

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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THE GOOD SHEPHERD
ENLARGEMENT

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP, AND THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 8: 12; 9: 5-7; 10: 1-42

PAG Our enquiry together is into various features of Christ that come out in John's gospel where He says "I am". We considered food in our earlier enquiry, the Lord saying, "I am the bread of life", chap 6: 35. In this enquiry we see that the Lord is "the light of the world". What is in mind is following Him. If we follow Him as we see Him, we must go somewhere and we come to the flock, and there is "one flock, one shepherd". He says of Himself, "I am the good shepherd". He also says, "I am the door of the sheep". We might notice that at the end of John 7 it says, "And every one went to his home" (v 53), and at the beginning of John 8, "But Jesus went to the mount of Olives", v 1. He is another Man from another world. In our enquiry in John 6 we spoke about food in view of energy and life and movement, but then where are we going to move to? We move to the Person, but, of course, we want to move to where He is; so I wondered if we could get some help together on these lines of enquiry.

JTB That is very helpful. "I am the light of the world". John 1 says, "The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man", v 9. Is there a sense there that the light is available for all? I suppose that would be a gospel touch. What you are indicating is that the light has in mind that we might follow. There is an interesting scripture in Job, "To bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of the living" (chap 33: 30); so the light really has in mind life. Is that right?

PAG That is right. "The true light", to which you have referred, "lightens every man", that is, it 'sheds its light upon' "every man" (see note), and it may also expose what man is, but we want to see that when the Lord says, "I am the light of the world", what He is seeking is a response, although there are so many people that are unresponsive: "every one went to his home". There is nothing wrong

with having a home, but they went into their own circumstances while the Lord went into His Father's circumstances. And "the light of the world" has in mind that "he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". That is to say, we would walk in the light in which the Lord Himself walked, "the light of life".

JTB It seems to suggest an area where the light is really beaming, and our exercise would be to be in that shining, do you think, and therefore come into an environment which is wholly light and where life is evident?

PAG Yes. God's first action in the restorative work of creation was to say, "Let there be light", Gen 1: 3. We know that God is "in the light" (1 John 1: 7); that is His dwelling-place; so that is God's sphere of operations. "God is light" (v 5), of course. He stands entirely distinct from darkness; so He *is* light; He is *in* the light; and He has *operated* in the light; and He wants to draw us into that.

DCB Is this reference to the world one that would draw our attention to the fact that in due time God will have, even publicly, a world which has no other light but Christ? What we are seeking to have is really the anticipation now of what will be fully secured then.

PAG Yes; so there is a prefiguring of that in the millennial setting of the holy city. It says of it in Revelation 21: 22-24, "And I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb. And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine for it; for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory to it". Millennially, that will be seen. Figuratively it is set out for us in Revelation 21, but subsequently the eternal day will be consistent with what is said about God, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all". That light will shine eternally in Christ.

DCB It is good for us to have in our souls that there is the divine end and for the moment, therefore, we are coming, by the Spirit, into the anticipation of that divine completion.

PAG What you say is right: it is available to us now. It says in the Psalms, “in thy light shall we see light”, Ps 36: 9. It is God’s light, and it brings us into the fulness of His thoughts expressed in Christ.

JCG Is the light intended to change us? The first thing that we receive in the gospel is light from God. God says to Job, “Where is the way to where light dwelleth? and the darkness, where is its place” (Job 38: 19) setting out the distinction that God always makes between light and darkness, do you think?

PAG It is interesting that we have that referred twice to the book of Job. It is a book that contains many suggestions, but some of them are men’s own ideas. They may sound good enough in their place, but God is going to speak, and that is when “the true light” shines. It says in Job 37: 21, “And now men see not the light as it gleameth, it is hidden in the skies. But the wind passeth by and cleareth them”. Now, the Spirit comes in in order that the light might shine: “But the wind passeth by and cleareth them”. The Spirit is acting here; He has been mentioned in John 7 in relation to a glorified Christ. You can see Him now beginning to act so that the light that has been hidden might become clear, and it is clear in Christ. What has been said as to light changing us is important. “But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit”, 2 Cor 3: 18. Our brother Bert Taylor reminds us that that is a permanent change. Such a change is effected when we see the glory of Christ. Conversion is a permanent change, but it is not the only change, is it? We are to be changed after that too, do you think?

JCG Indeed, the whole gospel of John and the presentation of the glory of Christ in these various forms brings that to us.

PAG So every time we get an impression of the glory of Christ it should change us.

GBG You referred to God being light and also “in the light”. Being “in the light” is what God has moved into. Has He moved into that in

the way the Lord Jesus has come in? “God is light”: that is His moral nature; but He is “in the light”: is that seen in Christ?

PAG Yes; so it is a fact that God dwells “in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen, nor is able to see”, 1 Tim 6: 16. That is His dwelling-place, but what you say about God moving is important. God has moved in Christ in order that we might come into the good of the light, because the light would otherwise have been inaccessible to us, and that is not what God had in mind. He had in mind that we should see the light, that we should be *changed* by the light, and that we should *walk* in the light. That happens because Christ came in. Is that what you are thinking?

GBG That is right; so it is “the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him”, John 1: 18. That is the action of light. God has moved into light and He is “in the light”. It is interesting that in that scripture in 1 John, “But if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have ...” it is what “we have”. It is what “we have”, something positive, not only knowledge, but we actually have something.

PAG We do. John tells us what we have by experience. He says, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren”, 1 John 3: 14. How would someone know that this is true. Well, if you love the brethren, that means there is something true in you of the work of God.

RG Is it significant that, at the beginning of this part of the dispensation in which we live, Saul of Tarsus was brought down on that road to Damascus by that wonderful heavenly light? It says, “a light out of heaven”, Acts 9: 3. There was no other light like that. And then immediately, while his eyes could not see, he stood up and when he walked, he found someone who was ready and able to lead him to the local assembly in Damascus, v 8.

PAG So it starts as “a light out of heaven”; that is the first thing. We have to recognise that the light is not earthly light; it is heavenly light. But then he goes on to say, “there suddenly shone out of heaven a great light round about me”, Acts 22: 6. So it is still “a light out of

heaven” but it is “a great light”; it is growing as far as he is concerned. And then in Acts 26, “I saw, O king, a light above the brightness of the sun”, v 13. In that sense he saw a light that was greater than anything in creation because he saw the light of the Creator Himself. He saw the One who had created it, “a light above the brightness of the sun”. That shows that the transformation can go on and it can grow - it is cumulative.

RG Do you think the increase in the light is worked out in what he says in Romans, then Colossians and then eventually Ephesians? You get “a light above the brightness of the sun” in Ephesians.

PAG Well, in Romans God is justified in Christ; in Colossians He is satisfied in Christ; but in Ephesians He is glorified in Christ. The light is growing; it is the same light. Perhaps rather than saying that the light is growing, it might be better to say that the appreciation of the light is growing.

JL It is a property of light that it dispels darkness so, corresponding with what you said, the light itself is not necessarily growing, but where the light is apprehended the darkness is dispelled. It is impossible then, as the Lord indicates in this chapter, to be following the light and find ourselves walking in darkness. That is an impossibility; the two things cannot go together.

