

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 71

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DEPENDENCE

Luke 4: 16-19; 1-13; 22: 39-44

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RWMcC The simple impression I have, brethren, for us to feed on is the thought of dependence. I wondered if these scriptures bring out, and help us about, dependence: what it is, and how we might grow in dependence. We probably all feel the need for it, but this first scripture in Luke where the Lord came to Nazareth was really the first scripture that came to me when I was thinking about this occasion. I would be interested to see what develops in relation to it because I had an impression that the Lord was manifesting dependence when He came to Nazareth. It does not say that He asked for the book of the prophet Esaias, but it was given to Him. The Lord went into that situation "according to his custom", as it says, and He "stood up to read", and the book was given to Him and "he found the place". He went in dependence and "he found the place". The impression, you may say, came to Him, and so He read, "To-day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears". I just wondered if we could see that, that the Lord was moving in dependence here.

And then we read as to the temptations because my impression is that these responses of the Lord show a dependent Man. There are three ways the devil tempts Him in these scriptures and then a fourth one in chapter 22. I wondered if what we see when we look at the Lord is a model of dependence; we are surely entitled to do that, and every right moral feature was displayed in the Lord. How many glories He had, moral glories, and dependence was one of them! He uses the Spirit and He uses the Word of God. Then in chapter 22 it says that He prays, and I wondered if we may say these were the three tools in the tool-bag of a dependent Man: the Spirit; the Word of God; and prayer. The brethren will forgive me because I am not able to open it up very well, but we have in chapter 22 the way the Lord prays: "he prayed, saying, Father, if thou wilt remove this cup from me:- but then, not my will, but thine be done". He was prepared to go all the way that was necessary. It was the will of Another, and that would be the mark, no doubt, of the

dependent Man, that he was entirely prepared to do the will of Another.

I think Acts 16 is a striking example of dependence. They were sensitive. It says, “having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit”. They were sensitive; there was a dependence upon what God would bring to them. And then “the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them” to go a certain way, and then Paul has a vision and they conclude certain things. There is intelligence as to what the vision means, and they move forward in dependence in relation to that, and then they find the beginnings of what was there, what was going to be developed in Philippi. They find these women “where it was the custom for prayer to be”, and so they find those that are characterised by dependence. Prayer has been called 'dependence in expression'. I just wonder if that would be helpful for us to consider.

JS I think it is a very attractive feature that has been set out in the Lord Jesus. Naturally speaking, man tends to be *independent*. We see Him here as He commenced His public service going forward in dependence, waiting for what was presented to Him, the book of the prophet Esaias being presented to Him, and He uses that.

RWMcC It was the scripture for the moment, where He was, and yet, as you say, He waited for that in dependence and that was the word given.

GBG Is it man's true glory to be marked by dependence? It is giving God the glory, is it not?

RWMcC Yes, I think so. You may say all the history of man before this was the history of man in independence, and that was really marked by failure, but I think what you say is right. Say some more, please.

GBG Do you think trust and the knowledge of God underlie our dependence on divine Persons? You must know the Person to be dependent on the Person.

RWMcC I think that would be right. It is as we know them, as we experience these things, that we can learn more.

GBG It would be an awful thing to have to be dependent on a person you had no confidence in. He said it would not be true dependence. True dependence comes from a person that you know and have confidence in.

RWMcC I think that is good. We see it in a baby. A baby is dependent on its mother for life, really, for food and so on, and that is pure dependence. When it comes to what you are speaking of there is what is developed in intelligence.

GBG Of course, the Lord as a babe was unique. He trusted on God from His birth; other babies do not do that; they depend on their parents; it is not exactly an intelligent or instinctive thing.

RWMcC The Lord came to Nazareth. He came to that area where He had been brought up. What a test it was! The Lord knew the tests He was going to face, but He was in dependence.

JCG Do you think that as we are dependent, as the Lord exhibited here, it makes way for the flow of grace? What resulted from this wonderful outpouring of the gospel was that they “wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth”. We would never move in grace unless we were dependent, would we?

RWMcC I think that would be right, but could you open it up a little bit for us, please?

JCG Grace is the flow of love from God. It is what issues from love amongst the saints but particularly coming from above, from God as the Supplier. The Lord Jesus exhibited that: “for of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace”, John 1: 16. This preaching which is so poignant in its timing really sets that out, does it?

RWMcC I think what you say is helpful. It is my desire and concern that we might be simple about these matters that we go over so that we all may be able to get something from them. What you say as to grace is good. We sang that:

Thy grace, O Lord,
that measured once the deep
(Hymn 293).

He was a gracious Person here. As you say, they “wondered”. Perhaps there were His glories that were hidden from their eyes, veiled, but these features, these moral glories, could not be hidden, could they?

JTB As was said, in the Lord’s distinctive infancy He was cast upon God from his mother’s womb: “I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother’s belly”, Ps 22: 10. These are very affecting scriptures. Does the oblation bring out that dependent manhood - particularly you think of the fragrance of it to heaven insofar as the frankincense was put on the offering? Whatever circumstance the Lord was found in, dependence was reflected in it, do you think?

RWMcC Can you help us as to what you said as to the oblation and the frankincense; just to open up a little bit, please?

JTB I was just linking it particularly with the first part of Luke 4 when He was led by the Spirit. It was the “fine flour mingled with oil”, Lev 2: 4. The association, speaking reverently, between the Spirit and the Lord was distinctive throughout His life. Everything He did was in the power of the Spirit, and that really is essential to the creature dependence, do you think?

RWMcC Yes, I thought that and I am glad you bring it out, the oblation being one of the offerings, speaking about the perfect evenness of Christ in the fine flour, and the frankincense, what ascended to God as a savour of that wonderful life. He is moving in the Spirit: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”.

APG It says, “according to his custom”. This comes in in Luke 22 as well. His customs would never be mere routine, would they? They were the customs of a dependent Man. Have you any thought about “his custom”?

RWMcC I did wonder about that and how far we could read on because it says, “and he entered, according to his custom, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read”. I do not know if His custom would extend that far, but I wondered if it is just a little window into those years that we know nothing about from twelve years old until this point, as to what His customs were. The Lord’s

dependence did not begin with His public service; it was that kind of Man that the Father could speak of in the previous chapter.

KW The Man in Isaiah 50 of whom it is said, “He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed” (v 4): that is the Lord Jesus. Every morning He was in the Father’s presence and waited for direction as to what He should say and what He should do. Does that link with what you have here in Luke chapter 4?

