

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 59

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COMMITTAL AND FAITHFULNESS

Key to initials:

THE SOLES OF THE FEET

A CLOTH WHOLLY OF BLUE

A LACE OF BLUE

COMMITTAL AND FAITHFULNESS

Ecclesiastes 5: 4

1 Samuel 1: 8-11, 25-28

Joshua 24: 15

1 Corinthians 16: 15, 16

WSC We are considering the subject of the structure, or the pillars, on which the pious believer's household is built. For this reading I suggest that we look at the matter of committal and faithfulness. These are two features that in the world are generally lost, and the loss of such features may creep in among us - especially the matter of committal. The first scripture that we read, while it is an Old Testament scripture - and we use these Old Testament scriptures to advantage by the Spirit - shows that committal is of vital importance in the things of God; and for us first of all it is in relation to the Lord's supper.

The scripture in Ecclesiastes goes on to consider the possibility that a person would be better off not to commit himself, than to commit himself and not fulfil his vow. That will need to be taken in its context; as we read, it says, "for he hath no pleasure in fools". The Lord asks us to remember Him, "this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22: 19); and that is central to the Christian life and experience. I know there are many churches that do not observe that, that do not think that it is needed; we are not speaking about them, but for the true believer, any hint from the Lord is enough to make him do it for the rest of his life because of love.

The second scripture is about this woman Hannah. She was concerned about the state in Israel - every man was doing what was right in his own eyes. Is that the state among us? That was then; the book of Ruth comes in at that time, and then we come on to Samuel. Here is a woman who realises that what is needed in Israel is a man, and she prays her heart out that she might have a man child, because she knew that that was what was needed. Her husband did not catch on. I do not think it was that he did not love her, because later he says, 'You do whatever you think is right'; but he certainly was not leading! Hannah was a faithful woman.

Joshua makes his statement about his house; and then Paul exhorts us to look at the house of Stephanas that have devoted themselves to the saints for service. Look at that house and model yourselves after it, “I beseech you, brethren, ... that ye should also be subject to such”. I think that there are households like that that can be modelled after; they can be models for us as devoting themselves to service, a faithful household. We read of the house of Stephanas in the first chapter as well, a faithful household.

I think first of all we have to come to this matter of committal. Will you commit yourself or do you want to keep things open and keep your options open between one thing and another? We call people like that ‘fence-sitters’. The Lord takes not pleasure in that kind of a person. He wants you to commit yourself. That is what we need today, committed persons, committed young people, young brothers and sisters, those who commit themselves.

APD In relation to your earlier remark, if a Nazarite forfeited his vow (Num 6: 9-12), he could reconsecrate himself. We may think we will perhaps fail, but provision is made for us to adjust ourselves in relation to what is right and reconsecrate ourselves.

WSC That is right. The Nazarite is an excellent suggestion because there was no requirement that a person be a Nazarite; there was no law that said everyone must become a Nazarite. It was a voluntary thing; it was out of his appreciation of God and His things that the Nazarite would commit himself. It was not an easy thing; it was difficult. There is a lot in the law, and it is good to read it and think about it. There are circumstances or things that may happen that will cause him to forfeit his vow, but God has made provision for him to begin again. The scripture does not indicate that he would *not* start over; he would start over again.

APD It is an encouragement to us that if we say maybe I will not commit myself because I might fail, provision is made for us so that we can reconsecrate ourselves.

WSC That is good.

JAH Proverbs says “Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be well-ordered”, chap 4: 26. There is also a footnote in chapter 2

that the pathways are not always straight and easy, they are sometimes circuitous and difficult, and so there needs to be a committal in the pathway, no matter where it is, verse 9, footnote 'i'.

WSC I think that raises an important matter - that we do not commit ourselves exactly to the brethren: we commit ourselves first to the Lord; then wherever the path leads us we can stay the course. If we are committed to the Lord, no matter what happens locally or universally we are committed to the Lord. He should be our first love.

JAH That is interesting because in Proverbs 2 it says, "Then shalt thou understand righteousness and judgment and equity: every good path". That is, in following the Lord we will find that. The footnote says, "It is properly a 'path going round,' and hence used for the 'entrenchment' of a war camp, as 'wagon-defence'". That is, it is not always an easy path; there is conflict sometimes.

WSC That is true. There is conflict, and difficulty, we may have problems that are not our own. The Lord leads us through them, but if the Lord is the centre of our committal, if we have vowed to Him, then we will be maintained personally as well as in our household.

GDR The Lord speaks of the danger of lukewarmness, "I would thou wert cold or hot", Rev 3: 16. Revelation brings it in as to an assembly where there was a lack of true affection for Christ. They seemed to go along in a lackadaisical kind of way.

WSC That is very good, because we live in Laodicean days. Laodicea is here and the Lord is looking for committed persons, persons who have taken a vow. I think we are heading down the wrong path with casualness. I believe that, and the young people will probably not appreciate this comment, but to be casual about these things is lukewarmness. The whole position will be destroyed, although of course the Lord is able to maintain what He will. To be casual, and not hallowing our meetings as we come together, such as this meeting and, especially the Lord's supper, is lukewarmness, which is the spirit of Laodicea. It must be hallowed in your mind; this must be special. We have a hymn and a prayer which sets this out in a formal way.

DH It was not a question of works - the work of our hands. As to God it says, "fear God", Eccl 5: 7. If we do not take heed to the very thing we are speaking about, then what follows that is defilement.

WSC The tendency around us in the world is casualness. You see it in every facet of life, but God wants committed persons.

JB Could you say some more as to the Lord's supper? We commit ourselves to Him, but we are also committed to His death. That is the termination of everything that is not in keeping with Him.

WSC That is what, in my mind, is the vow of all vows - the Lord's supper. When you take the Lord's supper you make a vow to Him. We can get loose and casual and forget what we vowed, but scripture says, 'Do not fail to pay that vow'. That would cause me to always be at the Lord's supper - obviously there are reasons when we cannot be, but I *should* be there.

SWD Consecration is what we have in the law of the Nazarite, which is the opposite to casualness, and it is followed at the end of that chapter with a blessing, Num 6: 24-27. It is seeing blessedness in Him.

WSC That is good, because the vow of the Nazarite was for God and there was no law that a person had to vow that vow; he took it voluntarily, he took it out of his love for God. What else would he do it for? It took seven days, and yet you come to the book of Jeremiah and there was a family who generation after generation had honoured their forefather's committal, which was basically the vow of the Nazarite, Jer 35: 2-18. I think it is occurring today, and we are thankful to see generations coming on and following that. We need to be encouraged in it.

HJG The Lord is there to help us: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments...", Rev 3: 18. He is the Provider for that.

WSC That is right; He is faithful. The scripture in Deuteronomy 7: 9 says, "And thou shalt know that Jehovah thy God, he is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy to a thousand generations with them that love him and keep his commandments". I think a generation is generally thought to be twenty years; that works

out at about two thousand years. What He is meaning is that it is forever; God keeps His covenants forever. The Lord is the faithful "Repairer of the breaches", Isa. 58: 12.

