. The reason the token or covering does not come up in our meetings is because the force of it is lost if it is done by prescription. I mean a godly woman - we have referred to "holy women", that is the kind of woman - would do it because of the angels. Angels look on and they

see this matter of subjection as well. It is not just what we see, but it is what the angels see.

JAH The mystery of piety has been seen of angels (1 Tim 3: 16), but now we are seen of angels. So what do they see? That is the motivation for a sister: it is not rules to obey, it is motivation of what angels take account of.

WSC That may be where this truth is lost, because we do not make a rule or a law. But it is plain in scripture.

SWD I just wanted to refer to when Paul first gave his directions, the first thing he says is, "But I wish you to know that the Christ is the head of every man". That seems to be crucial as a beginning.

WSC That is where it starts and if we understand that we will see that the whole system of order is in place. A corporation cannot run without order.

DH In relation to Rebecca it says, "she took the veil, and covered herself", Gen 24: 65. That was without instruction; it was done by instinct. She was guarding what belonged to Isaac, the great type of Christ.

WSC I think that is beautiful. That is a tremendous scripture and I love to think of the walk from the camel to the tent. "Isaac led her" (verse 67), that walk. What an amazing moment it is to be walking with Christ. That is where we are today; we are walking to the tent, but what a privilege we have. It should cause us to desire to do everything for Him.

DH It would highlight what we said earlier, sharing His place in headship. That is how it comes into expression.

WSC She immediately recognised that in him. We think it would be different if it was Christ, but it would not be different.

HJK Would you agree that the measure in which man is found in subjection to Christ is the measure in which he can expect the woman to be subject to him?

WSC That is quite true, but I have known godly women who are subject to ungodly men.

HJK I agree with that, but the thing is that man expects women to be subject, when he himself is not.

WSC Then that becomes lordship.

HJK I think you will find generally in the breakdown in the home, man is responsible, and that is where it really starts, even in the world. Man gave up his position and woman is coming into power. That is the order right now, and you see that sometimes in the assembly.

WSC The final word is, let us be subject to God: "Subject yourselves therefore to God".

SWD It is in this setting where it so beautifully says, "Does the Spirit which has taken his abode in us desire enviously? But he gives more grace". There is all the grace that is needed for all the instruction we have had.

WSC Yes, there is plenty of grace.

Calgary

1st July 2011

Key to Initials:

N S Brien, Calgary; J Buchan, Calgary; W S Chellberg, Wheaton; A P Devenish, Edmonton; S W Drever, Calgary; H J Glass, Toronto; R Gray, Calgary; G Henry, Glasgow; J A Hibbert, Calgary; D Howie, Edmonton; P Howie, Edmonton; D J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; H J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; M J Klassen, Aberdeen ID; K A Knauss, Indianapolis; P D Soukoreff, Vancouver; G D Rosenberry, Edmonton; C W Ware, Calgary.

THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF JESUS

John A Brown

Luke 3: 21 - 22

1 Peter 2: 2 from “desire earnestly”- 4, 7 to “preciousness”

1 Chronicles 11: 1 - 3 to “to Hebron”; 12: 18 - to “helps thee”

Acts 3: 1 - 8

We spoke in the reading just now about the way in which God's love is the operative power in the divine realm. What I have in mind to speak to you about in this meeting is what brings about a response in our hearts to that love, and by that what I have in mind is the personal attractiveness of the Lord Jesus.

I would like to speak first of all about how attractive He is to His Father. That is why I have read in Luke 3. We often say that the Lord Jesus is the Centre of God's universe, and that is true. Eternity will all be centred in that blessed One. We shall never see the Father except as we shall see Him in Jesus. Everything that God has done He has done in that blessed Person. He *is* the Centre of God's universe. Then I have to test myself, 'Is He the Centre of my life?'. I believe in Him. I have grown up believing in Him. I have grown up saying 'Yes' in answer to those who asked me, 'Do you love the Lord Jesus?'. And I do, but then I ask myself, 'Is He the Centre of my life?'. That is a more difficult question to answer than, 'Do you love the Lord Jesus?'. It seems to me that being able to answer the question 'Is He the Centre of my life?' depends on how attractive He is to me. Mr Raven used to speak a lot in his ministry about how the solar system is an example of what we mean when we speak in this way, see eg vol 2 p43. The sun is not just the centre of the solar system. Everything else in the solar system revolves round it and is tied to it, in this case by the invisible force called gravity which keeps everything in its place. Mr Raven used that analogy very effectively in speaking of Christ as the Sun and Centre of God's universe. I find it very blessed, but I have to ask myself, 'Am I revolving round that Sun? Am I attracted to Him?'. Gravity is an attractive force. The young people will have learned about this in physics - if you put two masses near each other, there