RWMcC It does very much. I was thinking of that scripture: “He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed”. Before that he speaks about, “to succour by a word him that is weary”. I think what you say is right. There was that side of the Lord in dependence that marked every day and every hour of every day, and every moment, but I feel the challenge of what you say as to every morning.

KW Even waiting in patience. I suppose you get that in John 4: He waited patiently at the well of Sychar. He did not move without divine direction, without the Father’s direction. Is that right?

RWMcC That is right. Mr Parker has a comment: 'every movement that He made gave the Father fresh occasion to love Him', JT vol 50 p344. That was the dependent Man.

QAP Where He speaks of the authority that He had to lay His life down in John 10, the Lord Jesus immediately says, “I have received this commandment of my Father”, v 18. So, although we see the glory of His Person in that passage, we also see His complete dependence as Man upon the Father’s will.

RWMcC I think so. I think it is a characteristic of His manhood here. It is one of His moral glories, and what you say is interesting: “I have received this commandment of my Father”. It shows - and we see that in Luke 22 as well - that everything about the Lord’s pathway was governed by the will of the Father. It is a wonderful thing for us to contemplate.

PAG It says, “And he came to Nazareth, where he was brought up”. Would it be right to suggest that one aspect of dependence involves

the acceptance of divine ordering and the circumstances in which God has placed us?

RWMcC Yes, I do agree with that. Please can you just say a little more to open that up?

PAG You think of the Lord accepting circumstances in which He would be limited. Nazareth was, I suppose, a village. It was not very big or prominent and “he was brought up”. He accepted that He had come into a condition where He would have respect for His parents. He accepted these things. It says of Him “he learned obedience from the things which he suffered”, Heb 5: 8. He learned what it was to come into a condition to which obedience attached and would fill out the will of God in such conditions.

RWMcC Yes, I think that is very interesting what you say. You may say He was in ordinary circumstances, circumstances that perhaps we know something about. They were humble, and He just accepted them as they were. What it says about when He was at the age of twelve is “and he was in subjection to them”, Luke 2: 51. Does that link with your thought?

JS It says prophetically in the Psalms: “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage”, Ps 16: 6. That is how He would view these circumstances, do you think?

RWMcC I do. I like that scripture, giving the Lord’s appreciation of the circumstances in which He was. They were the circumstances of suffering, but how precious they were to the Lord, to enjoy the Father’s pleasure in them!

DCB One feature would be faith. Is it helpful for us to see that as a feature of the Lord Jesus Himself as taking on, in the perfection of manhood, the pathway of faith?

RWMcC I am glad you bring that in because that is one of the features, I think, of dependence. If we were to say that He did not manifest faith here, I think it is Mr James Taylor who says, we would be depriving ourselves of Him as a model, Letters vol 2 p16. It is an essential feature, is it not, faith?

DCB These matters become attractive to us as we see them in Christ. He followed a pathway of faith. He came into a time when there was continuing a system of sight, but He was superseding that because of the way in which He went in a pathway of faith.

RWMcC Yes, He is “the leader and completer of faith”, Heb 12: 2. How pleasurable that life of faith was to the Father! At the end they say, “He trusted upon God; let him save him now if he will have him”, Matt 27: 43. That was really a testimony to the Lord’s faith. We speak carefully of His Person because He was distinctive and unique. We understand that. But these features, faith and dependence and other features, were the features that God was desiring to find in a man, and had not found. He had found them in measure, perhaps, in the saints of old, but He found them in perfection in the Lord Jesus.

JS While we recognise the distinctiveness of the Lord Jesus here as the One who was anointed to preach these glad tidings, do you think that becomes a help to us in regard to the announcing of the glad tidings, to be dependent on the Spirit?

RWMcC Yes, I think so - how essential that is, to be dependent on the Spirit in the service of the glad tidings. Then the work of God in any soul begins with the work of the Spirit in new birth, and if there is going to be an answer to the glad tidings that are preached, it is the result of that. It is in the ways of God. Mr James Taylor said, ‘There is the purpose of God, and there is His sovereign work, but in His ways everything must be based on moral grounds’, JT vol 21 p281. We can understand His purposes, what He had in His mind before time was that He will bring to full fruit, and His sovereign work in choosing any one, or simply choosing that you or I should sit under the sound of the glad tidings; but then in God’s ways everything is secured on moral grounds, and that is really where we answer to the glad tidings. And we see the moral perfection in the Lord Jesus in this service, announcing the glad tidings.

GBG So Philip was dependent. The eunuch was reading the scripture and the Spirit said, “Approach and join this chariot”, Acts 8: 29. Philip must have been in a good state there and he was able to help this one man.

RWMcC Yes, that is interesting. I had not thought about that, but that is another instance. Philip takes the eunuch up where he is, with the scripture he was reading and what an opportunity that was; what a scripture that was! What an opportunity God presented to Philip in that wonderful scripture as to the sheep in Isaiah.

JL Would it be right to think that dependence has its application to us in every circumstance connected with our lives and pathways here? But it seems to have a special connection with service in this section, does it, dependence in relation to service, whatever that may be for any one of us?

RWMcC I think you are right in what you are saying that it is applicable to every facet of our lives. I would be glad if you would say a little bit more as to what you have in mind as to service because I do feel that that is right also. because you would not want to take on service, and could not, in independence.

JL I was just thinking of the importance of filling out every service in the spirit of dependence. I was linking with the remark in relation to Philip as the evangelist. He was dependent, but, whatever matter of service may lie to our hand to do, we can only really fill it out effectively in the spirit of dependence, can we? No doubt it is under the anointing as well, but the spirit of dependence is basic to that, is it?

RWMcC Yes, it is. I think what you say is very helpful. It is a requirement, is it not, if the Lord is to be served in any way? That is not necessarily in anything prominent, but it is in everything.

AMB Dependence would involve that the dependent person draws on another, draws on God, which would bring in faith, would it not? It has already been said man's systems would give prominence to self-reliant people, self-confident people, but the Lord did not fit into man's systems. Do we see Him drawing upon God in these scriptures that you have read here and later in the gospel?

RWMcC Yes, I think that is right. It links with what was said about wakening "morning by morning", and the beauty of it is that it was manifested in the Lord here as a Man as a model for us.

AMB It is a most wonderful and marvellous thing that One as great as the Son of God should exhibit perfection in manhood in dependence. It does draw out our souls in worship and in appreciation, does it not?