KAK Does it help to see what the Lord says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments", John 14: 15. We began with the pillar of the household being love; will our love for the Lord Jesus motivate us to keep the Supper?

WSC My exercise is that this kind of faithfulness, the same level of faithfulness (to some extent) comes out in our households. We know that in our marriages we made vows, and a vow that is taken in marriage should be honoured. It is no different: it is a vow, and you should pay that vow.

JB Would you link spiritual instinct with the vow? When they were sitting by the rivers of Babylon they were asked to sing a song, but they said, 'we cannot do it because we are on foreign soil', but then they never lost sight of Jerusalem their chief joy, "If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to my palate", Ps 137: 6. You were saying earlier, as to Ecclesiastes, that you may as well not vow as vow and not pay. "If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy". If we keep the greatness of Christ and the assembly before us, our spiritual instincts will help us in discernment, what to do and what not to do involving the path of separation.

WSC It certainly does. That is an interesting Scripture. For the believer there should be those instincts, the unction that John speaks about. You do not need anyone to tell you not do this or that; if you have the Spirit, the Spirit will be saying to you, 'Are you really going to do this?'. That is a very simple explanation, but I think it is correct.

JB When we come to the meetings we learn by observation; we see and hear what the brethren do. The young people should follow what they learn to be rightly established.

WSC That is why I read the last scripture because here is the house of Stephanas: look at it, study it, model after it because they had devoted themselves to service. You could have easily looked at

Aquila and Priscilla as well; they staked their neck. These are households of value, and well worth modelling after.

CWW As to the importance of being attracted to Christ; I was thinking of where it says, “Jesus therefore said to the twelve, Will ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal”, John 6: 67, 68. We can seek to make all kinds of commitments, but unless we have that personal attraction to Christ guiding us, it is not going to amount to much.

WSC This has happened in my own experience; persons were committed to the brethren and then something went wrong; there were personal feelings, something happened in a locality, whatever it was, and then they just gave up because they were not committed to anything stable. They were not committed to the One they should have been committed to, the Lord; He is the One who is going through.

CWW In order to commit to Him we have to know Him. I do not mean just knowing Him as our Saviour, but actually spend time with Him on a regular basis and get to know who He is and His pathway here, and what He has done and what He is doing.

WSC For young people it may be difficult because we are naturally so much governed by what is physical that we think that things have to happen physically to be believable, whereas faith is *spiritual*. One of the important things about the Nazarite was that he had to keep at it, day after day. Every morning when he woke up he would remember that he had taken the Nazarite’s vow, and every night when he went to bed he would remember that for the whole period of time that he was consecrating himself, because it was to God. Israel may have been in a terrible state at the same time; all kinds of troubles might be going on, but he was committed to God. He took that vow. I want to encourage the young people; it may not seem like much when you may say, 'I will try doing devotions every day, I am going to get up a little earlier each day'. That is a most wonderful thing in the Lord’s eyes that you could do. Maybe you do not follow through with it too well or you forget, or some morning you are too tired, and so on, but the Lord is looking at that desire to be committed and He is pleased with that. You will find that over time

you draw closer and closer to Him and you will understand what He desires.

SWD Mr Darby says, 'Absolute consecration to Jesus is the strongest bond between human hearts', Synopsis, Matthew to John p402.

WSC It is the most wonderful thing to have a solid and firm link with Him. Then, no matter what happens when the winds blow and the waves come, and there are some times when it seems that the Lord is sleeping, you still have that comfort to know that He controls the winds and the waves. "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?", Mark 4: 41.

PH As to what has been said about keeping at it, the example is borne out in Hannah. She brings a coat every year; she kept at it and then the results of her committal comes forward in that God gave her more children, 1 Sam 2: 19, 21.

WSC Hannah is a wonderful example. When the tabernacle system was set up there was no stool prescribed, no seat prescribed in the tabernacle; the priests stood to do their service. But, here was an old man failing in the priesthood, failing in his own family, not controlling his own family. He sees her praying and he cannot even recognise prayer; he thought she was drunk. But Hannah kept at it and at it. That is faithfulness, and after Samuel is born she brings a little coat every year for him. That brings up an interesting question about our young people. She brought a coat that fitted him every year because she knew how much he would have grown. It is a wonderful thing to see how a mother reacted; she lent him to Jehovah. She did not want him for the world, she did not want him for the university, she did not want him for corporate management and ascendancy in the corporate world and so on; what she wanted was a man child for Israel and she got him.

JAH She made the coat to fit him, which was a lot smaller than an adult coat, but she understood his growth as well.

WSC Elisha did that; he got small enough to fit on that boy, 2 Kings 4: 34.

JAH His eyes on his eyes and mouth on his mouth.

WSC He would not fit otherwise. An adult and a child would not fit, his hands on his hands, but he made himself small and we need to get close to our young people.

JAH There is no one stands so high as he who stoops to help a child.

WSC I remember a brother here said to me that you have to be down on your knees to pray. That is an excellent suggestion; you might not always be down on your knees physically but the principle is there.

JRB That word, “lent” - “I have lent him to Jehovah” - is very meaningful because it means that she was not abdicating her responsibility. She was going to see the thing through.

WSC That is very good. In one sense our children are lent to us by God. But she did not have any great aspirations for him in this world; she wanted him for Jehovah. So she brings him with the bullock to the priest and says, “I have lent him to Jehovah”. He stays there with Eli. Can you imagine leaving your child there? And the effect is that the boy worshipped. It says, “And he worshipped Jehovah there”.

GDR There is something that precedes all this, and I am sure you know something about it personally - she wept. I wonder about that feeling side, caring for what is due to the Lord. I know you have our dear young people on your heart and we all do, but as to this matter of whether the fruit from the spiritual exercise is going to be realised, we have to be down on our knees in prayer, and weeping is involved in that.

WSC We know the history of Hannah. We know how that household worked; it was rather a dysfunctional household, but Hannah had real feelings. It was not an intellectual thing; she did not say that she knew by the books as Daniel did. Hers were real solid feelings about what God wanted, and maybe those of us that are older need a word about that; about really going to the Lord for our young people and asking him to answer any turn that they make toward Him. The Lord is faithful and He will do it.

RG I was thinking of Timothy as we were speaking of Samuel as a boy. Timothy came along the lines of his grandmother and his mother; obviously these were women who cared about the Lord's interests and he was the product of that despite the fact that his father was a Greek. He obviously had made progress and that laid the basis for Paul to lay hold of him when he was needed in the service.

WSC Timothy is called to act as "a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim 2: 3), and he is also called "man of God", 1 Tim 6: 11. I think Timothy is a wonderful example and a very great challenge to us because he knew what the great apostle was thinking, he understood his mind; but it was not just that: Timothy knew the Lord. The apostle said, "For I have no one like-minded", Phil 2: 20. He was a great example, and yet he was a young man.