PAG That is good. There is another word in Job, “his light dispels the cloud”, chap 37: 11. It really takes the darkness away. There is a verse in a hymn of Mr Darby’s:

Disease, and death, and demon,
All fled before Thy word,
As darkness, the dominion
Of day’s returning lord! (Hymn 189).

I recall my grandmother explaining that darkness is Satan’s world, but she thought that ‘day’s returning lord’ suggests Jesus, and His dominion and His rule and His world, which are greater than Satan’s world. Christ’s world is the only world for the believer.

NJH Can we get anything without light?

PAG Well, what I would say is this, if God put light first in His creation, then it must be essential. There could not be life if there was not light. The teaching of John's gospel includes three great moral features, light, liberty and life, but what would it be to come into liberty, if there was no light? And how would you have life if there was no light and no liberty? It is absolutely essential because otherwise if we do not get it without heavenly light, what we may have is only the product of our own minds. When Peter said, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matt 16: 16) and the Lord said, "flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens" (v 17), that was light, was it not? He did not get it by working it out.

NJH What has been said is right, that for the believer light has come in and dispelled the darkness, but this gospel actually begins with the darkness not apprehending it, John 1: 5. That was the character of the darkness.

PAG The darkness *cannot* apprehend the light. It is not that it might come to apprehend it; the darkness has to go; the moral effect of light is that darkness is dispelled.

RB Is it by faith that we apprehend the light?

PAG There is a strong link between light and faith. We have been taught that faith is light in the soul, but then we have to respond. It is not enough simply to have the light as to something; we have to respond to it. If we have the light as to our sinnership and the light as to Christ as Saviour, we still have to accept Him as our Saviour, do we not?

RB I was wondering as to that because really as the light comes to us, we are challenged as to whether we are regulated by it.

PAG That is exactly the point. "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". That means you are not now walking according to your own will in the darkness but you "have the light of life"; you are regulated by that. If we are not regulated by light, we are self-willed, and that is not what God is looking for.

AMB The test at the beginning of the gospel is whether the light was received. That is what you are speaking of. Light also places us in responsibility, the responsibility to receive the light and the truth that is embodied in it, do you think?

PAG Yes, and receiving is active, as you well know. Mr James Taylor has an address, 'What Believers Receive' (vol 8 p459), and it is very important because it touches exactly on what you are saying. We have a responsibility to receive what God has given us; so we have a responsibility to receive or accept the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. The gift of the Spirit is God's gift, but it says as to the Spirit that certain ones were to "receive" it, John 20: 22. Receiving the Spirit involves making way for Him.

RB In Ephesus they had left their "first love" and they were about to lose their life, (Rev 2: 4); say something about that.

PAG Well, the light was still there, but they had allowed, you might say, the top shoots to be taken. They still had all the light, but light needs to be held in reality and living affection for Christ. The link between light and life is very significant. It has to be living affection for Christ. That is why He presents Himself in the attractive way He does as the Shepherd. There is no lack of light, but I have to ask myself, am I *formed* by what I know?

DCB Does the man in John 9 give us that by example? The light came in, but he was regulated by the light. The fact that it is "the pool of Siloam, which is interpreted, Sent" really meant that he could come into the benefit of the light as he was obedient.

PAG That is right. Now, obedience is the first element of salvation and it is essential. He did not know very much but he did know enough; he said, "One thing I know", v 25. He knew enough, and if we know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and are regulated by Him, I am not saying we should not grow, but that, in a sense, is the essential starting point. A willingness to come under regulation is not natural; it is formed by the active work of divine Persons.

RG Is there a difference between light and knowledge?

PAG Well, men in the world have knowledge, knowledge in many spheres, in professions and so forth, and that knowledge is useful. You need to know how to count and how to read, but that is not light from God as we are speaking of it.

RG No, you can go to a college and get plenty of knowledge and that fills the mind, but the light that comes from heaven fills the heart and affects the affections of the persons, and the heart.

PAG Light as we are speaking of it is the revelation of God; you do not get that by mere learning.

TWL Ephesians 5 says, “the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth”, v 9.

PAG Exactly; so that means the light has been formative, “goodness and righteousness and truth”. That is something that has been formed in the soul of the believer and is available for divine Persons. “The fruit of the light” is not for us exactly; it is for God because He is the light in the first place.

JW I was thinking of what the Lord said to the disciples, “But blessed are *your* eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which ye behold and did not see them”, Matt 13: 16,17. Would that be the effect of light?

PAG Seeing and hearing are important, but then there were some who “desired ... and did not see them”. That would involve the sovereignty of God. We can do nothing to change or affect the sovereignty of God, but we should give thanks for it nonetheless.

JW I am sure that is helpful. We wonder sometimes that persons cannot see certain things but that is how light penetrates into the soul, that we do see something of these things. Is that right?

PAG Yes, and you cannot see without light, but I think what we are saying at the moment is important: obedience to the light is essential because if we are obedient to the light, then we will get something further as a result of that. If we are not obedient to the light, God is not going to give more.

APG In chapter 12 the Lord speaks about becoming “sons of light”: “While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may become sons of light”, v 36. Is that the change you are referring to?

PAG Yes; so what would you say more about “sons of light”? I think that is important.

APG “Sons of light” would be characterised by light. The man in chapter 9 of John became a son of light.

PAG In that sense you can be seen to be of a particular generation in which God is operating, would you say, so that there is something that becomes characteristic? A son of light would be characteristically of the light.

DHM We have spoken earlier about what is cumulative. The reception of light involves what is incremental in a sense. The hymn says:

O what blessing in believing
In the One who came to die,
And the glorious light receiving
Of God’s Son enthroned on high! (Hymn 219).

We do not get it all at once. I was thinking light is designed to move us forward. It says in another hymn:

And in that light of life I’ll walk
Till travelling days are done (Hymn 248);

- so there is safety in progress.

PAG So, by the Spirit, we have capacity for movement, but then accepting and acceding to the light is what would cause us to be drawn in the steps that the Lord was taking. The thought of what is incremental is important, as we have been saying; it is cumulative. Something is added: “For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little”, Isa 28: 10. Something is added each time we have an impression of Christ, but it is added in view of further movement.

AML Would you say the Philippian jailor moved on to be a son of light? He asked for light, but this is progressive, and he was answering to it.

PAG That is good because what he got was more than what he asked for. There was light, “Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved”, but then it says, “thou and thy house”, Acts 16: 31. He got light not just for himself but for his house; so you might say the sphere of the light immediately expanded for him.

JCG I was wondering about what was said earlier as to the man in John 9. He would say something about the Lord’s spittle and putting the mud on his eyes. It is immediately connected with the light, “I am the light of the world”, and that is what He does. Would “I am the light of the world” bear on that?

PAG So the man got the direct, living benefit of the “I am”. He got, you might say, the essence of the One who was there, who “made mud of the spittle, and put the mud, as ointment, on his eyes”. There was efficacy, you might say, in the essence of the Person that was there. The Lord, having come into manhood, was able to make Himself available in this way. It was a very direct transaction between the blind man and the Lord Himself.