RWMcC It does. It is for our worship as well as for a model. Perhaps that brings us onto this section as to the temptations; it was not so much to dwell on the temptations but on what you said as to the Son of God. That was who was here and the enemy of our souls - the *enemy* - tempted Him. But it says He “was led by” (or ‘in the power of’ - see note ‘a’) “the Spirit in the wilderness”. It was not as if the Lord sought that out, but that was where it was necessary for Him to go, and in dependence and in obedience, He went that way.

JS The efforts of the enemy were to take Him off the ground of dependence, to get Him to rely on the glory of His Person as the Son of God, but He retained His place dependently in manhood.

RWMcC Yes, it is so beautiful to read it in that light. It says at the end, “And the devil, having completed every temptation”. It was as if the whole armoury of Satan was used, all his skills, to try to tempt the Lord in these three different ways, and they were unsuccessful.

JS The devil found nothing in Him that answered to his proposals.

RWMcC It is so different from ourselves, and yet the same things that the Lord uses: the Spirit - “led by the Spirit”; the Word of God, which He uses to address Satan here; and later on prayer, these are all the things that are available to us for a dependent life.

DTP Is there something important in the fact that the Lord is returning from the Jordan? He is returning in power; for us that is necessary, is it not, to be developed in the features that really are pleasing on the divine side? The Spirit’s help is available to such persons too.

RWMcC I think what you say as to the Jordan is interesting, because – as we know from the ministry - the Lord quotes from Deuteronomy here and not from Exodus when he quotes from the law, and really Deuteronomy was with the Jordan in view: the land was in view and the crossing of the Jordan. I do not think I can open

that up but I like what you say. Perhaps you could say a little more as to what that means as to the Jordan.

DTP Well, I think it is a real exercise. You have been speaking about the need for dependence. We know what we are according to nature, but something has to be worked out in depth in the soul until we arrive at the fact that we cannot trust in the flesh, and, when that is arrived at, there is something substantially formed which is dependent for guidance, is it not? And that leads you on in your Christian experience and life and you become aware of the great need of the help of the blessed Spirit to be maintained in it.

RWMcC Linking on with what you are saying, where we come to it that we need to be dependent, the other thing that I would like us to be encouraged by and built up by is that we speak about dependence and it is not exactly like some kind of goal that is set before us that if we persevere, eventually we will reach it. It is something that you and I can prove every day. It is not that you have to be perfect or anything - we never will be - but it is something that we can learn something of and it is good, I think, to recognise the work of God in our own souls. and link on with that and to see that. Perhaps we may be helped to see that in some small measure we were dependent in a certain circumstance. Mr Stoney says something which I am challenged by: 'The more we know the blessing of dependence, the more we like it', vol 8 p468.

APG Do you have more in mind as to the way the Lord refers to the Scriptures? He knew the Scriptures. It would be good for us and for the young to learn the Scriptures.

RWMcC I feel the edge of that, but they are available to us. That is what I was thinking. The Scriptures are available to us. We can read; that is a blessing from God, as well as the fact that we have them. What a history there has been to secure them in our own language, and how many languages they have been translated into! They are available for us, but it is the Word of God. I am feeling my way here, but the need is to take the Scriptures and see how they apply to me in the circumstances where I am.

JCG The Lord answers the first temptation by, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God”. That was really a point to Satan, was it not, who did not listen to the word of God and did everything in his power to be against it in his pride and independence? The greatness of being dependent on the Scriptures is very important, do you think? Many of the Scriptures at the present time are being disputed and set aside even in Christendom; so the word of God coming to us is a living thing that answers to our dependence.

RWMcC I think that is right, and we might be helped to see what these three temptations relate to. This first one is really the natural. It says, “he hungered”. Well, we might say that is fair enough. We hunger too, and the Lord had been these forty days: “and in those days he did not eat anything, and when they were finished he hungered”. Satan tries to use that as a point of attack, using something we might need, something that is natural, and the Lord uses this scripture. If we read before that in Deuteronomy God gives them the manna; it is the thought of the manna. Perhaps we should read that: “And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with the manna, which thou hadst not known, and which thy fathers knew not; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by everything that goeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live”, chap 8: 3. It shows that even in the natural things that we need, we need to be dependent. I do not know how to put it: the Lord does not use His power to satisfy His need. Is that right?

GBG In Nehemiah, going over the failures of the children of Israel, he says, “The pillar of the cloud departed not from over them by day, to lead them on the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst” (chap 9: 19, 20); so even when we have failed, God from His side would still provide this for us, do you think?

RWMcC I am glad you refer to that because I just wondered about it. For all their failures the manna never ceased. There comes a day

when they eat of the old corn of the land, and it is after that that it says the manna ceased, Josh 5: 11, 12. God was faithful all through. What a God we have to trust in!

DTP I do like Paul's touch about it in Acts 13, "and for a time of about forty years he nursed them in the desert", v 18. What compassion God has for His creature. Amidst all the difficulties and pressures, He still nurses us during that period. We have really to be dependent to prove the fulness of it.

RWMcC If we are not, we will miss the benefit and the joy of it.

DCB Is it something gracious on the part of God to bring us to a place where we feel the need of dependence? Not, of course, that that applied to the Lord because He was always dependent. God took the children of Israel to the wilderness where they would learn the need to be dependent on Him.

RWMcC Yes; it says in one place that it was "eleven days' journey" (Deut 1: 2) as if to say it could have been done in eleven days, but it required those circumstances of the wilderness for them to prove God and find that He was all-sufficient.

PAG Mr Darby says:

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

Do you think in these three temptations we get some impression of the God that we have found as made known in Christ?

RWMcC I think so. You mean He is teaching us in them? Please say a little more.

PAG The enemy first attacks Jesus as man. He says, "Man shall not live by bread alone". And then he attacks Him as Son of man, and He says, "Thou shalt do homage to the Lord thy God, and him alone shalt thou serve". And then he attacks Him as Son of God, and Jesus says, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God". What a God we find! Every aspect, you might say, of Christ's manhood set out in perfection and with the perfect defence of the scriptures surrounding it.

RWMcC It is wonderful to see that, and these things really happened. It is not just something that is set out like a story with a moral, but the Lord was there in those circumstances, not as needing to go through them because of anything in Himself, but because it was required that God should have a Man who set out everything in perfection.

GBG God brings us into circumstances where we are caused to feel dependent because we feel we are helpless. We learn dependence even in the way we are made physically, do you think?

RWMcC I think that is right, but just say a little bit more.

GBG God provides food for us, provides our breath. Men do not recognise God in that way, but the believer realises that even as creatures we are dependent.

RWMcC That is right. Daniel says, "the God in whose hand thy breath is", Dan 5: 23. That is what he says to the king. We can see these things in these various circumstances as really so obvious actually when you think about it, and yet we can be so blind.