RG And he had "a good testimony of the brethren", Acts 16: 2.

WSC You draw attention to the history; his mother and his grandmother are both in line with Hannah, both faithful women that influenced his life. He was apparently amenable to it.

MJK I was thinking of what you brought out as to the children, that it starts in the parents. I was thinking of Moses; we might say that he had been committed as it were to the Person of Christ by his mother, but then he chose: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God", Heb 11: 25. With Samuel it was the exercise of his mother; she actually committed him to the Nazarite vow prior to him committing himself, but with Moses it was his own choice.

WSC I feel very much as you do on that subject, that it is vitally important that the parents are sure, as sure as you can be, that their child is saved - has come under the shelter of the blood. You may not be able to tell for sure that they have the Spirit but that, too, would be very important, depending on the age of the child of course. I think that if we are not sure of these things the child is in danger, our household is in danger. That should be one of the first things when it comes to children, that they know the Lord.

MJK I think it was Mr Coates that said that the children will take on that which is influenced by the instructors, who are the parents, vol

26 p120.

WSC That is good. It should be the parents. That is their job. That is the thing we are speaking about; the head of the house, that is his job. Generally it is the mother who spends the most time with them, but she would be guided by his headship.

JAH What about grandparents; does a righteous man consider his children's children? "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children", Prov 13: 22.

WSC Psalm 145: 4 says, "One generation shall laud thy works to another". I think grandparents do have a great responsibility. There are some things that grandparents should not get involved with; they have to regard the responsibility of the parents, but I do think that grandparents are very important.

SWD When you read Hannah's prayer, it is instructive the way that she addresses God? She says, "O Jehovah of hosts". What uprising she had in her knowledge of God.

WSC That is beautiful, the way she speaks to God, "Jehovah of hosts"; she is referring to God's people. Not too long before this Balaam had prophesied of Israel, "How goodly are thy tents, Jacob, and thy tabernacles, Israel!", Num 24: 5. He saw what God saw. Someone said that if he had seen inside the tents it would have been a completely different story, but he saw God's view of it. I think that is the view that Hannah had, that same view of God's people.

APD Would you say something about committal to the fellowship? We have spoken of our committal to the Lord, but it seems to me that there is a great need currently to be committed to the principles of the fellowship.

WSC That is the next step in a sense. It is called in Corinthians, "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord", 1 Cor 1: 9. That is the fellowship and we need to be committed to that.

APD Chapter 10 is committal to the fellowship of His death. I think you also get the matter of the fellowship of the Spirit (Phil 2: 1), but these are wonderful things and are protective and we need to be concerned to be faithful to them.

WSC That is the truth. We need to know what the fellowship involves. I think it is a very important thing that we understand that we are not meeting as a sect, or as an organised church, but we are meeting in the light and in view of the assembly of God. We must keep that in our mind. It should just be a principle with us.

APD It involves a partnership. What you do involves me, and what I do involves you. Is that right?

WSC Exactly, and it is the same way in a household. There is partnership there; there is husband and wife, that is what our main enquiry is about. These things underlie that; they are foundational to that, our committal to the Lord, to the fellowship. This committal underlies our committal to the Lord, to our wives and then to our brethren and so on.

DJK Does the call precede the vow, “called us with a holy calling”, 2 Tim 1: 9? It seems to link with the fact that there is the vow taken, but the call would precede that. Persons should commit themselves in every respect.

WSC I think that is the appreciation of our place before God; we come to the point where we realise that we have been called: “these also he has called; and whom he has called, these also he has justified; but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified”, Rom 8: 30. Glorification involves the gift of the Spirit. That is all involved in this; it underlies the whole thing.

NSB It is very interesting to me to notice how the Spirit seems to be emphasising this in various meetings. We have the commandment to rehearse from generation to generation. Paul says, “to write the same things to you, to me is not irksome, and for you safe”, Phil 3: 1. The fact that the Spirit is emphasising that currently seems to me to be indicative of two things: one, that we may have lapsed, and two, that in divine grace we are being recalled to first principles.

WSC The Lord is emphasising that more lately and by the Spirit. The need then is for the head of the household to give direction. That is where it begins, in the household, the head setting the course of the ship, on that compass heading, and saying that this is the way that this house will be set. That is what we get in Joshua. He says,

'All these things have happened and everybody has all kinds of ideas'; there was a lot of weakness in the latter days of Joshua's time. But he says, "as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah". I think that is beautiful! If each head of the house could say that, "as for me and my house"; 'this is what we are going to do'.

JB Taking the vow would involve accepting the principles that governed the fellowship, and that should produce consistency, should it not?

WSC Yes. We have the rules right here in this Book and we have the Spirit, and we do not need anything else.

JB If we are under the guidance of the Spirit, "the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth" (John 16: 13), we all will arrive at the same thing.

WSC That is why we began with a scripture about the vow. I think if a person is so much in love with the Lord and he commits himself to the Lord, then he will want to do everything - not only what the Lord commands us, "this do in remembrance of me" - but be alert to every desire of His heart. It says of David, "And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem", 2 Sam 23: 15. Immediately three men went and got it. That is the kind of people we want to be, men and women - all the Lord needs to do is to indicate His desire and I am at it. They went at the risk of their own lives.

JAH If we do pursue enquiry about these things, from time to time, we should be very dependent on the Spirit. It is not enough to have a series of meetings instead of a set of rules. We need to work in a very supportive way that gets households wanting to understand first principles.

WSC I think so; we want the principles of it; and the affection of it. That will cause us to move in the right direction and be true to the fellowship.

DH Mr Raven taught that fellowship is a bond of association which in its very nature separates those in it from the course and current of things around them, vol 1 p64. He said that 'There will be no such thing as fellowship in the world to come when Christ comes out and

has His rights, but it is a contrary scene and there are those who are held together by fidelity to the Lord', vol 15 p446.

WSC That has been the problem with Christianity ever since the beginning, and people could not realise that we are outside the fold. They wanted a fold, a sheepfold; that would separate the flock outwardly. Mere profession might even imagine that we would not even need to have love for the Lord; we would not need to know anything of Him. But Christianity is not the fold. You are left with your own link with the Centre. I think that is something that also needs to be said, that today is the day of *personal* faithfulness. You do not answer to me for your faithfulness, you are faithful to the Lord on your own; I am faithful to the Lord on my own. Of course, we involve each other because of the fellowship.

HJG Joshua tells us what committal is. He did not say, 'I am not going to serve the gods on the other side of the river and the gods of Egypt'; he did not say, 'I am not going to do that'; he said, "as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah". He is holding fast to the covenant relationship.

WSC The positive line is what I would like to get across in this meeting, that when it comes to faithfulness, that is the point. We focus on Him upon whom we should focus and nothing else. We often look at brethren; we say look at this one or that one, look at this locality, look at that: let us focus on Him.

