

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 70

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RDP We have been thinking in these meetings about the matter of completion. What is in mind now is expressed in this last chapter. It has been referred to several times already: “until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ”. This is not looking at what will be true eternally - there will be no shortfall there - but at something relating to the time in which we are. We may find difficulty getting our mind around that, but I believe it to be the truth, and I believe it to be what God has before Him, and what the divine system involves that there will be this. Paul could say, writing on another subject, “For for me to live is Christ, and to die gain”, Phil 1: 21. What a thing that is; and I believe the divine end is that God would have Christ everything to us. In every way that we know Him, He would have Him enhanced in our view. In the divine system that God has for His pleasure, everything is Christ; wherever you look you will see Christ, and it is in view that we arrive in increasing measure at that, beloved brethren. We may get some help on these scriptures.

I read of the queen of Sheba because she seems to represent a person who had light but she is not content with light; and she takes this journey to see for herself and she said, “It was a true report that I heard”. We are thankful for the true report, and for all that has come to us, by way of ministry, and by way of scriptures. When you come to the highest level books in the Bible, books like Ephesians and Colossians and Philippians, you find that there is a point beyond which ministry cannot go; and in all of these writings you will find that Paul speaks about his prayers. It is as if he recognises that ministry can only go so far. The final opening up of the glory of things can only be known by persons who enter into it by the Spirit. The thought that we had earlier as to the Spirit of truth helps as to that. Paul at Ephesus says, “I bow my knees to the Father... that he may

give you", chap 3: 14, 16. First of all he asks, in the first of his two prayers in Ephesians, that the saints might have, "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him" (chap 1: 17); and in the second one he bows his knees that the saints may come into it. It is as if he would recognise that there was nothing more he could say; ministry could do no more; and it involved what was acting and effective by the Spirit, in the saints, to discover the fulness of "the breadth and length and depth and height", chap 3: 18. I do not think any ministry can explain that to you; I think that is something that is to be known by the Spirit. Now I think the queen of Sheba here represents a believer. She is someone who has light, and she moves in relation to Solomon. She moves to see his glory and we know the detail of what she finds, but she says, "the half was not told me". I think we need to see that the half is only told when you come and you see. She expounds upon what she sees in Solomon's palace. She saw, "Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, and the food of his table, and the deportment of his servants, and the order of service of his attendants". She says, "It was a true report that I heard". I think we should be thankful for the report. We should be thankful for what has come to us by way of report, but recognise that as we come to the fulness of things, it is going to involve more than ministry, it is going to involve more than report, it is going to involve our own experiences in relation to the Spirit of God, that the greatness of Christ may come into view.

We know the other two scriptures well. In Philippians it is not a question of doctrine, as we do not get much by way of doctrine in Philippians; it is the work of God, in a person, in expression. Paul is not writing as the apostle in this chapter; he is writing as a believer, he is writing about his own experiences, about his outlook; he is writing about his desires; and he speaks of his stretching out, "that I may gain Christ; and that I may be found in him". You get some impression of what Christ meant to Paul, beloved brethren, and we could look at that. Then in Ephesians there is this wonderful chapter as to the Lord Jesus ascended and His activity in relation to what was down here and the gifts given, "with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of

God, at the full-grown man". It does not say until we are all brought there; that would be objective: we know that we shall all come, finally, into the fulness of the purpose of God. We shall know that, but it is not here until we are brought to this; it is until we *arrive* at it, and this unique chapter brings that before the saints.

WSC The queen of Sheba had apparently some questions, it calls them enigmas, but then it later says she spoke to Solomon, "and she came to Solomon, and spoke to him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon explained to her all she spoke of". Does it involve that we are not exactly questioning? We are seeking Solomon, we are seeking the Lord.

RDP Yes, I think so. Enigmas are often used as a defence mechanism, and I think when she comes to Solomon that all fades away and she does not speak any more of the enigmas: she speaks of all that was in her heart. That is a wonderful thing, as coming to Christ. You do not need defence mechanisms, you do not need the guarded questions and the two part questions that we so often ask; you do not need that when you come to Christ. As she gets to him it all fades away, and she spoke to him of all that was in her heart.

DMW It would be like contemplation of what Solomon had and him being exalted. It is like Christ and what He has here. You have to go in for that, and therefore you can express your own heart by going in for it.

RDP I think that is right. We have questions, and sometimes enigmas, but I think when we come to Christ we find that all these things will fade away and our hearts are revealed to Him. The glory of Christ, seen here in type, is not exactly what we find as coming to Christ as the Saviour; this is coming to Christ in His glory. I have been struck by a thought that what has come out in the worst of man is met by the death of Christ, but what has come out in the best of man is met by the glory of Christ. The death of Christ meets the worst, and it is the glory of Christ that removes for me what is best in man which I suppose you see in that scripture in the beginning of Philippians. It is Christ in His glory that meets that.

WSC The scripture we had in the earlier meeting, “the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming” (John 16: 13), really connects with this.

RDP I believe so, because I do not think this is future: it is now. This is “the house that he had built, and the food of his table, and the deportment of his servants, and the order of service of his attendants”. This is the divine system in glory, and everything is operating and working, and Solomon’s glory permeates it all, and you come now to one in whom is everything that is for God. It says in Ephesians, “that he might fill all things”, and everything is in Christ, everything is there in Himself.

GMC I wonder if you could open that up a bit more? I am thinking of the end of Job. He could say, “I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee”, Job 42: 5. The result was that he abhorred himself. The queen of Sheba comes and sees Solomon’s wisdom, and she really becomes a worshipper later.

RDP I believe so. I just have this thought (I am not sure if it answers your question) but perhaps we can come to rely too much on ministry and on gift. Ministry is what leads to what is of Christ, but you may say the final step involves what is in yourself by the Spirit of God. Gift is an enrichment. Gift is marking out in some distinction the way for us, but it is not a final thing. We do not want to come to a point where we rely on gift for everything; we need to see that the final thing is what works within, and that involves the journey, from Romans to Ephesians. She takes the journey and she is ready for it. If the young people look on the map and see where she came from it was an amazing journey in those days. I think Sheba is somewhere in the north of an Ethiopian empire and you can look at the journey and what it must have been. She covered that long distance and the dangers involved in the travel of that day but she was ready to take the journey. I wonder if we are ready to take the journey or whether we will only rely upon the report, good as that is. She says, when she comes, “the half was not told me”.

RNH Matthew speaks about, “Ask” and, “Seek” and, “Knock”, Matt 7: 7. These are verbs that involve the arriving; it is activity, allowing the Spirit to have His place with us in relation to movement, as the queen of Sheba shows here.

RDP Yes, I believe so; she came with her train and camels and brought gifts. She was a very rich monarch at that time but it all recedes as she is affected by the glory of Solomon, as we would say, by the glory of Christ. It is very important that we become affected by the glory of Christ. There are two lessons that the Lord gives in the New Testament which were given to Israel, that is, the sign of Jonas, and the glory of Solomon. He speaks about those two things: “more than Solomon is here” (Luke 11: 31), and, “more than Jonas is here”, Luke 11: 31, 32. Jonas speaks about the Lord going into death and Solomon refers to the Lord in glory. Those two lessons are left in Scripture, and Solomon shows that we need this experience of coming to Christ in glory.