JCG The reference to the next temptation in relation to the Son of man brings out the power really that God has to effect things to persons who are humble, moving in dependence. The Lord said that Himself: "And whoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whoever shall humble himself shall be exalted", Matt 23: 12. The devil said he would give Christ all the kingdoms of the habitable world if He would do homage before him: Christ will come into that in God's way. Because of the position He has taken as Son of man, He will come into that universally, will He not? That should encourage each one of us in the movements in the testimony. Whereas many go on in outward show and pomp and all the rest of it, we need to maintain dependence on the Spirit of God to keep in what is spiritual, that we might understand the world to come, and therefore the Lord will come into it. Psalm 2 brings that out, the glory and power that Christ will be given: "Ask of me, and I will give thee nations for an inheritance", Ps 2: 8. Luke brings it out very effectively as to His dependent position.

RWMcC What I thought about that, and what it says when we come to Luke 22, was that they really were going to be the Lord's, these things. He was not going to receive all these things of the hand of Satan; He was going to receive them from the Father. The cup in Luke, which we will come to, He was to receive it from the hand of the Father. This is like the world really, "all this power, and their glory; for it is given up to me". We may be tempted by the world; it may catch our eye; but it is not to be. We are to be in dependence upon God to see that homage is due to Him alone.

JL It says, "For he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground" (Isa 53: 2): He derived everything from the Father. Is that your thought?

RWMcC I think that is the demonstration of dependence, drawing nothing from what was around here but everything from the Father, and so the world in all its supposed attractions - I say that carefully; it is not like we are some kind of special people that are not attracted by the world in different ways. I think the world has a department for all of us. Satan would try to attract us in any way he can. But we see in the dependent Man the ability to spurn all of that.

GBG Mr Darby speaks of simple obedience as the Lord's weapon, Synopsis on Luke p224. It is a powerful thing. It is effective against the enemy although he does not understand it.

RWMcC No, he does not. The enemy did not understand Christ. The Lord says, "in me he has nothing", John 14: 30.

BPH I was thinking about what you said earlier about what had been drawn out from the temptations, but the greatness that we see of God. Is it important for us to know that no demand, no request, is too great for God? You referred to the departments that there are for us in the world and no doubt that is true, but no temptation that we face, nothing, is too great for God. Things that we come across in our lives and situations can seem very dire, but really none of these things are too great for God. Is that what we see?

RWMcC That is right. It says somewhere that we are not tempted above what we are able to bear, 1 Cor 10: 13. That should be a comfort to our souls, that our heavenly Father will not allow us to be

tempted above what we are able for. But we are still tested, and then there is the double edge to that because, if we fail, the Father has said He will not tempt you beyond what you are able for, and so we should reflect that we should have been able with these resources to resist that temptation.

AMB Further to what has been said, “for, in that himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to help those that are being tempted”, Heb 2: 18. That is a current word of encouragement.

RWMcC It is, and that is what we need to derive from these scriptures. This is not just some sort of intellectual discussion. We are talking about something here that should have a practical realisation in our own lives.

AMB This is a real Man we are speaking of, and He is exhibiting these blessed and perfect features of manhood according to God - that is, manhood in agreement with what God is.

RWMcC Of Adam it says he was created in His image and in His likeness. The Lord is the image of the invisible God (Col 1: 15), the perfect representation of God, but He is also the perfect representation of what God desired to find in a Man.

TCM The matter of service was referred to earlier. Do we see that that God will be fully served and recognised in a dependent Man, but also men are served? I was thinking of the first scripture, that others were going to benefit from the dependent movements of the Lord Jesus, but first of all it was God Himself that was going to have the glory.

RWMcC I think that is fine because the dependent Man is not for the admiration of men. Dependence would be regarded as weakness. That is not what you naturally show. People like to be self-sufficient. I think what you say is good, that it was for the glory of God. The dependent Man here was for the eye of God, but we come into the blessing that stems from it.

JTB Does His high-priestly service help us in developing this feature, “tempted in all things in like manner, sin apart”, Heb 4: 15? It comes in, “able to sympathise with our infirmities” and so on. His high-priestly service, having been through every circumstance

through which it is possible for us to be put, He is thoroughly able to help us as this feature is with us, do you think?

RWMcC Can you just open up for us a little as to the service of the priest in that way?

JTB He lives to intercede in that way for us, and to help us in our infirmities. It is not so much the side of advocacy; it is high-priestly service, which would apply particularly to those who are dependent and feeling their infirmities and weaknesses.

RWMcC I think that is good. Although it is a different circumstance, I was thinking of Mr Darby's poem:

Priests, that should plead for weakness,
Must Thine accusers be!
(The Man of Sorrows)

How blessed to see the contrast in the Lord! But the service of the priest was to plead in that way; it was on behalf of the people. There was a time when Aaron runs between God and the people, Num 16: 47. Is that the kind of thing you are thinking of?

QAP The Lord Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit teaching us in the hour itself what should be said, Luke 12: 12.

RWMcC I think what you say is a challenge. I think faith comes into that as well as dependence, because they are different. That is where you feel the cutting-edge of dependence, when you are in those circumstances.

The next temptation is really like a kind of religious thing. The devil leads Him to the temple. It is not now from a comfortable vantage point viewing the world; it is in a position of danger. How blessed that the Lord allows Himself to be led! It is quite instructive. I have just thought of the places where the Lord is led, and here is one: "And he led him to Jerusalem, and set him on the edge of the temple, and said to him, If thou be Son of God, cast thyself down hence". It is as if to say, 'You are something special and God will protect you; do whatever you want to do'; and that is not the case.

JS Do you think it would be a matter of realising just where we are in the ways of God, that we are kept in dependence? The devil

misquotes the psalm. There is a part missing from what he says “to keep thee in all thy ways”, Ps 91: 11. That would be that, in all the ways of our lives, we are not going to do something which would really take us out of the position of dependence, do you think?

RWMcC Yes, that is what the enemy would do. Let us read that psalm because what you say is helpful:

For he shall give his angels charge concerning
thee, to keep thee in all thy ways:
They shall bear thee up in their hands,
lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder;
the young lion and the dragon
shalt thou trample under foot.

v 11-13

The enemy cannot quote that last piece. I also think it is salutary what you say, that he omits the words, “to keep thee in all thy ways”.

JS Do you think it would show the need for us being kept characteristically in the way that God would have us in dependence on Himself?