JCG That is good. It involves the Lord contacting him personally and then towards the end of the chapter we find the evidence of him following, showing that the light had the effect. The fact was that he was in darkness before, and now he is in life and following the Lord and finding out the glory of the Person who had done the work for him.

PAG What the Lord did appeared to be contrary to what would help. The man was blind and the Lord’s action in making mud of the spittle and putting it on his eyes, one might say, would make it worse, not better, but he was subject to what the Lord said and did, and he went to “the pool of Siloam, which is interpreted, Sent”. The sent One, that is the Lord, sent this man, and if the Lord is sent, He has a right to send us, and if we are subject to that, then there will be blessing.

Someone might protest that they would not have done it that way; that is not the point; the point is how the Lord would do it.

NJH The Lord says to Him, “Thou hast both seen him”, v 37. Would that be the light he received?

PAG Yes; so at that point he had seen Him without fully recognising who He was, but, “Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he”. We might in our soul’s journey see the Lord without fully recognising Him, but He will come back and tell us something more. I believe the Lord is acting and moving and the question is whether we can see Him. If we have not quite caught what He is saying, we need to wait until He speaks again; and He will speak again, and something further will open up.

NJH And you will recognise His voice.

PAG The Lord will lead us on. This man is seeing now. In John 8 it is a question of following, and in John 9 it is seeing, so that when you come to John 10 the question is, ‘Where are you going to go?’. If you are able to follow and able to see, where will you go? You will go to the Shepherd, yes, but you will also go to the flock.

NCMcK I was wondering if you could open that up a little in regard to what you said this morning as to Mr Raven’s teaching as to ‘Fellowship, Privilege and Testimony’ (vol 1 p58), how the light would be effective in regard to these matters.

PAG Fellowship is governed by light. Fellowship according to God is not an invention of a particular company of believers, and we need to be very clear about that. The fellowship of God’s Son was there when Paul wrote to Corinth, and he wrote about something that already existed even when he wrote about it; so it is governed by the light of Scripture, and what we know that it is subject to “Jesus Christ our Lord”, 1 Cor 1: 9. That involves accepting the lordship of Christ and thus we accept His authority, and it is as accepting that, that we are regulated by Him in relation to the principles of the fellowship. Now, if we are regulated by that, it says, “But if we walk in the light as *he*” - that is God – “is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all

sin", 1 John 1: 7. What if issues arise? Well, there is a means for their resolution. When that is accepted, that opens up the way into privilege. You get the thought, for example, in 1 John 2, "I write to you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning", v 13. We enter into the knowledge of God, but then if we have done that, we would desire that there would be others who might come into the blessing that that would speak of so, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son a propitiation for our sins", chap 4: 10. That leads you on to the gospel, the testimony of the gospel. It is important that this is understood because at the present time in Christendom generally, the idea might rather be that the gospel comes first and then other things are secondary to that. But the truth of the gospel, the truth of the kingdom and the truth of the assembly are one whole; they are not separate items; they are to form one whole; and therefore the gospel goes out from the house of God and brings persons in.

NCMcK It is good to see how the light governs the position which we are in. Mr James Taylor's article on the light that governs the position (vol 5 p355) is so helpful. Even the privilege and what we enjoy are governed by knowledge and understanding of God. That governs us as to how we understand the point of the service we are at and so on. "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" is light of Christ in the believer and that light is to be seen in testimony, "among whom ye appear as lights in the world", Phil 2: 15.

PAG It is important to recognise that the believer as regulated by light is regulated in the whole of his life, not just in certain aspects of it.

JTB There are the two great lights to rule the day and rule the night. We need to be subject to Christ, but the thought of "the small light to rule the night" (Gen 1: 16) suggests we are to be true to what pertains to the assembly, do you think? We sometimes stop at "ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son" but it is "Jesus Christ our Lord". Every believer, of course, is part of that fellowship, but to

be practically in the enjoyment of it entails the recognition of “Jesus Christ our Lord”. Is that right?

PAG Yes, and what you quote from Genesis 1 is important because we say, and it is right, it is in Scripture, that it is “the great light” and “the small light”, but it starts with “the two great lights”. No person is greater than the assembly. It is one of “the two great lights”. And then you come to the fact in the later verses as to man and his wife, it says, “and let them have dominion” (v 26); so the assembly in that setting shares in headship with Christ. The recognition of these things would help in the matter of subjection.

GBG Every believer is called into “the fellowship of his Son”, but in John’s epistle it says, “But if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have fellowship”. It does not say, ‘we are in fellowship’ but “we **have** fellowship”. That is an actual, practical experience, but then it is “if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light”.

PAG Fellowship is not an abstract thing; fellowship is enjoyed by one believer with another; but it is enjoyed as we are regulated by the light.

DCB Is that John’s thought in the flock, that is, persons who are equally attracted and drawn to the Shepherd. He does not speak about fellowship here; it is what is enjoyed of it.

PAG Exactly. In his gospel John does not speak formally of fellowship, nor does he speak formally of the assembly, but he shows you the practical working out of fellowship and he shows you the personnel of the assembly. The assembly is composed of persons. It is not an abstract idea; it is composed of persons; and every believer with the Spirit has their place in it. Now, whether they have it actually and practically is another matter, but each one is available to be part of it.

JCG Is it important therefore that he says first of all, “I am the door of the sheep” and then later He gives the way in for the individual, “I am the door: if any one enter in by me, he shall be saved” but first of all He says, “I am the door of the sheep”. So the objective is that

persons would come together into this collective position that He speaks about.

PAG Yes, and in that sense the way in is not optional. “I am the door of the sheep”, the Lord says. I cannot decide how I might go in; the Lord is “the door of the sheep”.

RB Perhaps you could say some more as regards fellowship so that the young ones can understand it more clearly. Should someone ask for fellowship, or ask to break bread?

PAG Well, fellowship involves what we share in common. What does that phrase mean? It suggests something that we enjoy together; so in Ephesians chapter 4 it says, “There is one body and one Spirit, as ye have been also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all”, v 4-6. There is something that we can all have part in. It is what we enjoy together. Think of a young person who has grown up or come amongst the brethren, to speak very simply, and who loves the brethren. It says, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren”, 1 John 3: 14. If a young person loves the brethren, that would be a good thing, but are they saved? Do they know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour? Do they have the gift of the Spirit? If these things are true and they enjoy the fellowship and company of the brethren, and these are indicators that they are in fellowship, but then the expression of it, the highest expression of fellowship, is the breaking of bread. We have spoken about light, and about our responsibility to be subject to the light, and part of the light of Scripture is given in 1 Corinthians 11, “the Lord Jesus, in the night in which he was delivered up, took bread, and having given thanks broke it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after having supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me”, v 23-25. There is light from heaven about what the Lord is looking for so that, if we enjoy the fellowship, the company and fellowship of the brethren, we love the brethren, we are saved and we have the gift of the Spirit,

why would we not take this next step of remembering the Lord Jesus? In order to do that, we need to recognise as we have said, that the Lord is “the door of the sheep”, hence there is a way in. Brethren therefore would be responsible to take the matter up if I asked to remember the Lord Jesus in the breaking of bread. They would be responsible to come and ask me if I do love the Lord, and love the brethren, and if I do have my sins forgiven and know the Lord Jesus as my Saviour, if I do have the gift of the Spirit *and* if I have kept myself clear of other links and associations that would not be suitable for the Lord’s company and presence. If these things are true, and generally we would find they are, that would be a simple matter. You are right to say we ask to break bread, and we do not receive persons into fellowship either. We simply accept as being true what the Lord has done in that person and we are delighted to link on with them in remembering Him on a Lord’s day morning. Is that all right?