AGM I was going to refer to 2 Timothy, a time when things are broken, especially in Ephesus. Paul writes to Timothy and says, "but *thou*", emphasis is on "thou", but what he says is, "But *thou* hast been thoroughly acquainted with my teaching ...", 2 Tim 3: 10. Paul's teaching refers to a Man in heaven, and everything flows out from that.

WSC We have to get thoroughly acquainted with Paul's teaching then. Thankfully we have it, and we can be thoroughly acquainted with it as Timothy was. That is the word - "but *thou*" - and that is for us today, each one of us.

DAH In regard to that, could you speak about the house of Stephanas because it must have been a very difficult position that

they were in? How did they act in that difficult situation?

WSC They were a faithful house. It says, “I baptised also the house of Stephanas”, 1 Cor 1: 16. There was a history there with Paul in regard of that house. It does not say he baptised Stephanas, it says, “the house of Stephanas”. I think that is a very interesting thing; this house was a house committed to the saints for service. They were not among the kings in Corinth. Corinth had some prominent brothers who were running things. We used to think that was great to have brothers running things. If you have a brother setting down all the laws it is easy because all you need to know is his law. But this was linked with Paul in the Spirit and wanting to follow the work of Paul. This is very much like Hannah, because Corinth was a difficult place to be in, and yet it was “the assembly of God which is in Corinth”, 1 Cor 1: 2. There were no other Christian churches there. I do not know what else we can say about it, but this house is marked out as to how they were and what they were.

DAH The footnote is interesting; they devoted themselves, even in spite of the difficult conditions as you say; they obviously still saw that and were prepared to devote themselves in service even with very difficult things going on.

WSC It requires a lot of grace, a lot of forgiveness, to go on in a situation like that. Yet that was their aim and the apostle could see that and he could speak about it. He speaks about others as well, “The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he has often refreshed me, and has not been ashamed of my chain”, 2 Tim 1: 16. He himself was probably put into prison, perhaps killed, martyred over it; but the apostle asked for the Lord’s blessing on his house.

RG I would like to refer to the footnote - that this is a parenthesis. It is the Spirit’s comment, “they have devoted themselves to the saints for service” - the note says they had ‘appointed themselves ... given themselves up’. He introduces that by the Spirit, calling attention to that household.

WSC Yes, that gives an additional insight to the matter.

GWF I was thinking about "the unity of the Spirit" (Eph 4: 3) in that it exists but it is up to us to keep it. Does that link with your thought on committal?

WSC That is very good. That is something that we are given to keep. It exists, the unity of the Spirit is there, the Spirit is One. He is not many spirits, and yet it is our job to measure up to it, to be actually actively pursuing that, the unity of the Spirit. That involves this matter of fellowship which has been raised, that our fellowship is the fellowship of Jesus Christ, our Lord. That is our fellowship, not Plymouth brethren, not something else.

JAH The tabernacle had connecting bars that helped hold it together, and that is like this parenthesis about the house of Stephanas. God says, 'You devoted yourselves while the kings were arguing and the others were upsetting things'; here comes a family caring for the brethren. They were there as the supply system.

WSC They were doing it within the structure of the fellowship.

StWD After the parenthesis it says, "that ye should also be subject to such". That word subject is very important for us in our households. It is not something that just happens; we have to work at it; we have to work towards that and subject ourselves to it.

WSC Yes, if you had lived in Corinth, the thing you would have wanted to do is to help the house of Stephanas; you would have wanted to be supportive of them. It is not a special friendship, but you would want to further anything that was positive and that is what we need to do in our localities.

GDR Timothy was exhorted to "keep the entrusted deposit", 1 Tim 6: 20. That is a vital thing. Maybe persons get a touch, and you are thankful for the touch, but it is a question of keeping, it involves true exercise of soul.

WSC The idea of keeping the unity of the Spirit, how that is worked out, is our problem generally. I have one opinion, you have another opinion, and then, where do we go from here? What is the unity of the Spirit? Where is the Lord and where is the Spirit in a matter? We tend to hold to 'I am a good soldier for Jesus Christ and I am going to drive this point home'. That is not what we need.

DH So, "the unity of the faith" (Eph 4: 13) goes along with "the unity of the Spirit".

WSC Yes it does. "There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith", Eph 4: 3-4.

KAK Lydia says, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord" (Acts 16: 15), that is the starting point; and the next step is "come into my house and abide there". The invitation is for Paul and his ministry and everything he stood for to be taken into that household. Faithfulness is first to the Lord, and then the next step is to bring Paul's ministry into the household circumstance.

WSC When Paul and Silas were let out of that prison after the jailor's household had been blessed, where did they go? Back to Lydia's house; it was a sanctuary for them. That is a wonderful thing to think of, as we have often traced Paul's travels; that is really the first entrance of the gospel into Europe and into the western world.

KAK In the believer's household, the evidence of faithfulness to the Lord is the acceptance of the totality of Paul's ministry?

WSC Exactly, we cannot emphasise that enough. We have the scriptures. If they are made to look old, if Paul does not speak about things in a current style, that does not make it wrong. Scripture is the truth. This is what you go by.

DH Is it noticeable in that way that Paul sent Timothy into Corinth, "who shall put you in mind of my ways as they are in Christ, according as I teach everywhere in every assembly", 1 Cor 4: 17.

WSC Timothy was to do that. The whole thought of service was that Timothy was commissioned by the apostle to do certain things and to say certain things. When a young person is working with older persons, he should be respectful, but he should not say, 'I cannot say anything because persons here are older than me'. Timothy was not to do that; he was to show himself approved, 1 Tim 2: 15.

DH In the Acts Paul says, "these hands have ministered to my wants, and to those who were with me", Acts 20: 34. Helping older brethren get into the meeting would be Paul's ways as they are in Christ, showing affection to older brethren.

JRB I have been thinking of this matter of faithfulness. This is the principle on which things have been handed down to me. Naboth appreciated that his vineyard had come down to him; he had not had to enter into that conflict himself; but he became a martyr because of holding it in faithfulness, 1 Kings 20: 3, 13. I was thinking of the principle by which things have come down to us and the principle by which things are to be continued: "these entrust to faithful men", 2 Tim 2: 2. Am I numbered among them? Or, when issues come up, do I just let things slide by? Am I faithful?