WMcK What do you think about the spiritual things she says in verse 9, “Blessed be Jehovah thy God, who delighted in thee”? It is remarkable that she got that shaft of light into her mind as she looked at all this; it leads her to attribute it all to God, and typically His affection for Christ His Son?

RDP Yes, I am glad you refer to that because we sometimes sing,
That glory all belongs to God
(Hymn 88).

She seems to recognise that: “Blessed be Jehovah thy God, who delighted in thee”. She gets some impression not only of Solomon’s glory, but she gets the impressions of God who delighted in him.

WMcK And then whatever her own regime may have been, she goes on to say, “Because Jehovah loves Israel for ever, therefore did he make thee king”. We could say that, because God loves the assembly, He has given us Christ as Head.

RDP Yes, what wonderful, rich thoughts these are that come out. It is almost as if she had to go to find this out; she had to see, and she had to be there: “the half was not told me”, she says, “in wisdom and prosperity thou exceedest the report that I heard. Happy are thy

men! happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee, who hear thy wisdom!”. We are only looking at an illustration but it gives some idea of the believer being prepared to take the journey that we have been speaking about and moving from a moribund state, a static state even of Christian belief, into the fulness of divine thoughts and into this area of the glory of Christ. We all appreciate the work of Christ as our Saviour; we appreciate the blessedness of what He has done, we appreciate the blessedness of where He is, but beloved brethren let us not stop, let us go on until we become opened up in our hearts and in our lives to the greatness of the glory of Christ, because that is what the Spirit has in mind at the present time.

WSC In the end, Solomon gave her everything she asked, and then he gave her of his bounty besides that.

RDP Yes, go on; what do you see in that?

WSC I was just thinking how as we come into this appreciation of Christ we even get more.

RDP Yes, that is good. So are we ready to take the journey, beloved brethren? Is our Christianity to just be a static affair? If it is, sadly we become vulnerable to the enemy. We become vulnerable to the enemy if we settle like Jacob did on his way back. He was coming back after getting that touch of recovery, coming back to Bethel, and yet inexplicably he stops at a place called Succoth, and he built himself a house there, Gen 33: 17. He stops short of the full thoughts of God and he builds a house there, and the next thing you know, a whole disaster starts to open up, as to his family, as to his daughter: the brethren can read it. You know it has been said that if we become contented with having started right and not exercised about making further advancement in the truth, we may become ‘spiritually petrified’, JBS vol 11 p291. Then danger is lurking as you see in those epistles I quoted, danger that could see us carried away, so far as the testimony is concerned.

MN The sign of that would be Laodicea, lukewarm: it says, “grown rich, and have need of nothing” (Rev 3: 17); but, whatever we have, the queen of Sheba did not consider her wealth, she moved in

accordance to what you are saying, moved into a sphere of glory where Solomon was. That is how we should be moving; would that be it?

RDP Yes, I think so, and moving is the word. If you are in a boat, you cannot steer it unless the boat is moving, it just drifts all over the place wherever the wind and tide go. As soon as you begin to move it has steerage way; you can steer a course. So it is with the believer and his life. If we become static and moribund in our Christian life and settle down into a kind of 'comfort zone' we shall find that we will not be able to steer and we will be subject to the tides and the drifts and the winds of the day. It is like what Paul says in Ephesians, "tossed and carried about by every wind of *that* teaching".

NJP We were reminded recently in Toronto how we are to have a parapet, Deut 22: 8. There is a balustrade later on in verse 12, which refers to the Spirit's work to support us in the ascent to Jehovah.

RDP That is good. I certainly think it is something to be known, something to be proved, what the blessedness of the divine presence is. This is another world; what Christ has at the present time, and what we will have soon in fullness, and there is another wisdom, which has nothing to do with the wisdom of men, and these things are open and available to us in the Spirit, "the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ".

We might now turn to Philipians which is perhaps more familiar to the brethren. This is not so much a doctrinal book; it speaks about the work of God in believers, and particularly in Paul here, the writer. Paul could not write to Corinth in relation to the work that was in them, but he had to write objectively. He had to write to them as they were in Christ. There was so little he could say as to God's work in manifestation amongst them that he had to address them as they were in purpose, but when you come to the second epistle to Corinthians, in some measure he is able to address them according to the work of God in them. Paul the believer is setting out his exercises here, setting out where he had come from. Saul of Tarsus represented the best that man naturally could be, and he speaks of

the way that all of it was eclipsed by the glory of Christ, the fulness of Christ. What a thing it would be, beloved brethren, if that was so with any one of us. His exercise here, "I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus", sets out Paul the believer and his exercises, and you wonder whether you have begun when you read the exercises of Paul in this chapter.

AM Can you say something about the expression, "that I may gain Christ"?

RDP What do you think it means, please?

AM Well in a sense every believer has gained Christ, but is this the way Paul would count that whatever else he had lost he had gained Christ? There was nothing else that compared with that.

RDP Yes, I think that is good; you mean that whatever it was, and in whichever way it was, he was gaining Christ; he was gaining an appreciation of Him. He had Christ; in the purpose of God he had Him, but to gain Him in experience and to gain fresh appreciations of Him was his object in life; and everything that he was and everything that he did was directed in that way and he counted everything else as loss. This was a man of ability; this was a man who in this world would have been a star, he would have been on the fast track; he was one going to the top of the organisation very quickly, he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, he was educated in the languages, but all of it he says, "I counted, on account of Christ, loss", and then he says, "I count also all things to be loss". That was today; it was a fresh counting; and he says, "that I may gain Christ". Beloved brethren, what a thing it is if Christ were growing in us, we were gaining Christ, little by little, part by part, step by step, experience by experience; if we were gaining Christ, and this displaced something else in me. If we are to gain Christ, something else must go.

RBH Does that correspond with the queen of Sheba, "there was no more spirit in her"?

RDP I think that is right; please go on.

RBH She gets to the point where she had brought her enigmas, where she came to see, but she had these doubts. The doubts were

all gone now, so in the sense that everything else fades and becomes unimportant. It is so for everything in the Spirit: there is no more need to question the glory that cannot be surpassed.

RDP Yes, there is no more need or desire to do so; she became wholly absorbed with the glory of Solomon. There was no question of comparing what she had known with that; there was no comparison because he had exceeded the report and in everything, it was the fulness of what she could ever know.

HJG The first epistle to the Corinthians speaks of the Lord's commandment (chap 14: 37); but in the second epistle we get, "For whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him the amen", chap 1: 20. There is liberty there; he is bringing before them the need to find everything in Christ. It is quite interesting that you get that thought of the promises in Corinthians.