is an attractive force of gravity. That is how gravity works. In the case of two masses that you can hold in your hand it would be a force that you could hardly measure, but with the masses of the sun and the earth it is a very powerful force. It is a force, and it works, and I have to ask myself, 'What does it mean for me? Is the Lord Jesus attractive to me?'. Well, I thank God that I can say He is, but I think that maybe you could say the same as me; He could be more attractive to me.

I wanted to start in Luke 3 where we see this blessed Man, after thirty years of obscurity, about which we know almost nothing, coming out into public service, and the Father acknowledging Him. But more than acknowledging Him, the Father expressing the preciousness in which He held that blessed One, in which He held the Lord Jesus, "*Thou* art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". These words are so familiar to us, we have heard them quoted so often, but imagine what it meant for those around, because this was heard. There were other times in the Lord's history where the Father spoke to Him and people said, 'What was that? Was it thunder?', and someone else said, 'No, an angel must have spoken to Him', John 12: 29. But people heard this voice, "*Thou* art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". "I have found my delight"; what was the Father referring to? He was referring to the way in which He had found in Jesus all that He ever wanted from man, and He had actually found it in these thirty years about which we know virtually nothing. At the age of twelve He was able to talk about "my Father's business", Luke 2: 50. Even as a boy He was there for the pleasure of His Father. What a blessed Man He is to speak about. What I am speaking about is the essence of initial experience with Christ. We can never afford to lose that. We must always, I believe, have in our hearts the precious attractiveness of the Lord Jesus to the Father, and then grow in our appreciation of Him. I speak carefully and reverently, but the Father did not say this at the incarnation. Heaven was moved at the incarnation. The angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men", Luke 2: 14. Heaven was moved when Jesus came in. But now, after thirty years of perfect manhood, precious manhood, manhood according to God and manhood pleasurable to

God, the Father can say, referring to these thirty years of perfection, "*Thou* art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". There is a hymn that speaks of this -

And to know the blessed secret
Of His preciousness to Thee
(Hymn 277)

I wonder, dear brethren, if we could just get a deeper sense in our hearts this afternoon of that preciousness in which the Father holds the Lord Jesus.

So Peter in his epistle speaks of coming to the Lord Jesus, desiring earnestly the pure mental milk of the word. This takes us from initial experience with Jesus as Saviour, to growing up to salvation. That does not mean to say that we grow into our eternal salvation, but as putting our trust in Christ, we grow into the experience of what it is, the practical day by day salvation of having the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, and tasting that He is good. That is a test even as I say these words, because, as a believer in the Lord Jesus, my tastes must be different from an unbeliever's. Again I ask myself, 'What is it that interests me, what do I find myself being attracted to?'. This blessed One is so precious to the Father, and Peter speaks here, "To whom coming, a living stone". "To whom coming" - dear friend, have you come to Jesus? Do we ever stop coming to Jesus? It is an initial thing, surely, but then it is to be a continuing experience every day of our lives, coming to Him, "To whom coming". There He is, the Centre of God's universe and the Centre of our lives. Oh, what a blessed, precious, attractive Man He is, "To whom coming"!

A scripture I often enjoy thinking about is Hosea 11: 4, "I drew them with bands of a man, with cords of love". Now the context of that verse in Hosea 11 is a gospel context. What is the gospel anyway? It is the presentation of the attractiveness of Jesus, the Saviour. He "drew them", it says. Jehovah is speaking of Israel, of course, "I drew them with bands of a man, with cords of love". But the exercise I have, dear brethren, is that even in this meeting we might know what it is to be freshly drawn by these cords of love and bands of a man. Not just saying, 'I remember that initially when I