RB Is that really the force of what Paul says in 2 Timothy, “with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart”, 2 Tim 2: 22?

PAG So “a pure heart” includes that we are free from any association that might hinder us from having part in this. You might say there is only one association, “the fellowship of his Son”, to which all believers are called.

GAB According to 1 Corinthians 10, which was referred to earlier, “communion” and “fellowship” seem to mean the same thing. We might think of fellowship as being a certain association which we belong to and break bread with, but the idea of communion shows that it is something more deep, is it not, really? The interchange we have together of spiritual minds is what is enjoyed within the circle of fellowship.

PAG Communion is the common enjoyment of the same things, our enjoyment of the love of Christ. You love the Lord Jesus and I love the Lord Jesus; would it not be better if we could share our impressions with one another?

JCG Are we to maintain this? Revelation 22 says, “Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and that they should go in by the gates into the city”, v 14. The “right to the tree of life” is dependent on my washing my robes and continuing in that. That involves being free from all contamination that any sphere of the world might provide.

PAG If we just take in a simple way the Lord’s words, “I am the door of the sheep”, would you really like to take something in through that door that the Lord would not approve of? Would you like to take that into the flock? You would not want to do that, would you? You could hide it in your pocket if you want to, but the Lord would see it. If you love the Lord Jesus, you are not going to bring things in that He would not want to see, are you? It is not that you just leave them outside and pick them up when you go back out of the door again; you need to get rid of them. I am not intending to enumerate specific things. If there is something you would not want to take in through that blessed door, then just get rid of it.

NJH We have the blood coming first in 1 Corinthians 10. It really makes way for the rights of God. Is that right?

PAG I think that is why it does come first. 1 Corinthians 10 is the public side; on the public side we have to make sure the world knows that for us the rights of God come first, that there is no superior right to the rights of God. That is why, I think, the cup comes first in 1 Corinthians 10, and then the rights of God make way for the enjoyment of what the bread would speak of. There is One who is set to protect all this, the One who says, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”. It does not say ‘the good shepherd *laid* down his life for the sheep’; it says He “lays down his life for the sheep”. You think of all of the Lord’s life, the whole of His life devoted, of course, to the will of His God and Father, but He says, “But I am in the midst of you as the one that serves”, Luke 22: 27. “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”: it was the characteristic of the Lord as the good Shepherd.

JD Do you think that suggests how the Lord in His grace would seek to maintain us in our affections? We were speaking about fellowship, but fellowship is really contained in “If ye love me” (John 14: 15), and if we truly love Him, these other matters will fall into place.

PAG The Lord’s affections never wax and wane, do they? He “lays down his life for the sheep”. It is like a constancy of sacrificial love that would provide whatever was needed in order that the sheep might be protected and preserved.

AEM Could you just say a word as to why the word “good” was used?

PAG The good Shepherd provides everything that is needed, and if what is needed is that He should lay down His life for the sheep; you get that, I suppose, in Psalm 22. “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”. It may be that Psalm 23 is more “the great shepherd” (Heb 13: 20), while Psalm 24 would be “the chief shepherd” (1 Pet 5: 4), “Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle” (v 8); nevertheless these features of shepherding come into these three psalms in different ways that show us that the source of goodness lies in Christ. It was said in ministry a few months ago that we need to flood our local meetings with goodness. That has remained with me, and the way to flood our local meetings with goodness is to draw attention to Christ, “the good shepherd”.

AEM I was looking at the reference about having life “abundantly”. The good Shepherd is the way into that, is He not? The extent and the expanse of what He has in His heart for the sheep, who could tell it?

PAG I suppose the other thing we could have in our minds is that He is the only One who is good: He “did no sin” (1 Pet 2: 22); “in him sin is not”, 1 John 3: 5. He was truly the good Shepherd and the only One upon whom death had no claim, nevertheless He submitted Himself to His Father’s will to the extent that he went into death “and that the death of the cross”, Phil 2: 8. He lays down His life for the sheep because He *is* good. He was the only One who

could do it; He is the only One who could say, “On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again”. None of us has a right to lay down our lives in the sense of delivering up our spirits. He did because He was His own Spirit; He was the good Shepherd, the sinless One.

JCG The second reference relates to “I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine”. That involves intimacy with Christ and He with us. That is very important in the matter of fellowship.

PAG Yes. I think when you see in 2 Timothy 2 “the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knows those that are his”, v 19, that suggests, “I know those that are mine”, and then we have, “Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity”. That is the other side of the seal, “and am known of those that are mine”; if we know Him, we will name His name and withdraw from iniquity. It is one thing for Him to know us, but if we know Him, that is the other side of the seal.

RG I was thinking of, “I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free”, Exod 21: 5. There it is, “my children”. The good Shepherd knows every one of us by name, “I will not go free”. He lays “down his life for his friends”, John 15: 13.

PAG Well, that was the bondman that said “distinctly”. I have been struck by this: the Lord’s speaking is always distinct. There is never any doubt about what He is saying; He says “distinctly”.

JCG I was thinking it bears on what was said in the first reading as to “ye in me, and I in you”, John 14: 20. In 2 Timothy 2 there are the two sides. We are “in Christ”. That can never be altered; having believed and having the Spirit, the operative work goes on for eternity, but the other side is how we walk and whether Christ is in us. That is the Colossian side, “Christ in you the hope of glory”, chap 1: 27. That is practical and bears on the fellowship.

PAG It does. We are speaking of the One who had authority over His own life: “I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again”. If the Lord will, tomorrow we may say more about the

matter of authority, but the good Shepherd has authority. We should not over-balance the truth by emphasising one aspect of it against the other. The goodness of the good Shepherd does not absolve us from the requirement to hold on to the truth. The good Shepherd has authority. “And I have other sheep which are not of this fold”; that is what brings us in, but we come into the authority of the good Shepherd.

DCB The authority being placed, as God does, where it is most attractive.

PAG That is the point. He has not placed the authority in someone who is harsh and demanding but He has placed His authority in One who lays down His life for the sheep. That is where the authority is placed. It would draw our hearts to Him, do you think?

DCB The question of laying down His life seems to be a very attractive matter for our deliberation.

PAG The Lord was never taken aback by any circumstance that arose, but His characteristic motivation to lay down His life for the sheep was that He would always seek in sacrifice to ensure that the sheep were brought through.