RDP Yes. In the first epistle he has to address them on the ground of purpose, it is abstract, what he has to say about them: "ye come short in no gift" (1 Cor 1: 7), for instance; but in the second epistle things had begun to work with them and there was some evidence of the work of God there, and it is generously addressed.

JAO Is it important that Paul says here, "seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus"? It is very important that that is where things work out from. The Lord says about Paul that, "this man is an elect vessel to me", Acts 9: 15. The Lord took up Paul but Paul is not settling for that; he is wanting to get possession. He says, "if also I may get possession of it". It is a very wonderful thing, is it not?

RDP That is good. So you mean, and I think you are right, that, "I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus", was a fact, established in the soul: "I have been taken possession of". You can always go back to that, you can always rest in the fulness of that, but then in his exercises he says, "but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it". In other words, he is a bit on the line that we are speaking of that, although it was true of him - it would be eternally true that he was Christ's possession - he was looking to take things

up in the power of the Spirit, even in this condition in which we are; and God has provided the means that that can be so.

JAO There is the reality too of what it is to be taken possession of by Christ. If the Lord gets a hold of us in that way, we want to get possession of the best He has in mind for us.

RDP Yes, that is very good and helpful and I appreciate it. It is a great thing if we have the solid foundation of that in our souls, that we are His. We have been taken possession of, and He is never going to let go.

KAK I am just wondering if we get help by seeing how others move to completion. The Lord had before Him to go out of this world, and you can see that in Stephen, and perhaps Paul saw that as Stephen died. I was just thinking of going out of this world as in the sense of completion.

RDP Yes. Certainly Paul expresses it at the end of his life when he speaks about what had entered into it. He says, "For I am already being poured out, and the time of my release is come. I have combated the good combat, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith", 2 Tim 4: 6, 7. I think what you say is good. There is something very stable and helpful and blessed about that; the fulfilment of a Christian life; the testimony of God being expressed here in this.

WMcK He says, "to know him, and the power of his resurrection". That is not the power of the wilderness; that is power in relation to another world.

RDP That is right; go on please.

WMcK Well, I think the apostle had that before him. He wanted the actuality as verse 11 shows, as we do, but in the meantime this is the power that we want to know, the power that can take Christ out of death, and us with Him, and set us before God in righteousness, and holiness, and clothed with glory. What an experience to know such power as that while we are still here.

RDP I am sure you are right; so he says, "if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead". He could know that now; it is

not the end of his life. That was now, that he might know it, the power that worked in the Christ, the exceeding greatness of His power that worked in the Christ in raising Him from among the dead. That power might be known by the saints at the present time. It is a very great concept. These are very great things that we are speaking about, and what Paul is concerned with is that he might know that for himself. Not only that he would know it in finality at the end of his life, as we get at the end of the chapter, but that he might know it now in his experience and that he might prove what there was in resurrection.

WMcK Exactly, so that, living in a realm which is based on resurrection and is the result of Christ being brought out of death by the surpassing greatness of God's power, we are set up in relation to an eternal system of glory, of which Christ is the centre and of which God is the great ultimate object of worship.

RDP Well, that is very good. I hope these things reach into our hearts a bit. You are reaching a point where ministry cannot go further. It really involves your own experience by the Spirit, when things will start to proceed. Ministry cannot take you to the final end of your Christian experience, it can only help you along the way, but what is involved in the finality of it is the power known of the Holy Spirit of God.

WMcK Exactly; so that the real result of this is what the apostle says to the Corinthians, "I know a man in Christ", 2 Cor 12: 2. That is a wonderful thing to reach at the present time, and it involves "to know him and the power of his resurrection", and to know the heavenly new creation realm in which the purpose of God is fully established.

RDP I believe so. Towards the end of his life Paul says to Timothy, "I know whom I have believed", 2 Tim 1: 12. Now all of us in this room, in greater or lesser measure, can say we know that. We do not only know it because it is written in scripture; we know the One we have believed. These things we are speaking of here are to be real in knowledge, in relation to Christ in glory, not just as ministry, as doctrine, as teaching, but experienced in the power of the Spirit.

WMcK Exactly; so Mr Darby says, ‘That is where the Spirit of God sets a Christian. It is the place of every believer. They may have great exercises of heart before getting there; but where he sets them is not in the flesh but in Christ’, JND Collected Writings, vol 16 p365. Do we believe that, do we experience what that means? It is full spiritual maturity, full growth in the heavenly realm, the new creation sphere.

RDP Yes, I believe so, so that a man like John on Patmos could say, “I became in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”, Rev 1: 10. He entered a realm of things that was far outside his circumstances which was as real to him as anything around. He entered a realm of things that was reality to him, where he lived, where his life was, where his commonwealth was, that was above the suffering and the problems and difficulties and he enters into a sphere of privilege and, as we know, it develops into what is shown to him in the Revelation.

WMcK So we have a lovely touch here, “*our* commonwealth has its existence in the heavens”. You are not there alone; I am not there alone. All these beloved brethren are there: “*our* commonwealth has its existence in the heavens”. Well, we know there are at least three, and this extends to the full extent of the created realm, only it is new creation.

RDP Yes, and as the note to Philippians 3: 20 says, “Commonwealth’ does not satisfy ... It is ‘associations of life’”. Our ‘associations of life’ are in the heavens; it is the divine system which is centred upon Christ, not marked by man’s wisdom but by God’s wisdom, where sin-soiled feet never tread. It belongs to that glorious sphere, and he says that is where we live; that is where we belong that is where our citizenship is.

WMcK That is where we are as in Christ; and we are like Christ; we have His light, we have His Spirit. We are there before God fully, according to His purpose, and nothing could exhilarate us more in view of the service we have before us tomorrow, than enjoying this tonight to some extent.

RDP As you say, it is not future; it is now. That is what is proposed here; we are entering into the realm of things in this, and in

Ephesians the human mind will start to falter and say these things cannot be done, these things are not possible, but we are entering into the area of things where it says, “with God all things are possible”, Matt 19: 26.

KAO Paul could provide some help for us in verse 13, where he begins by saying, “but one thing”. Is that essential? Then he goes on to speak about “forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue” I wonder if we need help - I need help, I would say - about that matter, “one thing”.

RDP What do you think that “one thing” is?

KAO I link it in my mind with the Christ.

RDP Well I am sure that is right. His eyes are on the goal and “for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus”. I do not think the goal here is something future only: I think it is something that is set before us now. These things can be known now at the present time, but I like the idea of the “one thing”. It is as if other things would crowd in upon this; worries and concerns and exercises and problems and health and all these things, but he says, “one thing - forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue”.

JAO I was thinking of Psalm 27, where there is difficulty. It speaks about “When evil-doers, mine adversaries and mine enemies, came upon me” (v 2), and “If a host encamp against me” (v 3); but then in verse 4 it says, “One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah”.

RDP Yes; that is good. There is one thing that Mary desired: to sit at the feet of Jesus. Her sister criticised her but she was sitting at the feet of Jesus, that was one thing; she concentrated on that. Nothing that was said and nothing that was suggested could deter her from it. She was fixed in that determination in relation to Him.