came to put my trust in Christ', but constantly proving the drawing power of the Lord Jesus. What a wonderful thing it is! "To whom coming, a living stone", and then Peter says, "cast away indeed as worthless by men". I have spoken of the preciousness and the perfection of the Lord Jesus as He was there at the side of the river Jordan coming up out of the waters of baptism, and the Father's voice, "*Thou* art my beloved Son", speaking to Him, and then these three and a half years of public service. Then, as Peter says, "cast away indeed as worthless by men". Worthless! Did men find Jesus attractive? Some of them were impressed by some of the things He could do. Some of them were very impressed by the fact that He could feed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes. Some of them were even more impressed, these Jews at the grave of Lazarus, when He called into that tomb, "Lazarus, come forth. And the dead came forth, bound feet and hands with graveclothes", John 11: 43, 44. But were they attracted to Him? "He came to his own, and his own received him not", (John 1: 11); "Cast away indeed as worthless" by men. That is a terrible word, "worthless"; not worth anything. That is man's judgment of Jesus, this blessed One whom we love and whom the Father loves, the Centre of God's universe, the Centre of all that is worthwhile for us too; and men cast Him away indeed as worthless. He says in John 12: 32, "and I, if I be lifted up"; men did reject Him, men did crucify Him, these Roman soldiers put Him on the cross and the Jews, to whom He had come, His own, they rejected Him and crucified Him and mocked Him. But, "I, if I be lifted up ... will draw all to me". Oh the drawing power of this blessed One! I desire, dear brethren, that as I speak simply and humbly of the preciousness of Jesus, that He might become more precious to every one of us, that His personal attractiveness might shine into our hearts. It is really that which causes response to the heart of God, "cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious".

So Peter knew what he was talking about. Do you remember that time in John 6 when the disciples were going away? There had been persons who had followed Him, not the twelve but others who had followed Him, and it calls them disciples. They went away, He no longer attracted them. They no longer followed Him, "Jesus

therefore said to the twelve, Will ye also go away?" Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal", John 6: 67-68. Peter failed later, but he knew what it was to be attracted to the Lord Jesus. When he said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal", he was expressing not only the truth; not only, you might say, a truth that stands the test of time and eternity, but he was expressing the result of his attraction to this blessed One who meant so much to him. It was in the power of love that he said that, love for Christ, and I believe that the Lord Jesus appreciated it. So as far as Peter was concerned in writing these words, he had got the gain of that experience, so that he can say where we read in verse 7, "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness". He had said, "Lord, to whom shall we go?". There is no-one else. The Lord is the only One who shines in all the precious perfection of His humanity. That humanity in all its holiness, in all its perfection, in all its fulness; everything that was for God's pleasure, was there in that Man, and He laid down His life, a precious, perfect Offering for sin, "who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God", Heb 9: 14. How precious He was to Peter! Peter had known the bitterness of failure. Who of us has not known that? Peter had known the agony of even denying the Lord, and then weeping as the Lord turned to look at him. It was not a look of reproach; it was not a look of anger. It was a look of love, and it was that love that reached into Peter's heart there in Pilate's judgment hall, "And he went forth without", it says, "and wept bitterly", Matt 26: 75. All of that experience and many others, Peter with Him on the mountain, Peter being asked, "Will ye also go away", all of that comes flowing into this letter of Peter's and he says, "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness". So what the Father thinks of Jesus is to be shared with those who love Him.

Now, I know that the Father's appreciation of His beloved Son is unique and precious, and there is that in that relationship which the human mind can never ever penetrate into or contemplate. Yet something of the character of the Father's appreciation of Jesus in all the personal attractiveness of His beloved Son as He was at the Jordan, and especially as He was on the cross, is to affect us. It is often said that Jesus was never more attractive to the Father than

when He hung there as a precious, perfect Offering for sin. Think of what that means, the Father's love for that blessed One, as He offered Himself a precious, perfect, spotless Offering, "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness". Dear brethren, may the preciousness of Jesus grow in our hearts! May the link every one of us in this room has with Him grow in our hearts! In essence it is the gospel message, but I just feel it laid on me because I feel the need of it for myself. Is Jesus precious to me every hour of every day? Is He growing in preciousness? I can look back on fifty years of spiritual experience in my own life, and I would challenge myself, is Jesus growing more precious to me as the days and the years go by? That is what God has in mind for every believer, that we might be increasingly and constantly drawn in a response to the personal attractiveness of this blessed Man who is there, the Centre of His universe. Mr Raven used to speak about attraction, attachment and affection, vol 3 p68. Attraction is that power that draws you, "draw all to me". We know that in the gospel, there is a bond which the Holy Spirit creates. You know you have it with the Lord Jesus. First of all you are attracted and then you are attached to Him, and then that love that He has for you is answered to in love which grows. As I speak about the attractiveness of the Lord Jesus, I have all three of these things in my mind. Mr Raven ministered about that, and it is very good to read it - I commend especially the address in volume 20 p217. I trust that every one here has been attracted to Christ - then attached, that bond of love which nothing can break, and then the growing of love for this blessed One.