RWMcC I do think that. I think it is a challenge because we may be tempted to put ourselves in circumstances which are of our own doing, and you may say, 'Well, I will do this or that'. I am not necessarily saying that we are going into any wrong place or anything like that, but that is not really how to judge it. It is whether it is God's will: that determines whether it is right or not. We might think, 'Well, I will be able to prove God in these circumstances', but that is not the point, because we should know, as we touched on earlier, that we can trust God for everything. We do not need to prove Him. Does that link with what you are suggesting?

TDB One of the features that marked David was that he enquired of God before he did anything. I was just thinking of that kind of feature. We may be impetuous, maybe as Peter was, but, if we are dependent on enquiring, help is available.

RWMcC I think that is good. It says of Saul that he forced himself, 1 Sam 13: 12. He went on, went ahead with something that he should

not have done. It was not his place. It might have *seemed* right. I think it is good what you say that David enquired of Jehovah. That would be the spirit of dependence. That is what you are thinking?

AMB In that connection, the matter of subjection would be closely related to dependence, would it not? Both are to be characteristic. They are not things that we put on when we are at a meeting or on a Lord's day. They are to be moral features laid down in the soul of the believer, are they?

RWMcC I am probably not the only one challenged by what you say, but that is right. When I was at school and college, I used to think you did not really need to do much homework. Then I would turn up for class and think, I could have done with swotting up on this a bit. I feel a bit that way with divine things, that I have not applied myself enough to them, but I think it is good what you say, and it links with the scripture in Luke 22. You said as to subjection; there it is really obedience, the feature that is coming out. I think it has been said that the enemy left the Lord for a time, and this is the point when the enemy came back, and it says, "being in conflict he prayed more intently". It just shows the need of prayer and how it is one of the things that would be really a habit of dependence. Would that link with what you are thinking?

AMB I think that is fine. Attention was drawn earlier to the Lord's custom. It is mentioned in both chapter 4 and chapter 22 and it is good to become accustomed to prayer - I feel the edge of that myself - and to giving ourselves to the reading of the Scriptures too. We may say these are simple things, but they are tremendously important.

RWMcC They are. They build a foundation in the soul.

JCG He says, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation". The Lord had experienced that in the scripture you read first, and, therefore, it brought in more power in relation to the disciples, what they would do, and He brings it in teaching the disciples. "Lord, teach us to pray", they said. "And he said to them, When ye pray, say, Father ..."; and one of the things is, "lead us not into temptation", Luke 11: 1, 2, 4. That refers to a device that the flesh would use to attract us,

especially when we are younger, to other things and take us out of the path of dependence, do you think?

RWMcC I think that is right and, forgive me, but I do not think it is just when we are younger. I think it is all through our pathway. I think the enemy will find something different. As we perhaps change and grow older, there may be things that we cling to. I just submit that. We are never going to be beyond the need of this, are we? Is that right?

JCG Yes, it is. And then His appeal is very affecting, "Father, if thou wilt remove this cup from me". Of course, this was special to the Lord. We know that. He is in very close relations with the Father, is He not, which bears on what was said as to prayer? Daniel prayed three times a day to God, "his windows being opened ... toward Jerusalem", Dan 6: 10. That kept him in dependence despite the post he had in the administration at the time.

RWMcC That is good because he maintained that even when the circumstances would have suggested that it would be better to hide it. It was "as he did aforetime". It was his custom, his habit. I think that is good. I do not know that I can open up what the Lord says as to the disciples not entering into temptation. What struck me was that this is really obedience. Was the Lord going to be obedient in this circumstance, which was the most awful circumstance you could contemplate, and take the cup from the Father's hand, or was He not? Was the enemy at last going to get some advantage over that blessed holy One? The fact is he was not. The enemy was not going to gain advantage.

JS He felt keenly what was lying before Him in the cross and in the death, and He was perfectly submissive to the Father's will.

RWMcC He is a Model in all these things, a Model in dependence, a Model in prayer, in the use of Scripture - we might use Scripture a little unwisely sometimes, and dependence upon the Spirit; all these wonderful features are seen in the Lord.

GBG Mr Darby said the Lord did not ever use His divine power to screen Himself from suffering, or to hinder the suffering, but to sustain Him in it, to enable Him to bear what none could have gone

through without it, JND vol 34 p243. Because of who He is, He knew perfectly what was before Him, what would be called for in the way of judgment and, knowing that perfectly, He went on in submission to the Father's will.

RWMcC What you say should help to bring into focus in our minds the immensity of what it meant. We might be tested in obedience, but we do not always really know what is before us, and it is good to be dependent because God knows what is before us, and we do not, but the Lord, as you say, because of who He was knew all that was before Him.

GBG It says in Psalm 16,

For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol,
neither wilt thou allow thy Holy One
to see corruption.

Thou wilt make known to me the path of life",
v 10, 11.

- it was faith and trust in God in going this way.

RWMcC It was a path that had never been gone before, and yet the Lord was prepared to go that way.

JTB Mr Taylor speaks about Satan here bringing before Him the terror of death, vol 17 p6. What it must have meant as it poured upon His spirit that He, the Prince of life, must face death.

RWMcC That was one of Satan's principle weapons. It says, "who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage", Heb 2: 15. Do you think that what Satan here tried to bring on the Lord was the terror? It says that in one of the Psalms, "the terrors of death are fallen upon me", Ps 55: 4.

AMB He says, "but this is your hour and the power of darkness", Luke 22: 53. I know you did not read to there, but that would give us some sense of what the Lord was going through in anticipation and yet He never used His divine power to extricate Himself or to reduce the intensity of the suffering through which He passed.

RWMcC And then the same on the cross: "Art not thou the Christ? save thyself and us", Luke 23: 39. That could not be.

AMB It is a very edifying and healthy thing for a believer to feed on these aspects of the life and the sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

RWMcC That is what I felt and as thinking over these things for a few minutes, we have had some of that food because He is a Model for us, but how wonderful it is just to look on Him and to contemplate Him.

JCG Do you think Paul followed on the path that the Lord exhibited? In 1 Corinthians 2 he says, “And I, when I came to you, brethren, came not in excellency of word, or wisdom, announcing to you the testimony of God”, v 1. And then, “And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling; and my word and my preaching, not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”, v 3, 4. That exhibited the same features that were seen perfectly in Christ, but Paul is following in the same steps. Are these the steps that we should be in?