MN Is the “one thing” something simple? The youngest could hold on to one thing. That would carry forward into what is in a man of experience, those whom we can look up to. Paul says, “fix your eyes on those walking thus”. Would it help us with experience when

we see those persons walking in relation to their commonwealth in the heavens, and that would help us practically?

RDP I think that is right. To hold to one thing is not as simple as you think, I find. To concentrate on one thing and hold to it is something, because so many other things crowd in. How many times do you set yourself to do a job, and you never actually do it because you have diverted on to something else than the “one thing”. You think of the concentration that is in relation to this, concentration in relation to Christ. Paul has got one desire, and that is Christ, and being helped by the Holy Spirit in relation to that seems to be a very great blessing.

MN We have models we can follow in other brethren too, in regard to that; would that be part of it?

RDP It speaks of that; it speaks of the model here, “fix your eyes on those walking thus as you have us for a model”. Yes, that is good.

Perhaps we should just look at Ephesians before we finish. How magnificent. It is almost as if he turned to something else in the previous chapter and now he comes back, “I Paul, prisoner of the Christ Jesus for you nations” (Eph 3: 1), and then that chapter is a parenthesis, and then he comes back, and says, “I, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you therefore to walk worthy of the calling wherewith you have been called”, Eph 4: 1. And then he goes into this wonderful description of the ascent and descent of Christ. “Having ascended up on high, he has led captivity captive”. Think of the absolute supremacy of Christ: “has given gifts to men” - the gifts are given from an ascended Christ who has led captivity captive. There is no enemy left, He has conquered them all and from such a One and such a place He has given gifts to men. It describes the gifts later. He only gives the gifts once, it seems. The gifts were given; the distribution of the gifts according to 1 Corinthians 12: 28-31 relate to the service of the Spirit, and it is quite a consideration to look at that. He gave them once from an ascended position, a glorious position; He has enriched and endowed the assembly with the gifts; and then it gives the detail as to them, “with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man”,

and you say, 'How can this be?', and yet this is the divine will. This is the purpose of God, here it is set out, that this will be so, and I think it is very affecting, beloved brethren, “until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ”.

LB There are two viewpoints that would help the believer to look. It says, “He that descended is the same who has also ascended”, and I think those two views should be before us.

RDP Well, I am sure that is right. He descended in the infinite depths of His love to meet every obstacle, to meet every enemy, to remove everything that stood in the way of the full opening out of the purpose of God, I think, and He ascended and “he has led captivity captive”. It is an absolutely supreme position, but then it repeats it, “He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things”. Now, He will fill all things in a day to come and it will be seen, but at the present time He is filling the heart of the believer. The filling at the present time is in the assembly; that is where the filling is, and in a day to come it will be seen, it will be manifest that He fills all things. He ascended up on the one hand and “has led captivity captive”; that is glorious, but the second time it refers to His ascent it is “that he might fill all things”. Think of the One who is so supreme, in such a position, “that he might fill all things”; and then there is His giving and the gifts are given: “some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints”. Think of all the wealth of heaven and all the love of the Saviour’s heart, that He can give such endowment, we may say, upon the assembly.

AM Do the gifts express Himself?

RDP Yes; go on please.

AM It is a wonderful thing that He gives what He expresses Himself, in order that what is of Himself should be formed in the assembly.

RDP Right, that is good, and so the gift must contain some impression, some touch, some special touch of Christ. That is the idea of gift, and there is a certain mystery as to it, and it is all under

the hand of the Spirit, I suppose, whatever the particular time in the dispensation, whatever the day in which we are. There were certain things given in the beginning, for instance, in view of the inauguration. We are not in those days now, but the distributions of the Spirit go on. I suppose we could say that all will be needed at any time in the dispensation is met by this wondrous gift of Christ.

WSC In chapter 2 it says, “that he might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus”, v 7. That is what He is aiming at.

RDP Yes, go on.

WSC Well, I think that would motivate us in our love and affection for Him and in our walk here. Everything should have that in view.

RDP I think so. It is a wondrous thing how the love of God permeates these very great scriptures. His kindness towards us and His love is manifest there, and I think we find it difficult to speak about this because this is something that is envisaged now. I think we find difficulty, beloved brethren, or I do, in grasping “the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ” and the “unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God ... in order that we may be no longer babes”. The winds that come in, the “wind of *that* teaching which is in the sleight of men, in unprincipled cunning”, these winds are blowing about today. Beloved brethren, and especially beloved young brethren, there are elements operating in unprincipled cunning which are ready to carry you away and carry me away; and here you have the remedy in persons who are no longer babes, who cannot be tossed and carried about by this, because now it is not only a question of what they have read, or what they have heard, or what they have been told. It is a question of what they know, and they have known it: “we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God”, John 6: 69.

WKC So we would be encouraged to pursue. “I pursue”, it says in that scripture we have just had. Do you think that would keep us from being tossed and carried about?

RDP Yes, I think that is right. You mean, purposeful. I believe that is important and not to be distracted from it.

WKC When Peter took His eye off the Lord he began to sink, Matt 14: 30.

RDP Yes, when he went out in the boat, but remember he did walk on the water. It was only when he took his eye off the Lord that he began to sink. You might say that he did not walk far, but he did walk, and that was something to be encouraged in.

PSA Yesterday you touched on the aspect of solid food belonging to “full-grown men”: is that important for us in relation to the current time to be feeding, in relation to the solid food?

RDP I think so; what would the solid food be?

PSA It has to be what you have referred to as Christ in glory, does it not? The glory of Christ.

RDP It is certainly Christ; I think that is the solid food for men. The babes need milk, they need that which is easily digested, and sometimes we find that we speak about spiritual things and it is easy to just switch off. It is not so easy for us to take in as natural men, but full-grown men are those who partake of solid food.

LPC Would you say that the pursuing of this prize would involve sacrifice?

RDP Yes.

LPC You think of the queen of Sheba, going to Solomon; she had a difficult journey but she came, “with a very great train, with camels that bore spices”; that would have been a sacrifice on her part, a difficult journey, the distance. So the pursuit is something a believer would go over and beyond to attain that prize. As Paul says, it was not a prize he has gained himself; he is still in the process of gaining this prize.

RDP I think that is right and the Christian way will involve sacrifice. It is a sacrificial way. . We need to see that these things do not come without a cost but they do not come without a reward either.

DMW The view here in Ephesians 4 is that we are moving together, whereas in Philippians the apostle puts an individual pronoun, “I”, primarily. The work of God in each one goes on to our commonwealth, but then we have a collective, “we”. That may have

assembly circumstances in mind. There is another world in view with a basis of resurrection, that being the power to reach it, but here we are all moving together. It is collective.