JCG He goes on in relation to the Father, “as the Father knows me and I know the Father”, and then, “On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life”, and the rest of the chapter brings out the opening up of the glory of the relationship that there was between Father and Son, between God and Christ. Do you think that would help us to fasten on the glory of who was here? He says, “I and the Father are one”. It bears on your exercise as to the “I am”, does it?

PAG Yes; so “I and the Father are one” goes beyond the fact that they were agreed or that they were together in matters. It does not say they were united either; it says they are “one”. That is important. There was never any deviation in thought between Christ and the Father; they were one, one in everything. As Man He waited for God’s instruction: “He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed”, Isa 50: 4. But they were always

one. No instruction came as a surprise to Him, no instruction caused Him even for a moment to deviate from the will of His God and Father; they were “one”; but they are also one in Godhead.

AMB Is it instructive in that statement in verse 30 that the Lord makes it in the context of the Father giving His own to the Lord. What would you say about that?

PAG Do you think it was an expression of the eternal bond of affection that existed: “I and the Father are one”? You might say Christ as coming into a place of subjection would present the opportunity for the Father to demonstrate His love for Him.

AMB There is something very blessed about it, the oneness that the Lord speaks of which must involve the depths of divine affections. It is demonstrated in the giving of the saints by the Father to the Lord, to Christ. I suppose we would use the expression ‘the economy’ in this connection, the demonstration of the feelings of God Himself in relation to the saints and the demonstration of the oneness of the Godhead.

PAG In giving them to Christ the Father did not lose them. “My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one can seize out of the hand of my Father”. The Father did not lose those whom He had given to Christ by giving them to Him. It is a wonderful thing to consider that although there are distinctive relationships - Christ and the assembly, for example, is a distinctive relationship between Christ and His assembly - yet divine Persons appreciate and enjoy equally all that the Others have. So it says in the hymn as to the Holy Spirit:

Thou dost know the Father’s feelings
Of affection for His Son,
And His joy in the assembly
As united to that One. (Hymn 121).

That is the Father’s joy. The Father has joy in Christ’s joy; Christ has joy in the Father’s joy; the Spirit has joy in Christ’s joy. I just say this in passing: the Lord uses His assembly as a vessel of praise directed towards the Holy Spirit at the time of the service of God

because the Lord has joy in what the Spirit has brought to Him, but He also has joy in the Spirit receiving His own portion. When we say that divine Persons are one, that means that each appreciates what the other has.

GBG In John 17 the Lord says, “They were thine, and thou gavest them me” (v 6), but in verse 9 He says, “I do not demand concerning the world, but concerning those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine”. You get both thoughts. There is still the Father’s enjoyment in them. “They were thine” was in purpose, but “they are thine”.

PAG Again, if I may quote one of Mr Darby’s hymns:

Thou gav’st us, Father, in Thy love,
To Christ to bring us home to Thee,
Suited to Thine own thoughts above (Hymn 88).

What I might call these divine transactions have in view the satisfaction of the Father’s heart.

AMB The Lord is going on, at the end of the chapter quoted from, to say, “I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one and that the world may know that thou hast sent me”, v 23. There is oneness looked for in the company that the Lord has secured for Himself.

PAG That, I think, will form part of the millennial display, “that the world may know”. The world will be able to see a demonstration of what the work of Christ for the Father has secured, on account of purposes in a past eternity. It will be seen there in demonstration. At the present time, as it says earlier in John 17, it is “that the world may believe”, v 21. This is the time for the world to believe, but there is a day coming when the world will know that all these things we have been speaking about have been accomplished. Nothing has failed of what God has set on and all He has purposed has worked out into a blessed result.

AMB Would that be the result of the light? This is all really the result of the light coming into the world, the revelation of God making

known His mind.

PAG Exactly. The light has come in and it has been responded to. It has been responded to in these persons, and you can see how Satan is set against it. “The Jews therefore again took stones that they might stone him”. Satan did not want any of this because it was the revelation of God, and it was producing an answer for God.

JW I was thinking of the verses in John 17 when He says, “concerning those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine,” and then in the brackets “(and all that is mine is thine, and all that is thine mine,)”, v 9, 10. I just wondered if that would suggest what you are saying that each divine Person appreciates what is in the Other.

PAG What is coming before us is that we may see the good Shepherd in the light of how He cares for the sheep, lays down His life for the sheep, but the good Shepherd is also protecting what is dear to the heart of the Father. Do you think that would give us an expanded view of the service of the good Shepherd?

JW Yes, I think it is really fine to see how divine Persons consider for one another.

RB Does this oneness that we are speaking of underlie the fellowship?

PAG God is one; so if He is going to be represented at all on the earth He has to be represented in what is one. That is the true representation of God, what is one, so that is how the fellowship should work out in a practical way in oneness.

RB It results in blessing. Is that not a great thing to lay hold of?

PAG The blessing is immeasurable. It says at the end of 1 John, “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life”, chap 5: 20. What blessing to “know him that is true”, to be “in him that is true” in a world where what is contrary to what is true is proceeding all the time, and yet we can “know him that is true” and be “in him that is true”. That is a great blessing.

JTB It is fine to see that the millennial scene will bear testimony to the unity between divine Persons. The scripture in Zechariah 6 bears that out, He “shall sit and rule upon his throne; ... and the counsel of peace shall be between them both”, v 13. It is fine to see that “the counsel of peace” existed in that blessed way.

PAG And power to maintain it. Is it not there that it says, “and he shall be a priest upon his throne” and “he shall bear the glory”? There is a wonderful centre-piece to God’s operations which is in Christ, and all is maintained, but what you say about the “counsel of peace” is important because the good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep was part of the “counsel of peace”.

SCL It says, “And many believed on him there”. It is not just necessarily what He was saying, but they “believed on him”. I was wondering if you could help in opening up that expression.

PAG It is important because we can believe what a person says as being true and, in a sense, that might not be faith because you might be able to prove it in some way, but believing on the Person is true faith because you are believing on the “I am”. That Person is here and in faith we are laying hold of this blessed Man who is from another world entirely. “And many believed on him there”. If you went through chapters 8, 9 and 10, you might say there was a lot of opposition. In chapter 8 His words were rejected; in chapter 9 His works were rejected; and then here they say, “He has a demon and raves”. What was going to happen? The Lord is carrying on what is for God, “And many believed on him there”. There is a result for God from what He is doing.

JCG As to oneness, Ephesians 4 has been referred to already. It speaks about “the unity of the Spirit” (v 3) bearing on the present time in which we are. “There is one body and one Spirit, as ye have been also called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all”. The greatness of the unity of the Spirit bears on the way in which this is practically worked out.

PAG So it is important for us to have in our minds that “the unity of the Spirit” exists. We are to keep it, not to make it. It is there, and the extent to which we keep it is the extent to which we enjoy it, I believe, so it is there for our enjoyment and as we enjoy it, all these things open up, these other things that Paul speaks of.

BWL That is why we often hear it said that the sheep do not stray in John’s gospel.

PAG Say more about that.