WSC Very good; I think that is a very good help. There are new households which will be set up - will they be faithful? Will they carry on the torch? Will they carry on the testimony of the Lord? The Lord will have His testimony, whether we are there or not, and that is an impressive thing to consider, but what about me: do I want my household to be a bulwark in the local assembly? A house that is devoted to the saints for service? A house that is committed to praying for what is needed in my locality? Do I want that? Do I want the Lord's approbation in that? Or am I going to hear Him say, 'You are not a faithful servant'? I do not think we understand enough the Lord's feelings and what it might be to have Him disappointed in you'. When we stand at the judgment seat and we look back, with Him, we will stand alongside the Lord then, and He will show us all the way back, and He will say, 'This was your house, and that was not my mind, it was not what I wanted'. I think in a way that will be a wonderful time because at that moment we will see everything the way He wanted it. We will understand fully about that time that I spoke roughly to that brother or sister, and the way that I thought about that person, the way I handled certain matters, and the way I guided my household. What about all the time I spent on entertainment? - it was not a big deal to do that. Is that the way the Lord wants you to conduct your house? I appreciate you bringing us back to that because that is what faithfulness is. Faithfulness involves the approbation of the Lord Jesus. What a moment that will be to be with Him and to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant", Matt 25: 23 AV. 'You did well on this, you did well on that'; that is what He may say.

JRB I remember Mr John W Devenish snr speaking in Vancouver about the judgment seat of Christ, looking back with Him on all the way; he said, who would have it otherwise? We welcome that! To have His judgment about everything that has entered into our history. I look forward to it.

WSC The judgment seat of Christ is not the great white throne. The great white throne is the judgment of the unsaved, but I think the judgement seat of Christ is a wonderful thing to contemplate.

RG We will be in bodies of glory.

WSC Yes, we will.

KDD As to Lydia, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there"; that is the committal and helping of one another. You do not leave, you abide there!

WSC That is good. We want Paul to abide in our house, we want him to stay there and that can be so today; Paul can be invited into our house to stay.

Calgary

2nd July 2011

Key to initials:

J R Bellamy, Vancouver; N S Brien, Calgary; J Buchan, Calgary; W S Chellberg, Wheaton; A P Devenish, Edmonton; K D Drever, Calgary; S W Drever, Calgary; Steve W Drever, Calgary; G W Freeman, Calgary; H J Glass, Toronto; R Gray, Calgary; G Henry, Glasgow; D A Hibbert, Calgary; 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; A G Mair, Cullen; P D Soukoreff, Vancouver; G D Rosenberry, Edmonton; C W Ware, Calgary

THE SOLES OF THE FEET

John C Gray

Ezekiel 43: 1-7 (forever)

Exodus 3: 1 - 6, 13, 14

2 Samuel 15: 30

We are privileged to enjoy, beloved brethren, the fact that God has come to dwell; as He speaks of it, “the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet”. What a thing that is to think of the greatness and glory of God, as we have it in Exodus 3, and yet He has come into a position where He is near to us, where we know that He has come in the Person of Jesus. The soles of the feet, naturally, to us, are very sensitive. You take your shoes off, and if you have to cross some rough road or rough pebbles or wherever it is, we all know that it is quite a sensitive matter. There is an immediate reaction from the soles of the feet. And here is God speaking about Himself; He says, “Son of man, this is the place of my throne,” firstly, “and the place of the soles of my feet”. There are wonderful types of Jesus in this reference here. The brethren who are older know it well. First we get “the glory of Jehovah came into the house by the way of the gate whose front was toward the east”, that is, it is the rising of the sun. It is the glory of Christ coming in in all His power. It is like what is referred to in Psalm 19 as to the greatness of the One who has a circuit, commencing at the beginning of it and going round to the end of it. What a wonderful thing that God has made Himself known in Christ; made Himself known in love and in grace. That is the sensitive character of the appearance of God in Jesus, in the One who is His beloved Son. We were speaking in the reading about God’s appearance to others in various ways and by various names, but in Christianity our great favour, beloved brethren, is that He has made Himself known in Son, “in the person of the Son” (Heb 1: 2), in Jesus, and that is a wonderful matter. “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”, John 1: 14. That is, He was there and known as a perfect Man, a sinless Man, but the Person that was there was none other than God Himself. That is the triumph and beauty of Christianity, that God Himself in the person of Jesus

has descended and come into a place where He can speak of the soles of His feet. God is sensitive as He comes to dwell amongst His people. And we need to be sensitive; we need to be alert; and, as we have in Exodus, we need to be holy.

Ezekiel speaks of a future day. The greatness and the glory of the One who came in “by the way of the gate whose front was toward the east” shows the way in which God has come to us, and it is not only that He comes in in His might and power as the Son of righteousness, as He will do in the day to come, but He is coming in in all His life and light. The coming in from the east also brings in hope for man. That is maybe basic to the glad tidings, but it is basic to our lives all the time, beloved brethren. Do you never get down in your spirit? Do you never feel that sometimes things are overwhelming, things that have to be faced are a bit difficult? Do you look to the One whose glory comes in by the way of the east? It is the divine intention that we should keep our eyes upwards, keep our eyes in relation to the Man in the glory.

“The Spirit lifted me up”. This is a great book. I hope the young people will read Ezekiel sometimes. They may think it is a bit mysterious, but you will find frequent references to the Son of man, showing that God is towards us in relation to Christ on our side. Christ will reign; He will be universally known as the Son of man, of course; but here is a man being addressed, “Son of man”, Ezekiel, a man who was faithful, a man who went out carrying a captive’s baggage (chap 12: 7), one who felt the captivity, one who felt the fact that there had been public breakdown in Israel - and in our day there has been public breakdown - and he is moving in relation to the Spirit of God: the Spirit of God lifted him up. It is a wonderful matter. You read chapters 10 and 11, dear young people, and you will find that this man is identified. God showed him the glory of God which not only rose up in the house but it leaves the house in chapter 11; it goes away up into the mountain. Follow these things up, dear young people, and you will find that there is great blessing in it. But then you find that the glory of Jehovah fills the house. He is filling the house with His glory, filling the house with the glory of God. Does He feel that? Of course, He feels it! A Man is established there in

heaven, indeed, a Man who has the right to go up above all the heavens, that is, to be reinstated in the place where He was before He left heaven. What a momentous thing that is!

Then there is the speaking, and we have the speaking today, speaking out of the house, the greatness of what the Spirit of God would give us. These things are all suggestive. They bring in the prophetic character of what the Old Testament is to us at the present day. "And I heard one speaking unto me out of the house; and a man was standing by me". How great it is to have divine support as we are in the realm of what is superlative, what is excellent, what is heavenly, and above what we are ordinarily accustomed to down here. Then "this is the place of my throne". Now that is another type of Christ, the One whose title it is to be the King, the One whose title it is to be royal. On the throne means He is royal. "This is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel". God has come to dwell and He will dwell eternally. He will be with us in nearness, but He will be with us in Christ as Man. How wonderful it is to realise that God is with us in all the sensitiveness that marks who He is! He has come near to us in a Man that we might know Him thus, but He has come near to us like this so that we might understand that it is so sensitive. We are in a vessel, beloved brethren, the assembly, that exceeds all that preceded in relation to God's thoughts. What it says about Christ and the assembly is: "and gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all", Eph 1: 22, 23. How sensitive that is, to realise that our association with Christ involves our association with God. It is a sensitive matter, that God has come so near to us that He speaks about "the soles of my feet". Now we often refer to the Song of Songs. Some brothers have given a word on Lord's day morning, as to the greatness of the Bridegroom, the Beloved, from the crown of His head to the soles of His feet "he is altogether lovely" (Song of Songs 5: 16), but "the soles of my feet" brings in the total sensitiveness that God has in mind for us as being near us because it is His dwelling. That is the point of it. "This is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever".