RDP Yes, I think so, “until we all arrive at the unity of the faith”. The gifts are given to this end, with a view to, “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God”, moving together; this is not individual: it is the saints as together. It is the assembly really; it is the greatness of that thought. We should perhaps just leave it there, and think about this. These things are not impossible, beloved brethren. They are not beyond us; they are here in the Scripture and the power is available from God.

Wheaton

26th November 2011

Key to Initials:

P S Alexander, Twickenham; G M Chellberg, Wheaton; W S Chellberg, Wheaton; L P Chin, Wheaton; W K Clark, Kirkcaldy; H J Glass, Toronto; R N Hesterman, Woodstock; R B Hill, Toronto; K A Knauss, Indianapolis; A Martin, Buckhurst Hill; W McKillop, Ormond Beach; M Noel, Ormond Beach; J A Oberg, Villa Grove; K A Oberg, Villa Grove; N J Plant, Toronto; R D Plant, Birmingham; L Bernard, Ormond Beach; D M Welch, Denton.

OUR HEAVENLY GUIDE

Roland H Brown

Exodus 23: 20-23

John 16: 12-14

Psalms 25: 9

I would like to say a word with divine help as to our heavenly Guide. We were saying in the reading as to the conscience, that we cannot rely upon it as a guide. It is divinely given to us as a guard, as a warning light. Most of us are familiar with those in cars and other vehicles, that when something is wrong the light shines; there is a warning. It is a light that is ignored at the driver's peril. If he goes on ignoring that light, disaster will strike. The conscience is like that, it is for God in the soul of the believer as a warning light, for something that will, if pursued, lead to disaster. What a provision that is of God. It is not that we should labour under a guilty conscience, but that we might be preserved from what would damage us for the testimony.

The grace of God does not stop there. He has provided a Guide for those that are guidable. For those who want to be led in the divine way, there is a Guide. I think it is set out in this reference in Exodus; God says, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee". Sometimes when that word is used in the Old Testament, the word "Angel", with a capital "A", refers to the Lord Jesus; sometimes it may refer to an angel. I think this reference typically, and maybe actually, refers to the presence of the Holy Spirit. I say that because the prophet Isaiah, speaking of the children of Israel and their passage through the wilderness, says that "they rebelled and grieved his holy Spirit", Isa 63: 10. The Holy Spirit, as we know, and have no doubt heard many times in the gospel, has come to take up His abode in believers, a very wonderful thing, but He can also be taken account of objectively as a divine Person, taking up His abode, not only in believers individually, but in the assembly, in the house of God, "a habitation of God in the Spirit", Eph 2: 22.

I would like to focus on that point for a minute, the immensity of it, that God should be here in the Spirit. We have spoken about the blessedness of the days in flesh of the Son of man, what it was to live in close proximity and intimacy with the Lord Jesus. But He has left this scene; He has gone away. He is coming again, but He has gone away, but no less wonderful is the fact that the Holy Spirit of God is here, a divine Person. That is not a doctrine; it is a fact. The Spirit of God has come. He came down at Pentecost and He made His presence felt; though in Person unseen, though His activities to us are mysterious, yet His presence is a known reality. He makes His presence felt when He takes up His abode in the believer individually but how wonderful to think that He has come as a guide for the people of God: "I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way". How wonderful to think of God providing for that, for the wilderness journey, for the present moment. These people were walking through the wilderness. You might have said if you looked at them naturally that they did not have a guide. You could cross the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan in eleven days, in those days, and these people wandered, or so it seemed, in what was an eleven day journey, for forty years. You may say, they did not have much of a guide, if you looked at it naturally. If you looked at the people of God naturally today you might say that too, all scattered outwardly; what was constituted at the beginning publicly broken down: where is the evidence of the guide?

What the wilderness journey brought out was that God was teaching them about Himself:

In the desert God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found
(Hymn 76).

Then He was also teaching them about themselves; the journey in the wilderness was to humble them. We all need to be humbled. If we do not humble ourselves, God will humble us for our good. Peter says, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God", 1 Pet 5: 6. You may say that sounds a bit severe, a bit drastic, but it is for our good. The opposite is to be proud, and "God sets himself against the proud", 1 Pet 5: 5. It is a thing that is intolerable to God,

pride in man. But, He was humbling them; with what grace God humbled them, but He was teaching them the character of the God that He was. Provision was made at every step, the manna, morning by morning, the rock that followed them, the cloud by day, and the fire by night, every need was met so that their sandals did not wear out, their clothes did not wear out (Deut 29: 5); God was providing for them. He was able to provide; He was teaching them to trust Him, as He would teach us to trust Him. He says, "I will be to you for a Father" (2 Cor 6: 18) - think of God saying that. It is not, in that scripture, the full height of sonship, but the fact that God will provide, He could be relied upon. The Lord Jesus said, "your Father knows that ye have need of these things", Luke 12: 30. Those who have been humbled by Him can be rely upon Him to provide. We do not have to take forethought for those things because God knows what we need. He provides what we need, not always what we *want*, but He provides what we *need*; God has undertaken to do that. Even though they appeared to be wandering and scattered there was a Guide leading them along that path of learning and humbling to the land of His promise.

That is an interesting way to view the present time. All these things coalesce in the experience of the believer. We are in the wilderness. We have, if we are the Lord's - and I am speaking to those that are believers - an assurance of being with Him and like Him forever in His own circumstances. The forming, the learning time, is now; and in the trackless desert you can go your own way if you wish, but there is a Guide to keep you, if you are guidable. If there is a Guide available, it raises the question whether I am a person that is content to be guided, or whether I think I know best. The sad fact is that many believers have lost contact with the Guide; they have turned to one path or another because they were not attached to the Guide that God has provided. A whole generation perished in the wilderness, except two faithful men who came through. Paul reminds us, "For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea ... all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink ... yet God was not pleased with the most of them", 1 Cor 10: 1-5. They were rebellious by nature, and they

perished in the wilderness. God does not want any of us to perish in the wilderness, to perish in the testimony. We may have been saved from our sins, and saved from the wrath to come, but are we practically saved? The wilderness is a terrible place to be without a guide, there are lots of dead bones there, no resource outwardly, but this heavenly Guide was providing all that they needed and required in order that they might not perish in the wilderness, that they might not fall, they might not “be lusters after evil things”, 1 Cor 10: 6. He says, “But these things happened as types of us, that we should not be lusters after evil things, as they also lusted”. The lust is from within, that we might not be idolaters. They became idolaters, though God had brought them out of Egypt. They reared up a calf, the high priest himself did that - surely, you might think, a man like him could be relied upon, but he made a calf for them to worship. Think of how the feelings of God were affected by that, the God who had provided all and delivered them from bondage. Then it says, “The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play” (1 Cor 10: 7); they sported round the idol, and they rebelled against God. These things happened to them and are recorded for us, “for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come”, 1 Cor 10: 11. The Guide points things out like that for us so that we might not make the mistakes that others have made, we might be preserved from perishing in the wilderness. He says, “to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee to the place that I have prepared”. There is no doubt about it. They sang on the banks of the Red Sea anticipatively that -

Thou by thy mercy hast led forth the
people that thou hast redeemed;
Thou hast guided them by thy strength
unto the abode of thy holiness,

Exod 15: 13. You might say that was a spiritual view of the activities of the blessed Spirit of God, “Thou hast guided them by thy strength unto the abode of thy holiness”. Only Caleb and Joshua, as far as we know, of the original men that came out, went through, but the continuity is preserved in them, that God guided them by His strength all those years, “unto the abode of thy holiness”.