BWL I would like you to open that up. You have spoken about what is in Christ and what cannot be disturbed or changed, but as we appreciate “I am the good shepherd”, and later on “I am Son of God”, our affections are really held in relation to the Lord.

PAG Yes, so “He that says he abides in him ought, even as *he* walked, himself also so to walk”, 1 John 2: 6. That is the side of our responsibility. But it also says, “Whoever has been begotten of God does not practise sin, because his seed abides in him, and he cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God”, 1 John 3: 9. That is the sheep that does not stray. The one that is “begotten of God” “cannot sin, because he has been begotten of God”. It is important for us to have that in our minds, that there is in us, in every believer, a work of God which is indestructible and “cannot sin”. There may be our responsibility, and we would have to acknowledge that, but if we can lay hold of the fact that God has done something in us and in every saint which is indestructible, that would stabilise us.

JL It has been said in relation to the sheep not going astray in John’s gospel, that they are presented as men in the making. The sheep given to the Lord in chapter 10 by the Father are the men given to the Lord in chapter 17 by the Father. That bears it out, does it?

PAG Yes; so we should have in our minds that we are very glad to see brethren of all ages and stages, especially our younger brethren. Every person here who has the Spirit has the potential for spiritual maturity. That is what is there, potential for spiritual maturity. Each

one of us has our responsibility in relation to that. We should take account of what God has done and desire to build on it, so that there should be something which is like Christ and pleasing to God.

DWS I was just going to remark in relation to what was said about the sheep not straying in John's gospel. In verse 4 it says, "because they know his voice". There are many dear believers who know the Lord, but it is our responsibility to "know his voice", do you think?

PAG So His voice would involve not only what He *has* said but what He is saying, and we have to be subject to what the Lord *has* said, but we also have to be subject to what He *is* saying. There are a few scriptures presented to us in times of difficulty, one in Galatians, "But what says the scripture?" (chap 4: 30), but then in Romans, "But what says the divine answer to him?", chap 11: 4. We need both the Scripture - and it is the fundamental basis of anything that any believer does - but we need the divine answer, that is, the present voice of divine Persons. "My sheep hear my voice". We need to hear His voice now, do you think?

DWS Yes, we have been drawn into a living system, not something which is just a creed, so we understand and hear the Lord's voice to us as we go through exercises.

PAG We do, and He speaks in different ways, and like the man in John 9 we might feel we just know a little, we do not know everything, but as he listened, what did he get from hearing the Lord's voice? "Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? And Jesus said to him, Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he. And he said, I believe, Lord: and he did him homage". There was a sheep that heard the Shepherd's voice and responded to it, and he came into something far greater than he had ever contemplated.

At three-day meetings in Edinburgh

20th October 2017

Key to Initials:

R Bain, Buckie; A M Brown, Grangemouth; D C Brown, Edinburgh; G A Brown, Grangemouth; J T Brown, Edinburgh; J Drummond, Aberdeen; R Gardiner, Kirkcaldy; A P Grant, Dundee; G B Grant, Dundee; J C Gray, Grangemouth;

P A Gray, Grangemouth; N J Henry, Glasgow; J Laurie, Brechin; A M Lidbeck, Aberdeen (ID); S C Lock, Edinburgh; T W Lock, Edinburgh; B W Lovie, Aberdeen;

D H Marshall, Edinburgh; N C McKay, Glasgow; A E Mutton, Witney; D W Scougal, Edinburgh; J Webster, Fraserburgh

ENLARGEMENT

Rodney Brown

2 Corinthians 8: 9

Psalm 4: 1

1 Chronicles 4: 9-10

Judges 6: 11-21

Isaiah 38: 16

We have enjoyed these days together under the sound of the Word, and we can say that we have all benefitted from it. My desire from our time together, for myself, is that there may be a permanent result wrought. I feel the need of enlargement in the things we have spoken over; help has come in, and we have proved help together. I think the desire of God, of divine Persons, is that there should be a permanent result in each soul here - a result in enlargement, and I seek to say something as to that. The idea has really come into each of our meetings. You think of the living stones: "To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men" (1 Pet 2: 4), but, "elect, precious", v 6. You might say that our appreciation of the Lord Jesus has been enlarged as we have been together and spoken over these things. These are not static things; these are things that are to continue, but to continue in power, and to increase. These things increase in persons. If I do not make room for them, then I have to say the ministry, for me, has not had the effect that God intended, and I believe, that God does have an end in view. We have spoken about formation; we have spoken about increase; we have spoken about desire.

All these things relate to enlargement in the things of God. What we are talking about here is spiritual enlargement. I have read of three persons, some of them perhaps insignificant - Jabez, for example, these two verses are the only references to him in scripture. Hezekiah - there are details as to Hezekiah's life that are very interesting, entering into three different books in the Bible, spanning ten chapters altogether. There is a lot of detail gone into in

relation to Hezekiah, and I commend it to each one of us, myself included, to look into it. He came to something; he was enlarged, as we will see. Really he was enlarged in view of the service of God; that is the great end in our exercises, and in formation, that there may be more for God, there may be more for the service of God. Hezekiah shows us the way to that. Gideon - he was enlarged himself, but then others came into the benefit of what he had done; others became enlarged through what he did.

That matter starts as an individual exercise; but it involves others. We have all benefitted from being together, but then enlargement is not an end in itself; it has an outlet in the service of God; we have that before us tomorrow, if the Lord does not come for us. There is an outlet for all gathered to enter into these things in reality, and in power. Every resource is available that we should be enlarged, and that we should be sustained in the enjoyment of these things. Christ is on high as our great High Priest, the Holy Spirit is here, and gifts have been set in the assembly. All that is in view of enlargement. It is never too late to be exercised in this way; it is never too late to be enlarged.

Jabez speaks of a young person early in his pathway. What he set himself for in the way of desire God brought about; that is a very blessed thing. Gideon was, I suppose, a young man too. Where we read, Hezekiah was at the end of his life, and he was still being enlarged. Therefore I can say to all those that have an interest, and I credit everyone in this room with an interest in these things, from the youngest to the oldest, there is still room for enlargement. No one has a complete impression as to the Lord Jesus; how could that be? Think of the impressions that have come into our time together; there is something more for everyone from the youngest to the oldest.