Well, Moses in Exodus had to learn this, and we have to learn in relation to the presence of God, because what we are naturally is rough. It is against God in some sense, naturally I am speaking of, but God has refined the believer to make him not only blessed on the basis of righteousness, but to know, through that, holiness. So Moses is told to take his sandals off; that is, he went barefoot. "Draw not nigh hither: loose thy sandals from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground". The presence of God requires it, beloved brethren. The presence of God requires that we should not be entrammelled. Now in speaking of this setting of the Scriptures in relation to the sandals, it requires that we should not be entrammelled by what is natural and ordinary, never mind what is fleshly. These things are to be discarded. I am not speaking literally; I am speaking morally and metaphorically. We have to understand that the presence of God as gathering together to meet one another in the assembly in our gatherings is a sensitive matter, and we come to find that the presence of God demands that the natural be set aside. That is what Moses had to learn.

So he comes and he sees this thorn-bush. The young people would understand that, if a thorn-bush were set fire to, it would blaze up and in five minutes it would be gone, and all you would see would be dust and ashes; but not so in this example. Here is God intending to come and dwell amongst us - how wonderful that is - in conditions that require that the sandals come off our feet, "for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground", the presence of God.

Now, it is not just that we are speaking of God the Father who has never left the position of Deity, not just that we are speaking of Christ in all His beauty as Man, His position as Head of the assembly, His position in glory and all that He is in beauty and attractiveness, and what He is to us as our Saviour and our Friend and our Shepherd; but we are speaking also of the Holy Spirit. We are speaking of One who is here today amongst us, One who is taking charge of things, in some sense, in the area in which we operate in the wilderness, and He is very sensitive; and it requires that we take the sandals from off our feet, leave what is natural. It is not a place for what is ordinary; it is a place for making way for the

Spirit of God, for the dwelling of God because God is coming in to dwell: that is, coming into the midst of the thorn-bush which is not consumed. What a great thing that was! “And Moses said, Let me now turn aside and see this great sight, why the thorn-bush is not burnt. And Jehovah saw that he turned aside...” and He called him, “Moses, Moses!” When a person has his name called twice, God intends something special to be announced as, for example, Samuel. He is just a boy and he served in the temple; he opened the doors of the temple. It was a difficult time because things were failing in Israel. The whole regime of the judges had descended in blackness and darkness upon the people and even the priesthood was being indolent and lazy, and it was a very sad time, but God was speaking in His own way and He spoke to a boy and He spoke in such a way that he showed that He was going to transform things by bringing in His own man, His own king, David. That is what He foretold through the prophet. So here was this boy, and he had his name called twice, “Samuel, Samuel!”, 1 Sam 3: 10.

And so Moses had his name called, because there is a declaration of a relationship, a name of relationship from God that was to transform the people who were labouring under the bondage of Egypt, the burden of sin. He was going to transform them and bring them out. He gets this wonderful revelation: “the thorn-bush burned with fire, and the thorn-bush was not being consumed”. Wonderful matter that God has come amongst us and we have not been consumed! In Malachi you get, “For I Jehovah change not, and ye, sons of Jacob, are not consumed”, chap 3: 6. God has come in Christ to be near to us, but to be near to us in a very sensitive way, in a way that would call out the rejection of what is merely mundane and ordinary, and bring us into an elevated level of what is different, by the Spirit of God. So we get the revelation of the name of God in His glory. Moses says, 'What shall I say unto them as to thy name?'. “And God said to Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I AM hath sent me unto you”, Exod 3: 14. That was the Name. “I AM THAT I AM” is an expression of God Himself in His eternal existence, His continuing existence. That is a thing that we find difficult to follow and take in in our human, finite minds, but it is a fact, beloved brethren. The continual and eternal existence of a

Being, a beloved Being, that wishes to be near to us demands that we are on holy ground. What a revelation it was! And it is not just the name "I AM" - which the Lord Jesus, of course, alludes to in addressing the scribes and Pharisees. If you read John 8, you find that he says, "Before Abraham was, I am", v 58. There was the Creator Himself, there was God Himself in their presence, and they did not want Him. They rejected Him, cast Him out. But then "THAT I AM", expressing the substance of God without saying what it is. Moses was to tell the children of Israel: "I AM hath sent me unto you". It was translated, of course, as Jehovah, and that is the expression of "I AM", the great "I AM".

Well, it is a very sensitive matter, beloved brethren. That is what I am trying to stress, that "the place whereon thou standest is holy ground", and we need to see to that. Things become difficult. I know when you are working, and in business, and at the school, things become difficult because you are up against people that are unregenerate, that is that they are not believing on Jesus, indeed, the very opposite very often; and some can be quite violent, and some can be quite obnoxious. Some can be quite opposed to anything as to the name of Jesus or the name of God, but you confess the name of the Lord Jesus and you will find power and strength in it, dear young people. You will find that there is a way that can bring you through, and therefore you find that God is making Himself known in this sensitive way, and we need to maintain what is holy and just, even in the presence of what might be totally against us. There is a testimony in that.

Well, finally, just a touch as to David on the same grounds. In 2 Samuel, David was being cast out of Jerusalem because Absalom, the spirit of anti-Christ, was coming in, and here is David going up by the ascent of the Olives. He wept as he went up. Do we feel sufficiently, beloved brethren, the conditions that are around us in the religious area? There are dignitaries in the churches that are denying the manhood and deity of Christ. There are some dignitaries in the churches around us that are denying that Christ rose from the dead. There are persons in the churches who are allowing matters that the Scriptures specifically states should not be

done, and they are allowing them to be done. So much of what is in Christendom is crumbling because it has not made way for Christ or the Spirit of God and, beloved brethren, we need to maintain a way for Them. We maintain it in the spirit of humility, in the spirit in which David moves here, going out. He is not staying to battle with Absalom in the city. He is separating himself from it. Of course, some would say that he had to flee, but God was with him. It was God's intention that David was king; there was no doubt about that. And God could have come in for David in His power and overthrown Absalom, which He did eventually; but David is showing us, as a type of a believer, that he is feeling this position and he is separating from this obnoxious position of Absalom taking over. There are persons and dignitaries that only profess the name of Christ. We need to maintain the reality of being near to Him and feeling the position while Christ is cast out.