The word is “be careful in His presence”. The Holy Spirit of God is here and He can be grieved; they “grieved his holy Spirit”. He can be grieved by us personally, those of us that are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and no doubt we are conscious of times when He has been grieved by what we have said or what we have done, or where we have gone, because He has taken up His abode in the believer. I would have to say for myself that I have taken Him where He would not want to go and He has been grieved by that. The benefit of His guidance and care may, for a time, have been lost as a result. Be careful in His presence. It has been said of the blessed Spirit of God that He does not assert Himself; He is here with divine prerogatives and power but He can be grieved and the operation of His power can be quenched, “quench not the Spirit; do not lightly esteem prophecies”, 1 Thess 5: 19, 20. His guidance may come through a prophet, through a prophetic word; He may be pleased to offer guidance through an obscure source. The Spirit of God may take an obscure source to give guidance. Even the apostle Paul was told by the Spirit from an obscure brother not to go up to Jerusalem, and it would seem that for a time he became detached from the heavenly Guide because such was his mind that he *would* go up to Jerusalem, Acts 21. I venture to suggest that if a servant of the Lord, a man such as the apostle Paul, could do that, it behoves us to be *careful* in the Holy Spirit's presence, our ear attuned for the guidance that He would offer, not despising it because of the instrument that He may use, but recognising the source of it for our good - “Be careful in his presence, and hearken unto his voice: do not provoke him”: the allowance of what I am as a man in the flesh is what provokes the Spirit of God. “Do not provoke him, for he will not forgive your transgressions”. It reminds me of what the Lord said as to the sin against the Holy Spirit, “whosoever shall speak injuriously against the Holy Spirit, to eternity has no forgiveness”, Mark 3: 29. You could not think of any true believer on the Lord Jesus committing that sin, but it brings out how the Spirit of God is to be viewed by us. He says, “he will not forgive your transgressions”; the Lord Jesus said, a sin against the Son of man would be forgiven, but a sin against the Holy Spirit, He says, “to eternity has no forgiveness”. What a solemn thing that is; what care we need in the presence of this heavenly

Guide who is guiding the people of God. They are in His charge; the testimony of our Lord is in His charge, and He is guiding the people of God to their inheritance.

He says, "if thou shalt diligently hearken unto his voice, and do all that I shall say, then I will be an enemy to thine enemies". It is an interesting feature of God's people of old that when they were faithful to God, as He promised in His word, there was resident power among them to deal with enemies; there was no enemy too great that they could not deal with as they were with God; but when they turned away from God into idolatry they were overrun, sometimes by enemies that were very puny and very small and insignificant. They looked upon Ai as so insignificant that it did not really need all of them to go up and fight it, it could be taken at a stroke, but they departed from God, and the result was embarrassment and being overcome, Josh 7. That is a great lesson for us, that as we are hearkening to the divine Guide, there will be power proved to deal with evil when it arises. There will be power to resist the wicked one, the god of this world. John says, "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world", 1 John 4: 4. I wonder if we believe that. The enemy of our souls is very powerful and very great, but the One who has taken up His abode in us is greater and does not only give the believer individually the victory over the world, but He will give the people of God, too, the victory over all that that is brought in to distract us and lead us astray from the pathway of the will of God.

The Lord Jesus said of Him, that "he shall guide you into all the truth". These are remarkable things that are said of the Spirit of God in John's gospel. He says, "I have yet many things to say to you"; think of all that the Lord brought out in the days of His flesh but there was even more. I wonder if there is an interest in these things, the things that the Lord would like to communicate to us? "I have yet many things to say to you", as you read it you wonder why they did not ask him about that. He says earlier, "I go to him that has sent me, and none of you demands of me, Where goest thou? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart", v 5, 6. The Lord spoke about the Father, and He spoke about the Father's house and He was free to do that in this part of the

gospel; His life had been spent publicly in ministering to others, healing, comforting, cheering, entering into the circumstances of others. Who was there that was able and willing to enter into His things, into His circumstances? The traitor is exposed, he goes out, and in this inner circle the Lord looks round upon this company, and He is free now, chap 13. The cross is before Him, His life here was coming to an end and there was so much to convey. What little time was left here for the Lord to speak of these things? He says, "I have yet many things to say to you". You wonder why it did not, at this point, spark an interest, an enquiry with them, but the Lord says, "ye cannot bear them now". There was much that He brought out that they could not really understand until the Spirit came, but there was much that could not even be brought out until the Spirit of God came. As we sang in our hymn (No 158), He is the searcher of the depths of God. Think of what is within His control to bring out. I wonder whether we have realised the possibilities of the abiding presence of the Spirit of God here. Has He ceased to speak? We can point to distinctive ministries of the past that have been marked by the speaking of the Spirit of God, but has that ceased when those beloved servants passed off the scene? I do not think it has ceased: "when *he* is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth". He says elsewhere, "*he* shall teach you all things", John 14: 26. Nobody else could do that. You could go to school, university, there is nobody else that could teach you *all* things, but this Guide, as we establish an intimate relationship with Him, He is able to teach us all things. Would you be a pupil in that class? Could I encourage, with my own heart, and with my brethren, a greater interest in the things that He would teach? Not just telling us things for our information, but teaching them: that is, *forming* the saints, the heavenly company here on earth, forming them in relation to the great things of God; "he shall guide you into all the truth". The question is, am I guidable? Am I such that the Spirit of God could lead into the knowledge of the truth, or do I prefer my own opinion? Am I an opinionated person: anything that comes up, I have an opinion about it, a view; or am I willing in humility to be led by the Spirit of God, "he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself"? Think of a divine Person taking that position

that He would not speak from Himself but He would communicate what He heard. The Lord Jesus said the same thing of Himself, John 7: 16, 17. The words that He spoke were those that He heard; He communicated what He heard from the Father. It says of the Holy Spirit that, "he shall not speak from himself". I suggest that if that divine Person has taken up that position, it ill behoves any of *us* to speak from ourselves, but, "if any one speak - as oracles of God", 1 Pet 4: 11. No other speaking is worth listening to; speaking that originates in the mind and heart of man is of little account when you put it along side speaking as oracles of God. "He shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming". Is our interest caught by what is coming? We are often very occupied with what is past, what has happened, and who said what, who did what, who was right, and who was wrong, but what about what is coming? The Spirit of God desires to prepare us for the great eternal scene into which we are going to be ushered so soon. He cries "Come" with the bride, Rev 22: 17. It is the Spirit's own cry as well as in the Bride, working with such unpromising material, but securing an answer for the heart of Christ in a company of persons that are like the heavenly One; "such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones", 1 Cor 15: 48. They are persons who do not belong here. The Lord Jesus spoke of them in chapter 17, "they are not of the world, as I am not of the world", v 14. Think of the Lord saying that to the Father: that little company, the nucleus of the assembly, they did not belong here; they were heavenly men, they were the Father's men. They were loved by Him because they had been given to Him by the Father, out of the world, and His service had been to guard them and to keep them that their heavenly character might be preserved intact. They are not of the world, and the Holy Spirit will announce to us what is coming that we might be preserved in our heavenly character here even while we are on earth.