I started in 2 Corinthians 8 to bring out the fact that, in order that this enlargement should be available, in order that increase can be known by each one of us, the Lord Jesus became poor. We, by His poverty, have been enriched. He came from the height of glory into restricted circumstances; He has been found here, as we read in

Philippians 2, "in figure as a man", v 8. He served as a bondman. Think of the desire of divine Persons to enrich us, going to such lengths as the Lord Jesus coming here, and being found in figure as a Man, humbling Himself, and "becoming obedient, even unto death, and that the death of the cross". Who knew pressure like the Lord Jesus Himself? Think of what He endured in His life here, the conditions into which He came; and of what He faced from men. Think of Him particularly in Gethsemane when that pressure came upon Him, His sweat falling as great drops of blood (Luke 22: 44) and Him saying, "My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me but not as *I* will, but as *thou* wilt", Matt 26: 39. When we speak about pressure we can point to the Lord Jesus, and say that He knew pressure like no one else has ever known it, and no one else can ever sustain the pressure that He sustained. No one else has faced the judgment of God as He faced it. He bore it, and He bore it in its totality, and as a result, we have been enriched. We by his poverty have been enriched. Have you been affected, dear friend, dear young one, by the poverty of Christ, "that for your sakes he, being rich, became poor"? Does that not affect you, to think of the Lord Jesus doing that for you? Paul was writing here to the Corinthians, but I think we could apply it to each one in this room. Is there appreciation in your heart to the Lord Jesus that He has loved you so much that He has become poor on your account? He has laid a basis in righteousness whereby this enrichment can be the portion of us all. We are not left here in degradation; we have been given untold riches, spiritual wealth - great matters! Start there with a view of what this means to divine Persons. Are we going to be casual as to these things, in the face of such a sacrifice? Are we going to take what we want, and leave what we do not, in the face of what the Lord Jesus has expended for each one?

I trust that everyone I am addressing here has a personal and living link with the Saviour, and recognises that what He did in going to the cross, and in becoming poor, He did for them. It is essential that everyone in this room knows the Saviour if they are to come into the benefit and the blessing of the enrichment, and the enlargement

that is available; you have to start somewhere and it starts with the cross of Christ, and it ends in the glory. There is a place in it for everyone here; if you have not trusted in Him, do so now; do not leave it a moment longer. Come into the blessing that God has in mind for you. So we see what the Lord Jesus has done that this should be available and He *has* done it, and He has paid the price. He has gone into death and He is no longer there; He is ascended and glorified and it is from the glory that this enrichment comes. It is not bound up with this earth; it is bound up with a Man where He is in glory, and He is available there today.

Where we read in David's psalm, Psalm 4, it says, "To the chief Musician. On stringed instruments. A Psalm of David". The chief musician was referred to in the last reading: the stringed instruments generally refer to experience and pressure.

When I call, answer me, O God of my righteousness: in pressure

thou hast enlarged me; be gracious unto me, and hear my prayer.

These scriptures that I have read give examples of three persons who were in pressure. As has often been said, it is not the pressure that enlarges; it is being with God in the pressure. "In pressure **thou** hast enlarged me". So you can see how essential it is to have a living link with the Saviour, to know God, because, really, it is enlargement in our affections that is brought about through these exercises, and love lies behind it all. We have love in our hearts as a result of what has been done, but we can relate everything to Him - "in pressure **thou** hast enlarged me". That is the backdrop to my exercise and my impression for this time. There is much pressure; there is pressure in the world, there is pressure among the brethren, pressure in households, in health. The Lord is able for these things; He is available, and if we seek Him in that pressure, He will answer, and He will bring about something for His own pleasure. It is not something that we would invite, perhaps, but it is a blessing to see that when pressure comes, there is always a resource, there is always One outside of ourselves to whom we can go, and come out

of His presence, having related things to Him. I think that is what each of these three persons that we read about did. We may come out from His presence and the pressure is still there, as has been said; but we have been changed, because coming in touch with divine Persons changes us, and we get their mind as to things; it results in enlargement.

This was the experience of Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4. It is interesting that he was more honoured than his brethren. "And his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bore him with pain." We had reference in the first reading today as to Samuel and the exercises that he went through. He was like Jabez in that sense. Think of the exercises that Hannah had for a man child (1 Sam 1: 11), and I think Jabez has been related to that - the product of sorrow, the product of suffering. He has been likened to a young person with right desires. I would appeal to the young people here today, on the basis of this scripture, to have right desires. Those of us who are older can detect in young persons when there are right desires, and I think we can detect in this company that there are young persons with right desires. It is a cause of rejoicing; it is a cause of thanksgiving. I would say to each one here to ask Jehovah to bless you, to ask Jehovah to enlarge your border. When we were talking about our place in the body yesterday, I was thinking of this verse, the desire that is embodied in Jabez calling on the God of Israel. "Oh that thou wouldest richly bless me, and enlarge my border", is like asking for his place in the body to be made plain to him. If your border is enlarged in the world, it is generally at the expense of somebody else - not so in divine things; if you enlarge your border, others will benefit from that; others will come into the blessing that that entails. A desire to enlarge your border really means that, while you are responsible for everything that is in your border, there is an appeal to God for more responsibility. It is an indication to God that you accept what He would have you to do. I think Jabez answered to the right desires of his mother who bore him with pain, and he came into things for himself. There comes a time when you have to begin to have exercises for yourself. We go so

far, and I think the expression was used at the meetings in Edinburgh last weekend, on the 'coattails' of others, but there comes a time when you need to reach out in faith; really that is what Jabez did, and sought to be guided by God, and blessed by God. "And God brought about what he had requested"; that is a great thing. God would not withhold a blessing from a true heart that desires it - not at all. Dear hearer, how quickly He will link on with it, and come into the matter, and bring about blessing. And so, from the pressure, enlargement comes about. "God brought about what he had requested." A simple request from one young in the faith - how quickly God will link on with that, and bring about what he had requested.

In Judges, we have Gideon, who knew what pressure was, and threshed wheat in the wine press; the wine press speaks of pressure. It is not the place where you would normally thresh wheat, but if the food supply was to be maintained Gideon had to use what was available, and he did so. If he had not done this, the food supply would have failed because the Midianites came up in their hordes every year. It says earlier in the chapter, "they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as locust for multitude; both they and their camels were without number; and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of Midian. And the children of Israel cried to Jehovah", v 5-6. There was a period of seven years that this was so, but here was a young man who had exercise that the food supply should be maintained. And he threshed wheat. We have been affected this weekend by God's view of the saints collectively, and the idea in Scripture of threshing wheat has that in mind. Wheat speaks of the saints; it speaks of an ascended Christ, but it also speaks of the saints, and what is secured in them. Here we have one who was exercised to secure it from the Midianites, not only to thresh it, not only to make it available as bread in that way, but to secure it from the Midianites.