RWMcC I think that is right. He says, “that your faith might not stand in men’s wisdom, but in God’s power”, v 5. I wondered if what you say links with what we have read in chapter 16 of Acts because there it is Paul and those with him that were dependent upon one another in the body as well. Luke speaks so feelingly here as to this; it puts them together, and then Paul has a vision and then, “we sought to go forth”. It just struck me that sometimes we may try to do something, and we need to be sensitive as to whether that is the pathway of dependence. It may seem right, and I say this carefully and feelingly because they wanted to speak the word in Asia and they were forbidden. It needed very sensitive dependence on the Spirit to detect that, I think. And then “the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them”. These are all different expressions to help us to see the spectrum of support as we move in dependence, but how we need to be careful. It may be a bit irrelevant but I remember reading about how, in the early days of radar, some pilots flew right down the middle of the corridor of the signal, but others flew on the edge and then they knew exactly where they were, because they could feel the signal dropping off. I wondered if in some way that is a little bit like this: they are flying along the edge so that they can feel exactly

where the Spirit is guiding them. It is the testimony coming into Europe as we have often been reminded.

GBG Does the Spirit of Jesus specially suggest what you have been speaking of? It is a sensitive, inward thing, is it not? That Man was dependent Himself and waited, in the case of Lazarus, and that is the testing time.

RWMcC I think that is good. I had not really thought about that in that way but it is the spirit of that kind of Man that God was so pleased with and then we find that there is something to link on with. They find there is this vision and conclude and then they go a certain way and what comes to light is people who are dependent, they are praying "where it was the custom". You have the thought of custom coming in again which we have referred to showing that these things are open for us. It is not just something to look at as some kind of distant goal. There are things like that, but dependence is something that we can enjoy and prove at the moment.

KW Can I ask if you think that the prayer meeting is an essential meeting for us all? I was thinking in connection with being dependent. We have our meetings, week by week, but they do not just happen out of routine. We do not do things in the same way. I was thinking that the prayer meeting has been called the power meeting. We need that meeting for help and support and we pray for one another, we pray for the brethren, we pray for help in our gatherings. Is the prayer meeting an essential gathering to be dependent?

RWMcC I think it is and it is beneficial for us to be there and then there is the benefit that goes out to those that we pray for. John Richards said something last week as to the meetings, that if we announce them but nobody turns up there will not be a meeting. That is what you are saying?

KW We announce the gatherings and we have a hymn and a prayer to start. We go forward in dependence for each gathering and we get fresh help in each gathering. Is that right?

RWMcC I think so.

TCM Do you think that is one of the things that the Lord is saying at the present moment, pointing to local assemblies and the maintenance of that local position in many places?

RWMcC Just say a little more.

TCM That is really what divine guidance was first leading to, the setting up of a local meeting in Philippi, and there was opposition, of course, but nevertheless it took place. Do you think that is maybe something the Lord is saying at the moment?

RWMcC I think so. It is women, and then Lydia comes to light. There is the feminine side, and we see that with Mary of Magdala. She gets the message. She gets the first message really, does she not? I wonder if that links with what you say as to the assemblies.

JCG Having received the vision, and the Spirit's forbidding - "and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them", is it important that if we do find the Lord's mind in relation to things, as Paul did here, that we act on it straight away? It says, "Having sailed therefore away from Troas, we went in a straight course". They are not wasting time; they are acting obediently in dependence to what they had received from the Lord through the Spirit, do you think? That would be important for us too in the matter of dependence, that we do not just wait on it further but we act if we have a clear word about it.

RWMcC I think that is right, and in a certain sense that is a test of dependence. We are sometimes not sure, not too clear about things, but what it is to get a clear indication and to act on it. It is very helpful what you are saying.

AMB To be prepared to persevere in the matter too. They did not go straight to Philippi and meet Lydia right away. It says "And we were staying in that city certain days". They were active in their dependence and persevering in it. Do you think that should mark us?

RWMcC Yes, I think that is right. You might have thought they would get there and there would be the Macedonian man, and they would recognise him, but there were certain days, and there were other matters, and then there was the persecution, and it all did not

really look too good on the surface, but it works out: “all things work together for good”, Rom 8: 28.

AMB The result really is seen in the assembly in Philippi. We get some picture of the kind of meeting it was from the letter Paul wrote to them.

RWMcC That is good.

Dundee

20th October 2012

Key to Initials:

T D Beveridge, Kirkcaldy; A M Brown, Grangemouth; D C Brown, Edinburgh; J T Brown, Edinburgh; A P Grant, Dundee; G B Grant, Dundee; J C Gray, Grangemouth; P A Gray, Grangemouth; B P Hutson, Dundee; J Laurie, Brechin; R W McClean, Grimsby; T C Munro, Grangemouth; Q A Poore, Swanage; D T Pye, Kirkcaldy; J Strachan, Dundee; K Walker, Dundee

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

D Andrew Burr

Zechariah 3:1-7

John 8: 1-12

Week by week, there is a preaching of the glad tidings in this hall, out of an expectation that, where the gospel is taken up, God Himself will speak to us; and that expectation is reinforced by long experience. God takes advantage of the announcement of the preaching to speak Himself, and those who have had that experience know it is so because they sense something that lies beyond the measure of anyone who may be speaking in the preaching. It lies beyond the infirmities and limitations of the preacher; and lies beyond what might be thought of just as a gospel address. They feel that God Himself has spoken, and the reason why they would know that God had spoken is that, whenever God speaks to anyone, He gives them the sense that they have been brought through that speaking into His presence. I might say that that is unavoidable: if God speaks, those whom He addresses will have the sense that they have been brought into the presence of God. And there are two things that will always happen when you are brought into the presence of God, and therefore two things that will always happen if you truly hear the word of God: one is that you will have a very clear view of what *you are*, and the other is that you will have a very clear view of what *God* is. We need these things and that is why we come to the gospel. Now I was just reflecting on my own experience, and I could not have put my early experience into the words I have just used; but what I have described is among the oldest memories I have. I can remember feeling that I was in the presence of God in the preaching perhaps not long after I started school - maybe fifty five years ago. You see, God is not just calling adults through His word; He has something to say to everyone who is at the preaching. You may feel you have a very clear sense of what you are, you may feel the constant prompting of your conscience, you may be reminded of things that you had not thought

anybody knew; but now you find that clearly God knows. If I can call on my own experience, maybe that kind of feeling comes first; but it ought not to be the dominant feeling, because it is clearly a greater thing to come away from the presence of God with a clearer sense of what *God* is.