We read in Chronicles of David. Mr James Taylor says in a very simple and beautiful statement in his ministry that David is a type of the personal attractiveness of Christ, vol 17 p390. I enjoyed that. You get these nuggets in ministry. You can read ministry in all sorts of different ways. You can pick up a book and read it right through; that is good. You can have an impression of Jesus, and then you need an index to follow it up. You follow a thought and you get a touch from it. Or you might just open a book and you get a sentence of somebody's ministry that is living and it goes right into your heart and you say, 'I know what that means'. Ministry is living. It is good to have the books on our bookshelves, but to have ministry

living in your heart is a wonderful thing. The living character of ministry that has come out over a hundred and eighty years is marvellous. Brethren sometimes say Mr Darby's ministry is difficult to understand. Some of it is, but some of it is not. You go to the Evangelical volumes, to some of these gospel preachings, and marvel at the fulness of love and life there, feed on it, bathe your soul in it. Well, Mr Taylor said that David is a type of the personal attractiveness of my blessed Saviour. That is who I am speaking about, my Saviour and Lord. We never get away from that -

Blessed Man, and yet divine!
We rejoice as now we prove
Consciously Thy wondrous love
(Hymn 147)

“And all Israel assembled themselves to David to Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh”. That was an unusual way to put it. They could have said, 'Thou art our king', or they could just have gone straight on to say, “Jehovah thy God said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel”, but they say to him, “Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh”. I suppose in the literality of it they were acknowledging that he was one of them racially, but there is far more in it than that. “Even aforetime ... thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel”. Oh what a wonderfully attractive Person He is, this blessed Man that I am speaking about, and He has the power to attract a whole company round Him. We see that as these chapters unfold. So Amasai, chief of the captains, said, “Thine are we, David, And with thee, thou son of Jesse”. I have a sense of the drawing power of David as a type of the Lord Jesus, and how Israel gathered round him and declared their attachment to him. Really, what they were declaring was this attachment that they had. They were saying, 'You belong to us and we belong to you'. That is what it is. The Lord Jesus belongs to us. We can lay claim on Him. He is ours, and we belong to Him. This relationship forms the basis of everything that we enjoy in Christianity. It is what we call reciprocal, two way, going in both directions; the love of God for us and then our love. He loved us first, but then we love Him. So here these persons, Judah and all Israel, say, “Thine are we, David, And with thee, thou son of Jesse: Peace, peace be to thee! And peace be to

thy helpers! For thy God helps thee". So we have the sense now of David gathering persons round him. That is what we find in our spiritual experience. I am speaking of things that I am sure every one in this room has experienced. I feel for myself that I would like to experience it more, the power of attraction in the Lord Jesus Christ to hold my soul in relation to Him, and then as we come together, something being worked out collectively, so that He is the Centre of a circle.

I want to speak of the Christian circle. We do not find it first and then find Christ. No, we find Christ first. These persons had David as their object and then, as gathering round him, "all Israel", could speak; "all Israel ... saying, Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh". But first of all they had gathered round him. So we do not find the Lord Jesus through the company. We look for Him and we find Him; we prove what Mr Raven meant when he talked about attraction and attachment and affection, and then we find others there.

In Acts 3 Peter and John were exemplifying the Christian circle. Think of the experience that these two men had. They were going up into the temple together, it says, at the hour of prayer. There was something demonstrated in the lives of these two men. Think of the history of John, who had known what it was to sit at table with the Lord and to be in His bosom. What a marvellous place of nearness to Jesus. That is how we are drawn. When we are drawn to Christ we do not stay where we were, we move nearer to Him. John knew what it was to be in the bosom of Jesus. We have already spoken of Peter, and they are going up together. Great things have happened. Peter had preached his first gospel preaching a little more than seven weeks after the crucifixion, after he had denied the Lord. What a denial was Peter's in Pilate's judgment hall, 'I do not know Him'. Think of the power of divine love. These seven weeks later he is out there on the streets of Jerusalem preaching the gospel that chapter 2 records, "And ... they were pricked in heart, and said ... What shall we do, brethren?". And those who had accepted his word were baptised, "and there were added in that day about three thousand souls", Acts 2: 37, 41.