We have spoken a little about desire in Jabez, and Gideon had desire as well. If Gideon had not been exercised in this way then

that wheat would not have become available; the Midianites would have just taken that as well. Sometimes there is exercise required in order to secure something from the Midianites; they speak of what is natural and what is not conducive to spiritual desire. Gideon was exercised; it was not that the wheat came to hand all of a sudden and he was able to thresh it. This was the outcome of secret history. He had planted, I suppose, and he had tended it, harvested it, and now this was, as it were, the final matter to have to do with it, before it was made available to be appropriated by his household, or the people. Against the backdrop of the pressure that the Midianites sought to bring in, Gideon was working in a hidden way in order for this food supply to be maintained. If enlargement is to come in, we need the food supply; we need Christ, we need impressions of Christ. There is a danger in the time in which we are that our eye comes off Christ on to things here - even on to things that are legitimate, things that would take our attention, things that are natural, and not spiritual, and the food supply suffers. I may find myself impoverished because I am not prepared for this exercise of threshing, and securing from the Midianites; I am really falling in with what the Midianites speak of myself. There is no way in which we can stand still in these matters if we are not being enlarged; we are not static. We need to keep coming, as living stones. Everything we have spoken about this weekend needs to be real in our affections, and needs to be effective in our lives if this enlargement and increase is to be brought about. Gideon came into the blessing of that, and how graciously God speaks to him. Gideon was a humble person, truly humble. He meant what he said here, he felt he was not able for this, but his secret history belied that; he was clearly able. God had identified something there. The angel would not have appeared to him had that not been so. And so it is that secret history with God comes to light, and persons that are in secret with God are used. This can be seen in the Scriptures, with those that tended sheep in a hidden way. Think of David: "Are these all the young men? And he said, There is yet the youngest remaining", 1 Sam 16: 11. God can use those that go on in obscurity, and in true affection and desire, as He used Gideon here. Gideon did not think

much of himself; that is the kind of person God can use. If Gideon had thought that he himself could have brought about anything, God would not have linked on with that, because all the power for this is in God, in divine Persons. "And Jehovah looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might"; what a touch of assurance would have come into Gideon's soul as these words came to him. Further on, he brings out that the angel should tarry until he comes back with his present; so really Gideon is beginning to move on priestly lines. There is what can be offered; the kid of the goats, the ephah of flour, and the broth in a pot; these are all suggestive of Gideon's appreciation of the Lord Jesus; His death in the kid of the goats, the essential nature of His Person in the broth, and the evenness of His humanity in the flour, and the unleavened cake. Think of what impressions Gideon might have gleaned when he was having to do with the food supply. While outwardly there is poverty, and famine, in having to do with Christ, these impressions are available. They are available for each one, for everyone in this room. As we go in for them, and make way for them, then enlargement comes about. We see it in Gideon; we see it in this peace offering, which was accepted, and then further on where we did not read, a greater expression of it in the second bullock in verse 25, all that that speaks of, a mature thought as to his appreciation of the burnt offering. Gideon himself was enlarged as having to do with the food supply, but in so doing, others came into it. He was influential. You read on: it is an interesting account of the salvation that was brought about by Gideon; it was effective. Through him God wrought a great deliverance for the people. So not only do we see himself enlarged but others came into the benefit of it, and he was the means by which salvation was known.

In Isaiah 38 we have one, who in the face of pressure, was enlarged, and came into increase. This scripture is interesting; there is much as to Hezekiah in the Scriptures. In 2 Chronicles 29 where he first comes on the pages of Scripture it says, he "began to reign being twenty-five years old", v 1. The first thing he did, which relates to the house of God which we spoke about earlier in chapter 29: 3

says, "He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of Jehovah, and repaired them". Here was one who had an appreciation of the house of God in his heart. That was him at the beginning of his reign, and where we read is at the end of his reign. All through his reign he ministered to God, and had the service of God in his affections, and he became formed by that. His own appreciation was enlarged, and that is open to each one of us. His appreciation was enlarged, and then others came into the benefit of it. In chapter 36 of Isaiah, the enemies came up, and Rab-shakeh made his threats; and in the beginning of chapter 37 "when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his garments, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Jehovah" (v 1), and he really appealed to the prophet. So the prophetic word brings enlargement: we should always be open, and desirous of receiving the prophetic word, and of it having entrance into our hearts. That was the backdrop to the first threat from the enemy. He went to the prophet, and the word came. The next time Rab-shakeh returned, Hezekiah himself went into the presence of Jehovah; so we begin to see that things are working with Hezekiah personally - he no longer has to go to the prophet although that resource was available. In chapter 37: 14 he went into the house of Jehovah himself, and spread the letter before Jehovah. Thinking of Psalm 4 again, "in pressure thou hast enlarged me", he related matters to Jehovah, and he received the help that was available. He was able to say wonderful things, things that relate, I think, to the salvation of Israel, that give some indication of the enlargement that had come into his own soul.

The scripture says, "And Hezekiah prayed to Jehovah, saying, Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, who sittest between the cherubim, thou, the Same, thou alone art the God of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made the heavens and the earth. Incline thine ear, O Jehovah", v 15-17. This is a man who knew his God, and could appeal to his God, and God came in, and intervened, and wrought a great deliverance. Where we read in chapter 38 he came into pressure personally, "In those days Hezekiah was sick

unto death", and "Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to Jehovah", v 1, 2. Again, he related it to Jehovah, and Jehovah answered his prayer and gave him fifteen more years. The result of that was this writing which we have read part of, beginning in verse 9, the writing of Hezekiah. It was no longer only what he said, but the writing. That was my impression as to what he left, really, for the service of God. He had been effective in the service of God throughout his reign, but now, as a result of this pressure into which he had come, there was something permanent, something written that could be passed on. That is what I want to come to. It says in verse 19, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth". Hezekiah himself had been enlarged through the exercises that had come upon the nation, and the exercises that he had faced personally, but the result was something for the service of God. It was something for the next generation, "the father to the children shall make known thy truth". You might say something permanent was left there, something that could be referred to, something that could be passed on. Is that not the desire of each one here? We seek enlargement ourselves, enlargement in our affections. Paul appealed to the Corinthians to let their heart expand (2 Cor 6: 13); that was in relation to himself. I feel the need for that for myself, that enlargement and expansion might come in. But as it is so, then there is something that the following generation can take account of, something that they can come into, something of life, which has invigorated this weekend.

We have spoken of that thought of the living stones, and then the temple and the house of God, the pillar and base of the truth. These are tremendous matters that are available for all. We have stressed that in our times together. By all, we do not mean just everyone in this room, but all believers - we hold it for all; it is available for all. It is available for you, young ones, just as it is available for the oldest saint in this room. There is something we would seek to communicate to you, to impart to you, of the blessing of these things, not that it will make anything of you personally, and I

do not suggest that anyone enters into it for that reason, but in order that the service of God might be enriched, and there might be something for Him as a result of this. Anything that He passes us through - it is easy to say it, but I feel the need of it, both in terms of what we have to face personally, but also what we face assembly-wise - anything we are passed through by way of pressure should result in a greater note in the service of God. So,

Jehovah was purposed to save me.

- And we will play upon my stringed instruments all the days of our life,

in the house of Jehovah. v 20.

He brought others into it. It was *his* stringed instruments but “**we** will play”. What we have, what we have benefitted from ourselves, is available and is to be passed on, and is to be entered into in reality. These are not fairy tales, these are not traditions that have been passed from one generation to the next; these are living realities. There is something for each one of us to enter into livingly. As I said at the outset, we have opportunity to do that on the Lord’s day tomorrow. What privileges are ours! Has anything been withheld? The result of what the Lord Jesus has done, and the way we have been set together, and the result of the truth that has come to us - it all has in mind that the service of God should be enriched. We spoke earlier today as to assembly truth - well, how blessed. What a privilege it is to be in an area where such truth is held, and gone in for, and it is available for all. It is available for you, dear friend, and God would have you go in for it, so that you may be blessed, and that there may be more for His own heart. May the Lord bless the word.

Address at three-day meetings in New York

28th October 2017