Now, I have read about a man and a woman who were both standing in the presence of God. That is what links these two people together; they were both standing in the presence of God, and what I have said about the presence of God is clearly true of them both. We get an unsparing view of what *they* were, and we get a very clear view of God Himself as well. They are both real people. The first one may have been seen in a vision, but he is a real person because we know what his name was and we know what his job was. We know less about the woman; we do not know her name, but we are in no doubt that the story we have read of her is true, that what was said about her is true and what happened to her is true as well. Perhaps someone here might have an experience as real as this today. Do not think that these are matters for dreams or that they might only happen to someone else. Today might be the day that it happens to *you*, and I would like you to give some thought to what will happen, and what you will go away with if you let it happen.

The book of Zechariah was probably written when the people of Israel - or some of them, a few of them - were coming back from the captivity in Babylon. This man Joshua was the priest and he had come back from Babylon, and he is viewed in this section standing before God. You might rightly say that that is where the priest ought to be, but the condition in which he was standing before God made it quite impossible for him to act as a priest. Something has gone badly wrong and Satan knows it. So Satan comes as well and his work is to accuse Joshua. Now Satan knows enough about each of us to be able to do this. He is the father of lies, but he does not need to lie to make out that I am a sinner: it is frankly obvious. He can seize on the things I have done and represent to God that those things, and what I am, disqualify me from the blessings that God might otherwise have wished to confer upon me in His love. I think it

is true about Satan that he knows about God's righteousness. I do not believe that he understands God's grace but he knows about God's righteousness, and he knows enough about it to accuse the sinner.

Now scripture speaks about a number of garments. The Lord Jesus tells a parable about an occasion when a king made a wedding feast (Matt 22: 11, 12) and, as we often say, we understand that he gave every one a wedding garment. The guests who were received were people who had come in from the ditches and we can assume that they were conferred with a wedding garment. It speaks of the way that God is able to confer righteousness upon us. We have none of our own, but God is able through the work that has been accomplished on His behalf by the Lord Jesus Christ to clothe in righteousness everyone who comes: "righteousness of God ... upon all those who believe", Rom 3: 22. That is a garment that is offered in the gospel. We are also familiar with the parable of the prodigal son, and how the father had a garment for the prodigal son: that garment speaks of the Father's love. I have been enjoying a few thoughts about the prodigal son. Somebody said to me that they imagine that when he got up from the pig troughs in the far country, most of his friends would not have recognised him; but the father knew him! The father knew him and he knew him a long way off and, although he was clothed in his rags, the father embraced him. Somebody else remarked that He did not love the rags but He loved the man who was wearing them; and He clothed him with the expression of that love. "God commends *his* love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us", Rom 5: 8.

Now this man Joshua, as I have said, was a priest, and the priest had a garment. The garments that the priest should wear had been designed by God Himself. God is a clothes designer, as we know: He made coats of skin for Adam, for example, to His own design; so that instead of looking at the sinful flesh of a fallen man, He might look with pleasure at His own work. The priest's garments were also made to God's pattern. We do not know if Joshua here was wearing the priest's garment but his situation was as bad

whether he was wearing it or not. If he was not wearing it, then how was that? Here was a man who had been called by God to a certain office to be available in God's service, but had the clothes that God prescribed to enable him to fulfil that office been discarded somewhere along the way? It may be, on the other hand, that the garments that are spoken of here were the priest's garments, in which case, how was it that they were filthy - filthy? How was that? You might think that that question would apply even if he was wearing his own clothes. How was it he was wearing filthy garments? Joshua does not say. What could he say? Satan had a lot to say and there was a lot that Satan could say, but what could Joshua say? Anything Joshua could have said about himself would have just given Satan ammunition, would it not? What, for example, if Joshua had said, 'Well, I have only just come from Babylon'. 'Ah', Satan says, 'what were you doing in Babylon?'. You might say, 'Well, I go out into the world every day, I cannot help getting involved in things out there'. 'Ah', Satan could say, 'you are involved in the world, are you? I know all about the world. I know it is not of the Father. I know it is coming under judgment. It is all over you: your clothes are covered with it. You have made yourself unsuitable to the office to which God has called you. How did that happen?'. This man is like us, you see. He is not a man like the man at the wedding who came in off the streets. This is a man who had been called to God's service. He might be like someone who has broken bread. He has committed himself at one time, and now he is in the place where the service entrusted to him should be conducted and he is entirely unworthy of it. There he is, standing in the place of office but incapable of exercising it, and Satan is standing right next to him with enough to say to condemn him, and Joshua cannot say anything. And I say to you, beloved brother or sister, you cannot say anything either. But I would say this to you also; you do not need to, because, when Satan goes on as he does, eventually God tells him to be quiet. Satan has to do what he is told, and Satan is silenced by a God who is rich in mercy. He says, 'I am the God who has chosen Jerusalem'. That is the right that God asserts. It is the right He has to exercise and display His mercy and that voice, the voice of

that God here, is made to prevail. So Satan is silenced and now heaven waits to hear what God has to say. God could have asked a few questions, could He not? He could have asked the sort of questions Satan could have asked. 'Joshua, *how* did you get like that? How did you get in that state? Did you not know that that garment was a garment of holy service?' He could have said those things, could He not? He could have asserted His righteousness and where could Joshua have stood? What could Joshua do? But what does God do? He completely confounds Satan. Satan was not ready for this: He says, 'Take that filthy garment away, and give him something else'. You might think that is very simple, is it not? But Satan is completely confounded. He would have never thought of that.

You might be exercised, as I say, that the word of God might bring you into the presence of God week by week, and you know it troubles your conscience. You might go out of here resolved that this week is going to be different, that this week is going to be better, that you are going to speak to the people you were rude to and put it right, that you are going to stop doing this and that, you are going to stop going here and there, you are going to pray more, all these other things. Will it happen? - well, put it this way, I will not promise you that it will. But God is saying that your justification in the presence of God will not rest on your good intentions. It will not rest on what you *have* done, the best of it or anything else; and it will not rest on what you would *like* to do or what you *may* do. We *are* saved, Paul says, by grace. "Ye are saved by grace" (Eph 2: 5), and here is the grace of God. He says, "Take away the filthy garments from off him" and, "I clothe thee with festival-robles". Beloved, what a wonderful God we have to deal with. I will come in a moment to how God does that: the adversary might say, 'but, but, but ...' How is God able to do that? Changing the garment does not make the garment clean. We will come to that, but let us see first that Satan is silenced by the grace of God. What a wonderful thing that is. If the word of God brings you into His presence this afternoon, I will tell you how you will go out. You will go out, beloved, with a sense you have

never had before that you had to do with “the God of all grace” (1 Pet 5: 10), the God of all grace who may have surprised you with the provision that He is able to make for you; so you will stand out there justified - “justified freely by his grace”, (Rom 3: 24): by His grace. It is a wonderful thing, beloved, a wonderful thing! God has magnificent ideas in His mind for the sinner and He will not allow anyone to change His mind. Grace is His resource that will save Him changing His mind. What is grace? As another has said, “The principle of grace is this, it does what it will with its own”, FER vol 2 p121. His righteousness must be satisfied but He is not pressing a claim of righteousness against a sinner who cannot meet it if there is Another who will, who can, who is ready to. Beloved, the Lord Jesus has raised His hand on your account, and if you will only put your faith in Him, He has undertaken to answer to God’s righteousness for the claims that that righteousness makes against you which you could never ever meet. The testimony is this: that that work of righteousness which He undertook for the sinner is accomplished; and the proof of it is in this festival-robe.