I read the last passage because it says, "The meek will he guide in judgment". Could I be guided in judgment? I find that I am very ready to express a judgment about things and about persons. This verse has weighed with me lately. It is very easy to become critical of others, critical of one another, and self-righteousness enters into

that, but, "The meek will he guide in judgment". How often things come up amongst us and we want to know what somebody else thinks about it, what their view is. But what is the divine view? Am I concerned to get the divine view? God has a view. God is going to "bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing", Eccl 12: 14. That verse has struck me lately; there is no human organisation or bureaucracy that could cope with it. The court system of this country could never cope with that, but God is going to "bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing". God has a view - a view of all that I do, all that I say. He has a view of things that may affect me that are outside of my control. God has a view; am I concerned to have *that* view or do I prefer my own opinion? "The meek will he guide in judgment". People that can be guided, recognise that they have no resource in themselves. That is a tremendous thing to come to. Not only that your will is broken, but any natural or native wit or intelligence that you may have is of no assistance to you in the things of God; you have no resource outside of this heavenly Guide. He is the exclusive means by which God can communicate His mind to us, and by which we can communicate the mind of God to one another. To receive and to understand and to communicate the things of God is the exclusive province of this heavenly Guide. "The meek will he guide in judgment". How wonderful to be guided like that. But then it says, "the meek will he teach his way". God has a way of doing things and it is very different from our ways. He said long ago, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways", Isa 55: 8. The history of the testimony has shown that God's way is very different from man's way. How we need to be taught God's way particularly when insisting upon the truth. You may have a judgment as to what is right and you may be right in that judgment, but in the insistence upon it, it is so easy to be marked by self-righteousness and a "holier than thou" attitude, Isa 65: 5. The Spirit of God will teach God's way. Many of us would say from experience that that way is marked by infinite patience. God is patient with slow learners. Some of us would have to confess to being very, very slow learners, and have hardly learnt much yet in the school of God, but His way is marked by patience, it is marked by an infinitude of grace; but there is a way

by which God operates and He will teach it to those that are meek enough to learn it in preference to their own way, "For the arms of our warfare are not fleshly", 2 Cor 10: 4. How easy it is to resort to carnal weaponry, to politics and manipulation and all the things that mark the way that man conducts his affairs. They are beneath the heavenly people that are journeying under the guidance of a heavenly Guide to their eternal home. They have a portion that was prepared for them before the foundation of the world, but they are left here in a trackless desert that they might learn God as well as learn about themselves, and in humility come to appreciate what God has provided for their guidance amid the confusion. What confusion there is in the day in which we are, what moral confusion. Has there ever been a day like it? We are in the days that are described as difficult days; you wonder to what extent the moral confusion and chaos in which we are found would ever have been understood by those who have gone before us, but it has been understood by God, understood by the heavenly Guide. Provision has been made for the very conditions in which we are even in this Book, which was inspired by the Spirit of God; provision has been made for the day in which we are. What a Guide He is. One would desire that these few remarks might endear the Person of the blessed Spirit to us, the grace that He should be with us in these conditions in which we are, but with a view to engaging us with what is heavenly and eternal.

May we be such that can be led on under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit to reach the great end that He has before Him.

For God's Name's sake.

Newport

21st April 2012

OUR APPRECIATION OF THE LOVE OF JESUS FOR US

David W Scougal

Luke 10: 38-42

John 11: 1-5; 12: 1-3

Reference was made in the reading on Lord's day to Mary of Bethany, and I have been thinking a little bit since then about this family at Bethany and their exercises, and particularly their exercises in coming to appreciate the love of Jesus for them, the love of Christ for each one of them. I think we will see, as with the Spirit's help we speak over this, a link with what our brother has already said in relation to gaining the victory. Christ has gained the victory and there are those who gain the victory through His work.

In the first scripture we find Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus. Mary was very quick to come to appreciate the Person whom she had come into contact with. She was very quick to appreciate the Lord Jesus, and to appreciate the love that the Lord Jesus had for her; and to appreciate the place where all her exercises and her needs would be met - at the feet of Jesus. What a blessed place to be found! I trust each one of us knows what it is to find our place at the feet of Jesus. I speak as much to myself as to anyone else in this. I feel the burden of the word in relation to being more fully in the appreciation of the love that the Lord Jesus has for each one of us. We know that the Lord has loved us, the Lord has died for us. I suppose each one of us here from our very earliest years has sung of the love of Jesus:

Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.

Each one of us knows these things, but how much do we appreciate, really and fully in our lives and in our walk, the love of Jesus, the love that He has for each one of us, the love that He has for us day by day in our walk here? Mary was quick to come to this realisation and appreciation as she is found sitting at His feet.

In this first scripture Martha does not appear to have the same appreciation of the love of Jesus. She loves the Lord; she invited Him into her house. It was not Mary that asked Jesus to come into the house, it was Martha that received Him into her house, but “Martha was distracted with much serving”. There were things that came into her life that came between her and her appreciation of the love that the Lord Jesus had for her. That is often the case with each one of us; I speak for myself. We know that Jesus loves us, but do we really put Him first in all our ways, and do we really know and appreciate in a full way the love that He has for us? The more we appreciate the love that Jesus has for us, the more we will love Jesus. How much greater our love will be for Him as we appreciate His love for us. How much He has done for each one of us! He has given Himself for us. How great a matter it is that He has given His life for us, that perfect life, that perfect life in which He fulfilled all the will of God. He gave that for us. He went into death that we might be secured: “we being still sinners, Christ has died for us”, Rom 5: 8.