Every one of these souls was being drawn to Christ; not to Peter, to Christ, but Peter was there as a faithful exponent of the love of God in his own life. A man who seven weeks before had denied the Lord, but then he had got the benefit; he had gone through that experience. The Lord had tested him about whether he loved Him, and he was able to preach the gospel. But now he is going up into the temple with John, and this poor man was being carried. He had no power in himself, he was "being carried, whom they placed every day at the gate of the temple". He was helpless, but then, when he asked for alms, "Peter, looking stedfastly upon him with John". My impression is, dear brethren, that there is something very attractive about Peter and John here. Now, I do not want to be misunderstood, because what they represented was the attractiveness of their Lord and Saviour. But they do not say to him, 'Look on the Lord Jesus'. Peter says to him, "Look on us". There is something seen in what is worked out in the hearts and souls of those who are attracted to Christ. Features of Him begin to appear in those who are attracted to Him. That is what the Christian circle is. It is marked by the characteristics of the blessed, attractive Person who is at the Centre of it. And so Peter says, "Look on us", and this transaction takes place, "what I have, this give I to thee: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaraean rise up and walk". Now, we can use this in the gospel, but it is not my intention to speak of it in this way, because all of us here know what it is to answer to the love of the Lord Jesus. What I had in mind was, "And leaping up he stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple". You see, this man who was lame is now being attracted; he had to be carried, but he is now in movement, "walking, and leaping, and praising God". Why? Well, Peter and John had come up to him. Peter had said the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaraean, and told him to "rise up and walk". This man now had something in his heart, a link with the Sun and Centre of God's world, and it puts him in movement. He is no longer lying at the gate of the temple. He is not just healed - it is not just that his feet and ankle bones have become strong. "And leaping up he stood and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God". So what I have been speaking about results in praise to God. Hearts that are affected by the

attractiveness of this blessed One are hearts which can worship, which can respond to the God who purposed all of this. It is a wonderful thing to come to Christ and experience this: "Was not our heart burning ...?", Luke 24: 32. This is all in the purpose of God. All that God's heart desired, He found in Christ and He finds it in those who are attracted and attached to that blessed One.

Well, dear brethren, these are just a few very simple thoughts, but I desire that we all might be freshly attracted to this blessed Man who is the Centre of God's universe. Not only is He the Centre, but He always will be. This is what it will be in eternity, 'myriads raised and living', as hymn 380 says, all with Christ as their Centre, all responding to God for ever. We can know it now, we can feel that drawing power, these bands of a man, cords of love. It is a wonderful thing that we can enjoy now in character what we shall enjoy forever. It is all in that blessed Man in all His personal attractiveness to His God and Father who has purposed that these things should be. May we just be encouraged and blessed! For His Name's sake.

Grimsby

13th February 2011

THE INFORMALITY OF LOVE

G Bruce Grant

Numbers 10: 33-36

I thought of this scripture after thinking about the Supper on Lord's day as to the informality of love; speaking of the Lord's love, the informality of the Lord's love. Love cannot be bound. Prescription and order are right; we get that here, prescription, how they were to move in the wilderness. We have Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, Dan and, in between these four tribes, the ark on the shoulders of the Kohathites; that is how they were to move. They set forward and they went three days' journey and the amazing thing is that the ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them; the ark moved out of itself and went before them to seek out a resting place for them. Now that was not as it was given in the prescribed order, therefore it brings out the activity of the love of Christ in relation to His people, that He loves us so much that His love cannot be bound.