Now I go on to John 8. In a sense it is the same story, but there are some differences. One of the differences is that, whereas in Zechariah Satan was accusing Joshua, in John 8 Satan’s representatives are accusing the Lord. You notice that. They sought something - not to accuse the woman, although they did that too - but to accuse *Him*. Now, that is very important, because the question of your righteousness and your salvation now becomes a question between God and Satan. Satan - like these Jews - is now questioning whether God is entitled, if He were to wish to, to present salvation to you. It is a very bold question but there can be only one answer, and it will be *God’s answer*. So this woman is taken in sin. I do not want to go into the detail of this particular sin except to say that, unlike many other sins - many of which are in our thoughts and private to ourselves - this sin cannot be committed on your own; so there was someone else who was as guilty as this woman. I think if you had found him in the byways of Jerusalem and asked him, he would have said he was in a better position than the woman because

somehow they had chosen to bring the woman and let him go. But the result of that was that, although she stood in her sin in the presence of God, someone just as guilty as her was not there. The result was that whatever she received he would miss. He would probably have thought that that would be to his advantage, and we are about to see that it was not. The Lord Jesus asserts the rights He has. What He says challenges them all, but, at the same time, we could say that He was among them as “Him that is without sin”. No one can say anything against the Lord Jesus: He is marked by perfect righteousness and holiness. As Man, He represents God in the most absolute way, “Him that is without sin”. Here we have something rather more literal than we have with Joshua and Zechariah because this God before whom we stand is *among* them; and He is come not in judgment but He has come to *stoop down*. In the presence of this sinner who was standing up, the Lord Jesus stoops down in front of her and writes on the ground. What a wonderful thing that is! Imagine her coming into the presence of God, feeling as small as possible, and the God before whom she came stooped until He was lower than her. Think of that! It is another manifestation of God’s grace, but taking away nothing from His righteousness - “him that is without sin among you”. He had come in grace but He had come as the sinless one: “Him who knew not sin” (2 Cor 5: 21), “sin apart” (Heb 4: 15), “who did no sin”, 1 Pet 2: 22. He did no sin and there He was, claiming the sovereign right to decide this woman’s case and to disqualify everybody else. What a wonderful thing that is! These other people standing by, what could they say? He disqualified them all, and He asserts His own right to decide this case. He has done more than assert His rights to *decide* your case. He stooped the second time, and in stooping the second time, He has asserted the right to *take* your case and to meet the claim of God’s righteousness against it.

Let me leave you with this thought. God says to Satan, “Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”. Could you say that you are a brand plucked from the fire? I am. I just ask you this question, who went into the fire to get you? It is not as if you were knocked out with

a stick or something like that; no, it says “plucked out of the fire”. Someone has felt the full intensity of the heat of a fire on your account. Someone has gone where the wrath of God burned in all its intensity, and He went there to pluck you out of it. Jesus stooped, it says, and He wrote with His finger on the ground. Think of the feelings of Jesus, the feelings that have left a mark on this world, the fingers that communicated the gift of God, the fingers that touched a leper, the fingers that touched the eyes of the blind, the fingers that broke bread for five thousand people; think of them too as the fingers, beloved, that reached into the fire to pluck you out. What a wonderful thing that is! And it is that One now who claims the right to silence Satan on your behalf: “neither do I condemn thee”, He says. Are these easy words to say? Is she just let off? I tell you, they were not easy words to say. I cannot remember who the first person was who was healed in the ministry of Jesus - perhaps the gospel records would not allow you to tell straight away; but the first time that Jesus reached out His hand and touched an infirm person so that they were healed, He committed Himself irrevocably to all that the cross would involve. Mr Darby says, ‘He bore in His spirit what He took away in His power (for all was the fruit of sin in man)’, Collected Writings vol 7 p172. So, in touching even the *consequences* of sin, beloved, He undertook before God to bear the *guilt* of it. He could not say this to this woman except that, while she stood there and He wrote on the ground, He was committing Himself before God to take the brazen sin of that woman upon Himself as if it was His own and bear the wrath of God in relation to it. As I say, He was willing, for this woman, to reach into the fire of God’s wrath and pluck her out. What grace beloved, what grace! If you feel you have been in the presence of God, you have been in the presence of a God ready to stoop like this, ready to act like this; not just to be nice or to be kind, but to suffer and suffer the utmost intensity that the sinner might go free.

Oh, what does ‘go’ mean? I read on a little bit in both these passages because they talk about walk, and people who have been touched by the grace of God, as you might be this afternoon, will

walk out of this room different. You will have been touched by the most powerful thing that a creature could ever feel, the grace of God; and if it truly has touched you, you will never be the same again. And that will be seen in the way and the places in which you walk. He does not say to Joshua 'I will give you a place to walk in the streets of Babylon, to get these garments dirty all over again' but "a place to walk among these who stand by". In other words, to walk from now on in the conscious sense that, having come into the presence of God, you will never leave it - *never leave it*. And that is what this woman was left to do. The Lord says, "I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness". Well, you might say that she has got to go back to the rest of her life. Will she walk out of the sight of Jesus, and perhaps never see Him again? That is not a safe way to go. It says, "he that follows me shall not walk in darkness". He says "go, and sin no more". There is only one path in which you can carry that out and it keeps you near, very near to Jesus.

Well, I have not any more to say, beloved, all I have done is to draw attention to these two people. They are rather like us, are they not? You might say, 'I am not as bad as these people', but in character we are. We may have committed ourselves to the service of God, to the path of His will, but we are stained with the world and the things that we have done out of pleasure and out of our own pursuits and our own way. There we stand unable and perhaps unwilling to serve; accused by Satan in a way that would disqualify us forever from the privileges that we thought were ours.

It is only in divine grace, beloved, that they will ever be ours and, if they are ours by divine grace, they are ours forever. May He bless the word.

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