“But David went up by the ascent of the Olives”. Have you ever, dear young people, gone up by the ascent of the Olives? It was a resort that the Lord Jesus frequented. It was a place where He moved frequently. It was a place evidently where the Lord Jesus could resort to the presence of His Father in restfulness and peace and quietness, but it suggests to us an area where the Spirit of God can help us in times of problems and difficulties. Do we do that? Have you been up the ascent of the Olives? What a thing that is! When there is a problem to be solved, the solution is there. The Spirit of God will indicate it. Christ as Head comes in, and the power of the Spirit to show what should be done, but we need to feel, therefore, the movement in relation to the ascent of the Olives. It is a wonderful thing that the Lord Jesus moved in that area in dependence on His Father and found rest amidst all the conflict that was against Him from the religious element of the day, the scribes and the Pharisees. That was a real thing to Him because “He came to his own, and his own received him not”, John 1: 11. They did not want Him. Here He was in all His meekness and all His lowliness and all His perfection, going about healing, raising the dead. Think of the sensitiveness of that! That is the soles of the feet, God drawing near to us. He comes to Nain, and He finds a widow and her only son was carried out dead. The Lord Jesus felt that. It is the

soles of the feet of God Himself, coming in, coming in nearness and in compassion. He “touched the bier” and made the young man sit up, the power of life in Christ, Luke 7: 11-15. Then at the grave of Lazarus you find the same thing, John 11. The soles of the feet are there. How wonderful that is! The ascent of the Olives is a wonderful thing to lay hold of. The Lord Jesus did these things, but the Spirit of God would give us power in the testimony to move on the ascent of the Olives that we might understand the Spirit’s power to help us as not only seeing what the breakdown is, but going out of it and finding God. That is our resource. But the Lord Jesus shows the soles of the feet in John 11; Lazarus had died, and these two sisters, how they felt it! When the Lord comes to the sepulchre, He says, “Where have ye put him? They say to him, Lord, come and see”, v 34. The awfulness that the Lord saw in relation to the results of sin! “For the wages of sin is death”, Rom 6: 23. The Lord saw that. As a Man, He felt it. “Jesus wept”, it says, v 35. How He felt it! That is the soles of the feet coming to light, the place where God was coming to dwell in compassion with us, and there are many, many other examples.

Well, going up by the ascent of the Olives, David “wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot”. How touching that is! He feels the sensitiveness of it. He feels the need for the presence of God. Do you think David had not read about Moses? Do you think David had not read about the burning bush, had not heard about the holy ground that Moses stood on? Of course, he had. And here is David going up barefoot, up this ascent, “head covered, and he went barefoot”. Well, we feel the present position, beloved brethren. It is not to overwhelm us, but it is to make us feel sensitive, not only as to the way God has come in amongst us, but in the way in which we will approach God, in which we will return to God on holy ground and find that there is a way in which we can come out of the breakdown and find Christ by the Spirit, that He is outside the camp. “Therefore let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach”, Heb 13: 13. There was a time when Moses took the tent of meeting, after the idolatry amongst the people of Israel, and pitched it outside the camp, Exod 33: 7. That was to indicate, as Paul says in Hebrews, “Let us go forth to

him", go forth to Jesus, and this is what David is doing in type here. He is doing that in type as a believer, moving by the ascent of the Olives, going up barefoot, with his head covered, feeling the reproach of the position. As Mr Percy Lyon used to say, 'broken-hearted churchmen'. Beloved brethren, do we feel, what is around? We would be able to speak to people, and God would grant repentance and bring in what would be real and living. We would trust that that would be increasingly so. "And all the people that was with him, covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up." Well, that is the position of the testimony in the wilderness in which there is a suffering people but in which there is a people who are going to reign with Christ. The people who suffer with Christ will reign with Christ. We reign with Christ on Lord's day morning. As you come to break bread at the Lord's supper and remember Him, the Lord takes us forward and, by the power of the Spirit, we understand the manifestation of His presence. How real it can be and how exhilarating it can be as it takes us there apart from anything that is down here of a worldly character, of a character that is denoted by religious opposition to Christ in the time of His absence.

May we be encouraged, beloved brethren, that there is a need for sensitiveness on our part. If God has come in in Christ in all the feelings and compassions of a Man to dwell with us, there needs to be compassion and feeling on our side if we are to be near and dwell with Him. May He help us together for His Name's sake!

Peterhead

26th March 2011

A CLOTH WHOLLY OF BLUE

George A Coull

John 4: 1-30; 9: 11, 12, 25 (from “one thing”), 35-38

Numbers 4: 4-6

There is a great deal of detail in this chapter in Numbers which we can go over privately. I got an impression a week or two ago which has been with me since and the hymn we have sung confirms my thoughts -

Unique in Thy humanity
Eternally divine
(Hymn 199)

I have been thinking of how these Kohathites were instructed in the handling of the holy things. It says they put this covering on the ark which was the veil of separation, then the badgers' skins; and then they put on a “cloth wholly of blue”. It was remarked during the reading last Thursday that the ark was never to be seen, but when it came to the people of Beth-shemesh they recognised it, 1 Sam 6: 13. It had been in an area where the natural and human eye could not see it. It was there in the presence of God solely for His delight and satisfaction. The scripture says that when the camp moved the ark was to be covered with the two coverings, and then with “a cloth wholly of blue”. The beautiful fact is that it was for the eye of God, but now Christ in testimony was coming into view. In a sense few knew who Jesus was, but soon persons were coming to Him and that is why I read these other two scriptures. Persons began to recognise who He was and were able as it were to see this cloth wholly of blue. It really was for the eye of the Father. So you can understand on the mount of transfiguration, when comparisons were being made, the voice out of heaven saying, “*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight”, Matt 17: 5. There is the cloth wholly of blue shining in all its brilliance for the Father's heart.

And yet this woman in John 4 and the man in John 9 were beginning to see something of the cloth of blue. The woman was far,

far away from divine things. She had some knowledge of religion, and she would have some understanding of other kinds of men, but there was no satisfaction; but there comes a Man who is 'unique in thy humanity': there comes this Person, Jesus. He sat "just as He was" at the side of the well, and she says, "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself?". Comparisons are there, but gradually the Lord moves along and has certain things to say to her. You get the feeling that something is being developed all the time in the woman's affections. Conscience is eventually touched and her heart moved, and her eyes are opened. In a sense the mercy-seat was there in function, and she was there and saying, 'Well, it is all in Christ'. What a beautiful picture, what beauty to behold! Heaven itself was aglow in Luke 2: 11: "a Saviour has been born to you in David's city, who is Christ the Lord". Heaven was looking on and seeing "the holy thing" there, chap 1: 35. Here this woman is coming to a knowledge of the Man; eventually she has to say, "Come see a man". She had never seen a man like this before. I say these things, beloved brethren, because religion will not hold us. There are many things in this world which men try and become enveloped in; and I fear that some of our young brethren's eyes are becoming clouded because they may have lost sight of the beauty of Christ. Dear brethren, let us hold to the fact that this is a Man who has come from the presence of God Himself, freighted with divine blessings, and there is a cloth of blue there - nothing else but a cloth of blue -

'Tis not for human eye to see ...