I think we see this in John's gospel. We have the Lord's service in Luke's gospel; He was anointed to serve and He went out in the sense of approval of His Father: that was more His commission. It is wondrous grace of the Lord in Luke's gospel that He went out definitely anointed in view of that. But you do not get that view in John's gospel. It is more the unofficial side in John's gospel: He in the bosom of the Father, enjoying the Father's love and serving His own. His own are very much in mind in John's gospel, not so much men at large. Verse 30 of chapter 20 says, "Many other signs therefore also Jesus did before his disciples"; they were done before His disciples in view of their help, in view of their being enlightened as to the glory of Himself and appreciating that Person. That is what the signs were for in John's gospel, but they were for His disciples. So you see the Lord in John's gospel in a more unofficial way. He lays aside His garments and serves His own. There is informal activity of love on the Lord's part, it is un-prescribed. He did it because He loved His own so much; He stooped to such a lowly service. He wanted to tell them what was in His heart as to the Father's things, the Comforter, the Father's

house; but He wanted them restful in order to open out His heart to them, and His love operated in that way, laying aside His garments.

How attractive the love of the Lord is, the informal activity of the Lord's love. It always does what is suitable, it is never out of place, it is just what is needed at the time, and that is how the Lord serves us. As He came in in John 20, He showed to them His hands and His side, v 20. He did everything there. It is not that everything is done by the Lord as He comes in, although He sets everything on. But in John 20 He did do everything; He showed them His hands and His side, a reminder to them of His love. He showed them His hands. We do not show our sides to one another, if you think of the literal thing, but the Lord did it to His own. That was love on the Lord's part, an informal activity of love that He actually showed them His side; how intimate He was with them.

There are also His hands. They knew about the Lord's hands. He had suffered for them, but He had also served them; and showing them His hands would also refer to that, He would continue to serve them. The Lord's present place on high is for His own, and He continues to serve us. I am often impressed with that scripture on Lord's day morning; He showed them His hands and His side. As we gather together, we are all different, we have all had different experiences, we are all carrying different burdens, different exercises, but the Lord would serve each one of us in whatever way is needed to set us free with Himself, and for Himself and for what He has in mind.

This scripture here would relate to that. It is the wilderness, we gather in the wilderness, and the Lord in His love operates so that we might have rest. It says "to search out a resting-place for them"; so that He is considering ourselves. What a resting place it is as He comes in, our affections at rest and set free in relation to Himself; what it means for Him, but He has considered for us. The remembrance of the Lord Jesus is primarily for Himself, "this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22: 19); He wants remembrance. As our affections are full and we are there for Him He would consider for us and cause us to be restful and manifest Himself. What a blessed privilege that is; He serves us in love in view of us being set free.

In the scripture we had in John 12 we get the informal activity of love by Mary, un-prescribed but just exactly what was needed at the time. The supper was more an ordered thing and they all had part in that. Mary, the most spiritual person there, apart from the Lord, of course, knew what to do; her love for the Lord caused her to act in the way she did. But I would speak of it as the informal activity of love. One person actually disagreed with it. "Mary therefore, having taken a pound of ointment of pure nard of great price, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment" (v 3); that was her affection poured out on the Lord irrespective of what others thought, instinctive, intelligent affection operating in Mary. We have the blessed Holy Spirit to help us in this way, to pour our affections out on the Lord Jesus, expressing what would always be suitable and fitting as we are dependent on the Holy Spirit, the power for these things. How attractive it is, just this informal activity of love. It is when things are cold, or not as they should be, that love cannot operate in the same way. When things are normal, that is when you get the informal activity of love because there is no fear, "perfect love casts out fear", 1 John 4: 18.

May we be encouraged by the service of the Lord Jesus in the informal way He operates amongst His own because of His love for us. And then it can be taken on by ourselves. We gather, and there is order, there must be order; then there is what is beyond order. A brother recently read that scripture in Chronicles here, that they did not observe the courses, 2 Chron 5:11. It is the same thought; it was informal as being dependent on the Spirit. It is not doing as we please, the flesh operating, not at all; it is the activity of love as under divine control.

May the Lord bless the word.