When we come to the second scripture we find these two sisters again, but then we find that they also have a brother. He is not mentioned in the first scripture. He is not on the scene in the first scripture, but here we find him in this scripture. This scripture in John 11 specifically says, “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus”. Again Martha is given prominence. “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister” - it does not mention Mary by name - “and Lazarus”. An exercise had come into this family at Bethany; it says, “Now there was a certain man sick, Lazarus”. We are told about Lazarus having died: the Lord Jesus says, “Lazarus, our friend, is fallen asleep”. Now Martha speaks to the Lord and says, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died”. Something had come in in exercise in this family that had caused this malady with Lazarus. He had grown sick and he had died. The gracious words of the Lord Jesus are, “This sickness is not unto death”. Thank God that if you are a believer if something comes in even that only distracts you from the Lord Jesus, you might say it is not a sickness unto death, because your links with the Lord Jesus go through to *eternity*. Even if something comes in that distracts you from the

faithfulness of the pathway, these links go through to eternity. It is as if the Lord Jesus would graciously say, "This sickness is not unto death". But exercises had come into this household, as they do to all our households. Martha had her exercises. But how awful it must have been for this household that their brother had come into this condition where he had died; perhaps, we could apply it ourselves that we might have declined spiritually. The man who had taken the Jericho road had become "in a half dead-state", but then the Lord is able for these things. The Lord is able for whatever exercises come into our lives and we can be found, as Mary was, sitting at the feet of Jesus; the Lord loves us, He loves each one of us. He loves you, dear brother, dear sister, He loves me, and He would desire to bless each one of us as He desired to bless these three members of this house at Bethany. Despite all the exercises, despite all that had come into their lives, the Lord Jesus desired to bless them. I have often been impressed with this scripture where it says, and I go over it again, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus". He loves each one of us. He is able for the circumstances, and He is able to bring in help and to bring in healing, and to be able to call Lazarus out of the grave and restore him.

So in John 12 we find a completely different scene. We find a scene where I might suggest that each one of them, not only Mary, but Lazarus and Martha, have come to a fuller appreciation of the love of Jesus for them. They had gained victory over all that had stood in the way. They had gained victory over all that the enemy would bring in to distract them from that blessed One, and it says here, "where was the dead man Lazarus". I suggest that that was a different thought to what Mary says about her brother dying in the previous chapter. Here now was a man, you might say, who was dead to this world but alive to God, as we might be related to a Man in resurrection, one who was related to the One who had gained the victory, who was to be raised from among the dead in a new order of life. So we can reckon ourselves dead to all that is in this scene but alive to all that belongs to the Lord Jesus, alive to all that belongs to God. The apostle Paul could speak of "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", Gal 2: 20. Lazarus would come into the appreciation of that, the love of Jesus for Him was to go that

way but had already delivered him from the power of death. Martha we see serving here - it says, "and Martha served", able to provide something at this supper, something for the heart of Christ, something for His appreciation because now she was herself in the appreciation of the greatness of the love that Christ had for her. How wonderful it is! And then Mary again, Mary has something special, she has something that can be poured out, "anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair"; and it says, "and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment". How wonderful that is, a full appreciation by these three persons of the love that Jesus has for them so that there is a wonderful response from the heart of each person in relation to that blessed One. May it be our portion to be those who know the love of Jesus personally, and to be able to respond to Him in love, in response to His love! I trust that the application of these scriptures will be appreciated by all. May we be encouraged for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

18th September 2012

“THE PAINS OF DEATH”

John N Darby

... As to your question, dear brother, it is a point of profound interest to follow the sufferings of the beloved Saviour. I find what you have said right in general. There is something to add, it seems to me, and I do not think that the “pains of death” mean that Christ suffered after His death and before His resurrection. He has “suffered”, as you say, as a righteous man exposed to the wickedness of men. There was also another side to His sufferings as Man, not only the isolation of His heart, which nobody understood, but the fact that, feeling every insult poured out upon Him, He looked for someone to have compassion upon Him and found nobody: this only adds the feeling of [His] heart to His sufferings as a righteous Man. Of the two following characters of the sufferings of the Saviour of which you speak, I have nothing to add. May God give us to feel them! I want to speak of His sufferings, as seeing the glory of His Father trodden under foot of men (and by the men whose cause He took up in becoming Man). To this suffering, however, was added, it seems to me, the profound sorrow of seeing the love of this Father despised and rejected by men. That must have been terrible for Him. At the tomb of Lazarus, His distress arose from the feeling that He had as to the way that death weighed on man, the terrible state in which man was found without being able to deliver himself. I believe that His sufferings in Gethsemane were different from His sufferings on the cross. He had been “tempted” at the beginning of His ministry by the enemy, who used things by which he hoped to entice Him into acting according to His [own] will: thanks be to God this [attack] was only to be defeated. The strong man has been bound, and the Victor has begun to spoil his goods. The enemy, it says, departed from Him for a time, Luke 4: 13. But not only was man bondman to the power of the enemy, from which a living Christ could deliver, but his own heart was enmity against God, and the Lord had to bear the consequences of this state, if He were to continue with the work of salvation. This enmity being fully developed and Satan having taken possession of men’s hearts through the manifestation of God that

man did not want, Satan returns as prince of this world, and having the power of death, the fear of death, he comes to make all the horror of death, the fear of death as coming upon Him, bear down on the soul of the Lord as it is said: "My soul is very sorrowful even unto death", Matt 26: 38.

Here, overwhelmed and in agony, His communion with His Father is not interrupted - His access to Him. He prays more intently. He undergoes the power of death inflicted by the enemy because we were there; but instead of being separated from God by this means, instead of being in despair, He addresses Himself to Him ardently. He overcomes; and while the outward instruments of Satan's power come, it is they who fall to the ground (John 18: 6); but He delivers Himself up; it was their hour and the power of darkness. On the cross, death was not the power of Satan who used the fear of it to [try to] turn the Saviour aside from the way of obedience and of submission to the will of God; it was the cup itself that He drank, the forsaking of God when He was made sin. It is on the cross that the work itself was done. He combats at Gethsemane and appeals to God; He suffered on the cross, He suffered the forsaking of God for sin. But perfect in obedience, He drank this terrible cup and is able to commit His soul in peace into His Father's hands.

There, I believe, dear brother, His sufferings ended, not that He had everything yet, nor that He was glorified before His resurrection; but it seems to me that in saying to the thief: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23: 43), it was to say: 'I am not waiting for my kingdom in order to bless, to give the fruits of my death'. The thief had said: "Remember me, Lord, when thou comest in thy kingdom". He believed in the coming kingdom. The Lord's answer implied: 'I do another work than that of acquiring the kingdom, I save souls: you will not have to wait until I have come in my kingdom to be blessed; you will be with me *today*, there where spirits, where souls can enjoy God's delights'. While it says in Acts 2: 24: "having loosed the pains of death", that is a figure; they are "the pains of **death**". The word 'pains' here signifies 'childbirth pains', and I believe that it speaks in figure of giving birth to man in resurrection, for which death and the tomb were as the pains of childbirth: death could not hold Him.

Thus, viewed as a whole, I do not think that it speaks of pain after death, but the pains of giving birth in death.

...There is still what we read in Hebrews 2: 18: "he... suffered being tempted" (KJV), in that all the attacks of Satan were directed against Him, pressed in all things by the enemy, so that He could not take a step in the spiritual life in which He was engaged without meeting an obstacle painful to His heart and without overcoming it. We can have fellowship fully with the sufferings as the expression of His love unto death. What He has borne for us in drinking the cup and passing through the darkness is not our portion, is not the fellowship of His sufferings: He has been our substitute there (cf 2 Tim 2: 10).

Bath

26th September 1855

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