The fact is the Lord was here in the person of a Man, unique indeed and 'eternally divine'. He was amongst men, and what these persons began to see was the cloth wholly of blue, the glory of Christ in all His humanity.

The man in John 9 came to the point where he says, "And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? And Jesus said to him, Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he. And he said, I believe Lord: and he did him homage". Wonderful! A person in line with heaven; a person who has a glimpse of Christ. It says of the

apostle Paul - Saul at that time - that “straightway in the synagogue he preached Jesus that *he* is the son of God” (Acts 9: 20); a Person out of heaven! He was “taken possession of by Christ Jesus”, Phil 3:12. It is a wonderful thing; it is a delightful thing to heaven to look down and see such a One moving here in all His simplicity, in all His obedience, in all His perfection; and then persons began to see this. This woman in John 4 eventually says, “Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?”. The man in John 9 is led perhaps a little further: “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”. A little further on in his apprehension perhaps; nevertheless it is still the same Person. Oh that our hearts may be filled with the glory of Christ; oh that our souls may be saturated with the beauty and glory of the Person of Jesus! There is no-one like Him.

May our hearts be encouraged in thinking of these things! Later on, in Numbers 4, there is the covering of these other utensils, the other things that were to be carried. They were covered over by a cloth of blue to begin with, and then there were other coverings on top of that. In thinking it over, you can see the blue coming through in the woman in John 4, an expression of something of heaven in her soul; the man in John 9, something of the blue coming through too. They were simply testifying to the power of divine love they had proved for themselves, really the witnesses in humility of sinners saved by grace expressing something of the joy of heaven and of the glory of the One who had effected it all. Let this formation mark our lives now.

These are wonderful things, dear brethren, and there is nothing to compare with them. May our hearts be encouraged to consider these things, so that God may have the glory for His Name's sake.

Aberdeen

4th October 2011

A LACE OF BLUE

James Alex Gardiner

Numbers 15: 37-41

Philemon 8-16

I am impressed by what our brother has said. It is very beautiful to see Christ and what is heavenly and spiritual manifest in the gospels. And then the saints have to be marked by the spirit of Christ. In Numbers 13 and 14 there is breakdown and unbelief; only two of the spies who had been up to the land were quite confident that the Lord could deliver their enemies into their hands. The other ten said they were as grasshoppers (chapter 13: 33). It has been said 'was Jehovah a grasshopper?', JND vol 24 p119. Chapter 16 is the intrusion of the Levites into the priesthood, seeking to be priests simply because they were Levites. We are surrounded by this rebellion, beloved, man taking up priestly office that he is not fitted for. But here in chapter 15 there is instruction. Instruction as to what is to happen when they go into the land. God has not changed his mind; He is going on with the truth. People may fall away but, whatever may happen, He knows that there is a generation that is going in.

So I read this here beginning from verse 37, "that they make them tassels" - the note says 'flower' - "on the corners of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they attach to the tassel of the corners a lace of blue; and it shall be unto you for a tassel." There is to be the manifestation amongst us, beloved, of what is heavenly and what is spiritual. It may be that we get ourselves into a corner; it is the corners of their garments here. We would have to say humbly that we are not always very spiritual, or manifest the spirit of Christ; we find ourselves in a corner. We are caught unawares perhaps, and there is a manifestation of something that we have to judge in ourselves. There should be some manifestation of the lace of blue, what is heavenly, what comports with the ark, what is truly of the Spirit and of Christ; because we are

to be marked with the spirit of Christ. It is very beautiful. We have been reading of the men of faith, all of them in some measure were marked by the spirit of Christ. How beautiful that is! It is said officially that the spirit of Christ was preaching in Noah, 1 Pet 3: 19. It is very wonderful, beloved, that what is heavenly and what is spiritual is manifested in these conditions in which we are, where what is natural is overcome by what is spiritual and kept in its place. It is an evidence - small it may be - but nonetheless, an evidence of what is heavenly; there is an evidence of Christ, a Man out of heaven. How beautiful and great that is!

Well, I read about Philemon because he is in a corner. Onesimus had run away; no doubt he had not run away empty-handed. He had made for Rome. He did not know anything about the counsel or purpose of God. In the ways of God he came in touch with Paul and became converted. How is this position to be reconciled? There is Onesimus, Paul and Philemon. He was a slave and had run away, although Paul would have liked to keep him. There is a wonderful evidence of the blue in the apostle's writing here in how he meets the situation. How would Onesimus have felt when he was going back there? Paul had it all worked out. He has all in order and assures Philemon about the genuineness of his love; how this corner with the tassel and lace of blue is manifest in Paul. It is to be manifested in Onesimus and it is to be manifested in Philemon; also in the sister Apphia who no doubt knew all that may have been missing after Onesimus went. Why she should be mentioned is a question, but she is mentioned in the epistle. So we need help (from our living Head that we sung of; wisdom is resident there in Him) in how to solve these problems. The solution comes in the manifestation of the spirit of Christ and the wisdom from Christ as the living Head. Look at the wisdom that shines in Paul as he meets the situation. He says, "having much boldness in Christ to enjoin thee what is fitting, for love's sake I rather exhort, being such a one as Paul the aged". Then he goes on to say he would like Philemon to "possess him fully forever; not any longer as a bondman, but above a bondman, a beloved brother, specially to me,

and how much rather to thee, both in the flesh" - he would still work for him, be linked "in the flesh" in that sense - but also "in the Lord". "If therefore thou holdest me to be a partner with thee, receive him as me." Note how he makes no differences: "receive him as me" - how beautiful this is. If Paul went to Philemon's it would be a great thing, a wonderful spread, everything set out and prepared for him. 'Well', he says, 'just do the same for Onesimus. He has come to know Christ as his Saviour, his sins are forgiven; he is changed. He is manifesting the lace of blue'.

Beloved, these are wonderful things, very powerful and substantial; and we need to see that we have this tassel and this lace of blue on the corner of our garments, so that when we are in corners there is a manifestation of the spirit of Christ. That is just it: nothing else is testimony, but *that* is testimony. If this is the case with us we will go right through into the inheritance. We will not be caught up in the rebellion of chapter 16. We will get the gain of the priestly service of Aaron and his rod, right through to the leadership of the Spirit. The teaching of the book is wonderful, but I just want to leave that impression with you and myself. It is a challenge to us. It is to me anyway, the matter of whether there is a lace of blue and a tassel on the corners of my garments. It is at the corner, and we get in a corner; the Lord would put us in corners. He makes sure we are put in corners so we can prove what is in ourselves and judge it, prove His grace, wisdom and delivering hand, to prove the fact that the spirit of Christ is what He supports and what overcomes. And this is a testimony to Him, a Man in glory.

That is all I have to say, beloved. I thought it was very beautiful what our brother said about the ark covered in blue. There is with us what relates to heaven in the lace of blue and the tassel.

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