Dundee

12th April 2011

TWO EFFECTS OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST

John Strachan

Romans 8: 35-37

2 Corinthians 5: 14-15

We had a fresh impression, dear brethren, on Lord's day, of the love of Christ, and it led my mind along the lines suggested in these scriptures. It is a great matter that the love of Christ can be relied on, not only on Lord's day morning but continually. It says in John's gospel, "Jesus, knowing that He was about to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, loved them to the end", John 13: 1. The idea is that He loved them through everything. It is a great matter to have such a love that we can always rely on, no matter what may come up, what circumstances may arise. The Lord was feeling for His own as left here; He was going to the Father and His own were to be left here. And we are left here in this world in the absence of Christ, and it is a great thing to know that whatever comes up, we have a resource in the love of Christ that is absolutely reliable. He has proved it in the way that He has gone to secure us, and how He continually serves us, "always living to intercede for" us, Heb 7: 25. I wondered if these two scriptures that we have read would suggest not only how the love of Christ is known and enjoyed, but that it has an effect upon us. We are left here and it is not like Lord's day morning all the time, but we have the rest of the week to fill out, and I thought it is the effect of the love of Christ on our souls that would help us.

So in chapter 8 of Romans Paul says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" and he refers to these different things. I think it has in mind how we are left here in the place of testimony and these different things may be experienced, "tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? According as it is written, For thy sake we are put to death all the day long; we have been reckoned as sheep for slaughter". These things really refer to our position here in the testimony where Christ has been rejected. So he goes on to say, "But in all these things we more than conquer through him that has loved us". Paul

was victorious, and he says this not only for himself but includes others, “we more than conquer through him that has loved us”. It is not in our own strength, our own power at all, but we can be victorious over things that may arise that are adverse. As we are here going through this scene, things do arise that are adverse and are testing, but we can more than conquer; that is, we can be victorious. The Lord Jesus was victorious. That is the great matter to affect our souls that He was victorious; He went into death but came out of it victorious. In all that arose in His pathway before that, He was always marked by a sense of triumph. So Paul says, “in all these things we more than conquer through him that has loved us”. We can go through as superior to the circumstances. I think that is a very encouraging thing for ourselves whatever may arise, that we can go through as more than conquering “through him that has loved us”.

Now in 2 Corinthians 5, I thought we could see how the apostle was constrained by the love of Christ, and he brings in the plural, “the love of the Christ constrains us”. I think he would draw us into this. It was evident that he was constrained by the love of the Christ. It had such an effect on him, such an influence on his life; he was marked by the constraining power of the love of Christ. What a power it is, dear brethren, the power of the love of Christ. Paul lived on this principle as being affected by the love of Christ; so he says it “constrains us, having judged this”. We come to a certain judgment, “that one died for all, then all have died”. The death of Christ really proved that all lay in death. It proved that, a state of death, the state we are in by nature; it proved that. But we are not to remain that way: “he died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised”. So He died for all - what a claim He has on us, dear brethren - that “they who live should no longer live to themselves”; that is, that He has the supreme claim that we should no longer live to ourselves. Naturally we tend to be very self-centred and have ourselves as an object, and maybe to please ourselves, but the love of Christ is to affect us, His death is to affect us “that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised”.

So He has been raised and we have a link with a Man who has been raised, and who loves us. He is also a Man who has been raised and who lives for us. And so if we are going to live here it is no longer to live to ourselves but “to him who died for them and has been raised”. We have an object before us; the One who has died for us, the One who loves us, the One who lives for us. What a thing it is to go through life with an object like that; so that we have got Him before us. He always did the things that pleased the Father, and our object is to have Him before us, so that we are suitable to Himself as doing what pleases Him rather than ourselves.

May the Lord encourage us for His Name's sake.

Dundee

12th April 2011

BARNABAS

Robert C Trotter

Acts 4: 36-37; 9: 26-29; 11: 22-26

I would like, beloved brethren, just to call attention to this man called Barnabas. He is quite a personality, "And Joseph, who had been surnamed Barnabas by the apostles (which is, being interpreted, Son of consolation), a Levite, Cyprian by birth". I know there is some thought as to how he managed to have retained his property; it has even been mentioned that it might have been a farm, but nonetheless he gives it up. A fine feature of unselfishness marked him; how unselfish he was, and certainly what he gave up was used for the testimony, which is a fine feature, "being possessed of land, having sold it, brought the money and laid it at the feet of the apostles". We often remark on the end of this chapter and the beginning of the next, because it would seem that the enemy felt that he had to do something about this situation. But Barnabas gives up his land and, as I said, the money was used for the testimony; it furthered the testimony. That is a fine feature to be able to do that, to further things, to help things forward. It is easy, in one sense, to slow things up, but it is a fine feature to help things forward. It is a feature that marked certain sisters. One, Phoebe, was "a helper of many, and", Paul could say, "of myself", Rom 16: 2.

Later on where I read we see Saul. He arrived at Jerusalem a great vessel of the testimony, an elect vessel, and, of course, there was a big history behind it all, but there was a new history beginning in Saul. That is fine, when a new history begins. These are simple words, I know, beloved brethren, but it says, "Saul increased the more in power, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this is the Christ, v 22. And having arrived at Jerusalem he essayed to join himself to the disciples, and all were afraid of him". You can understand the tardiness to take aboard such a personality as Saul had been. Someone said he had been approaching Damascus like a roaring lion. That is what marks the enemy, but the Lord had to do with him, and Barnabas, I hardly know how to explain it, can ease the situation. He eased Paul, or Saul as

he is called here, into the affections of these saints. That is a fine feature. "But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and related to them how he had seen the Lord in the way". I wonder how Barnabas did that? He must have done it in such a way that the apostles were carried by it. He must have related it in such a way that they were carried by this matter, "related to them how he had seen the Lord in the way". What a matter that is, to see the Lord in the way. How the Lord showed Himself to Saul, an elect vessel, as it goes on to say here, "he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him". It was a wonderful matter: "he had spoken to him". That speaking was direct, no mediator needed, it was a direct speaking to Saul, and it says, "and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus". In Exodus 26: 6 it says, "And thou shalt make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains together with the clasps, that the tabernacle may be one", and then again it says in verse 11, "And thou shalt make fifty clasps of copper, and put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent, that it may be one". Someone has suggested, and I just pass this on, that that was Barnabas's service, JT vol 24: p121. These clasps held things together. How wonderful that is if we can do that service, to hold things together. In a day when things around us are falling apart, when there are all kind of things showing their face, I was just impressed with that, that it was a service that Barnabas had rendered in his day. He had that way with him. We are not all blessed with it, but it is a fine thing to do a service like this.

Chapter 11 is most interesting, "And the report concerning them reached the ears of the assembly which was in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go through as far as Antioch". You see there was great confidence in Barnabas, and what a service he had part in, and it says, - I love this verse - "who, having arrived and seeing the grace of God, rejoiced". I look around tonight, and that is what I see, the grace of God, and it is in persons, what He has done in persons, securing persons. It says, "and seeing the grace of God, rejoiced, and exhorted all with purpose of heart to abide with the Lord". What a thing that is! What a service that is! He was able to carry out this service of exhorting. I think it is a gift really, it says, "he that exhorts, in exhortation", Rom 12: 8. We need to work at it. So it

says, "and seeing the grace of God, rejoiced". Well, there is rejoicing too, you know; there are exercises, but there is the side of rejoicing, "having arrived and seeing the grace of God, rejoiced, and exhorted all with purpose of heart to abide with the Lord; for he was a good man". You get his credentials here, "he was a good man". That is fine, if somebody says of a brother, "he was a good man". "And a large crowd of people were added to the Lord". It is an attractive line of things. I think that is what it really brings out, that it is attractive, persons are attracted to it, they "were added to the Lord. And he went away to Tarsus to seek out Saul". He saw a need. It is fine to be able to discern that, discern a need. There are needs amongst us, I appreciate that, but here is one who could discern a need, as it says, "And he went away to Tarsus to seek out Saul. And having found him, he brought him to Antioch. And so it was with them that for a whole year they were gathered together in the assembly and taught a large crowd; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch".

Well, I just had a few simple thoughts as to Barnabas, what we might call Barnabas service. It says he was a good man. I am attracted to that. I will just read it again, "for he was a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith". He had faith too. How faith is needed. Some things may look black, may look difficult, but it says that he was "full of the Holy Spirit and of faith". We see how that characterised him. It is fine if Christ-like features characterise us. We have had what our brother has brought before us, what was seen in Christ, and that is wonderful, what a model for us, but then these certain features are to be found in us as patterned after Christ. "And so it was with them that for a whole year they were gathered together in the assembly and taught a large crowd". What a year that must have been! How fruitful! What a fruitful year! A year has in mind every season; there is the thought of winter when things could be difficult, then there is the spring time when things begin to develop and show great promise, then there is the time of fruit. All that would enter into a year, as it says here, "And so it was with them that for a whole year they were gathered together in the assembly and taught a large crowd; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch".

May we be encouraged! For His Name's sake.

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