

# **A WORD IN ITS SEASON**

**SECOND SERIES**

**No. 163**

**October 2020**

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# THE SHEWBREAD

**Exodus 25: 23-30**

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**CJB** I feel a little apprehensive in looking into this subject because I think there is a lot to know about it, but coming into the experience of it is a wonderful thing, and I feel my own weakness in this. I think some of what is so impressive about looking into something like the shewbread, or the manna, the oblation, or the breaking of bread, is seeing what each represents, and then seeing how it is appropriated - that was on my mind. Each of these things would bring out some feature of divine things. I would seek the brethren's help; I hope the younger persons will be our gauge of understanding. If they are not following, they should say something; that is what the Spirit of enquiry would help with. There is a lot we can go into, and what has been suggested in Leviticus 24 is probably a wonderful place to start. To summarise quickly: inside the first room of the tabernacle there is the candlestick, and then there is the table with the shewbread and the utensils on it. Later on we get the altar of incense, and those are presented in a helpful order in Exodus. The fine flour is maybe something to start with. It is found in the oblation, representing the perfection of Christ. But what is absolutely special about the shewbread, the way I understand it, and I want to come into the experience of it more, is that it represents God's estimation of Christ, and the saints are included in that. I think that is a wonderful subject to open up. Perhaps we can start with that, enquire, and get help together.

**MJK** I appreciated what you have read in relation to the table. Mr Darby says that the shewbread is always mentioned with the table, Collected Writings, vol 19 p188. So there must be something very substantial about what is there. I am going to try and make a quick summary of what I have enjoyed in relation to this so that maybe the children can understand. There are several things to look at. We might start with the wood of which the table is made: the wood of the table is the acacia wood. Isaiah 53 says, "there is no beauty that we

should desire him". That kind of wood is not beautiful in itself but it is substantial, it is strong - that is what Christ is; we see the substantiality of Christ. Then it is overlaid with gold; now that is beautiful: so then there is divine righteousness. So that lays the foundation, and then there is a blue cloth put over it - that is the glory of heaven overlaying this table that is holding that which has been brought in in the saints - the bread. The whole of Israel is seen in those twelve loaves. That is one of the reasons I referred to Leviticus 24 because that is the only place where the twelve loaves are referred to, or "twelve cakes" as it says there. That suggests the saints. It is what there is of Christ, but what there is of Christ *in the saints*, that which is substantial. Then you see where it is - not in the holy of holies but it is in the holy place. And God's light is being shed on that; the saints could be nothing without God's light. So, God's light is being shed there on that bread; and then, when you look at what the bread is, the fine flour - that speaks of what is of Christ in the saints; that is where it all starts. It is unleavened - there is nothing there to corrupt the saints in this area. Then, the bread is laid out before Jehovah. It is interesting that it is not ten loaves, and it is not two loaves; I say that because David reigned over only two tribes for quite some time. There were ten tribes separated from the two tribes for a long time. But in the shewbread you see every believer, do you not? So appropriation is touched on there: "it is most holy unto him", and it is regarded as an offering by fire - that which has been tested by the judgment of God. It has met the judgment of God.

**DIJK** The word 'appropriation' has been mentioned a couple of times, maybe you could help myself and the younger ones. What do we mean by 'appropriation'?

**CJB** Yes, it is a big word and we may not really use that word any more in every day circumstances; essentially it is 'eating', but it goes a little beyond eating. I would welcome correction if I am wrong, but it seems to me that appropriation is not just the eating but the eating sustains you. You are taking it all in for health. We eat, and then our body functions; on a spiritual level it would be similar: we take something in, and it essentially feeds or keeps the spirit healthy.

**DgJK** I think what you have mentioned is good. It was fine flour, and that is able to be appropriated. That is appropriating Christ, is it not? I do not know how much I can say. Fine flour expresses the detail of what was seen in Christ for the satisfaction of God. Everything is perfectly in accord; it is fine flour. I hesitate to say this, but there is no inconsistency in fine flour. Then it is mingled with oil. So, everything in Christ is to the satisfaction of God; and so it is also to our satisfaction. So, applying the type, when we eat, we eat and are satisfied; 'appropriation' means there is something gained as a result.

**CJB** The appropriation of the shewbread is a little different from the manna. I think it was set out on the Sabbath and it was to remain there on the table all week. So it was not really to be appropriated by the priests until the end of the week. It is a wonderful thing to think about! I like what was brought in about the shewbread flour representing Christ, but the twelve cakes represent the people of God and that is displayed and is fragrant because the frankincense is put on it. So there is something that is for God that is there all week. God is completely satisfied. You might think about flour and accept that it represents the Lord, but Mr Coates goes deeper in relating the thought to the oblation, vol 3 (Outline of Leviticus) p18): 'the "fine flour" of the oblation speaks of what has sprung up here and come to maturity, in the Person of Jesus, for the delight of God. It is viewed in this type as apprehended in the minute detail of its perfection and evenness. If we think of ourselves growing up as wheat and being sifted, we could imagine there would be many inconsistencies to be found, but this fine flour represents a humanity in which there is no flaw at all - a wonderful thing; and then to be mingled with oil is a tremendous thought.

**Ques** It seems like everything here has some sort of correlation to what is fine and perfect, but this cloth of blue - does it have a special meaning?

**MJK** If you look up into the heavens what colour do you see? The colour blue is a heavenly colour. The thoughts of God, and the heavenly character, mark all of those things that are on the table.

The loaves are a representation of believers, and so God sees them in a heavenly character.

**PBK** You were talking about the fine flour and we spoke of it being sifted: when you sift flour it takes out all the impurities, anything that would cause a lump. Of course, the works of Christ are perfect; there was nothing that did not go through; only the perfection of Christ had come through in the loaves.

**BSK** There were twelve loaves of bread; why did they make twelve?

**MJK** It represents every single tribe in Israel; one loaf for each tribe. Today it would represent every believer, every person who has accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and has the Holy Spirit is represented in these loaves. As we go on to the breaking of bread, a similar thought is represented in the loaf itself - in the body of Christ.

**CJB** You might wonder why we have the Old Testament; what you are asking about shows why. The number twelve or the colour blue are things that now we can look back on in the Old Testament with the help of the Spirit to see features of Christ. It is helpful to consider types. "Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching ...", 2 Tim. 3: 16

**AJC** I am contemplating 'appropriating' still. We often speak about making something our own; does that connect with this thought of appropriating?

**CJB** What is testing about this scripture is that it was appropriated by a priest. In a certain sense we are all kings and priests, but one thing the ministry has mentioned is that it is a mature thought, C A Coates vol 4 (Outline of Numbers) p23. It is not something that we would take lightly. To think about the sufferings of Christ as an example requires tremendous maturity. That does not mean age; I am not talking about age: I am talking about the seriousness of what Christ endured, the fine flour, the cakes being baked. Think about the pressure and the sufferings of the Lord; it requires a priestly person to appropriate them.

**AJC** That is helpful, and we need the Holy Spirit to understand these things. If we are really to make these things our own, and get

the benefit of eating the bread, we need the Holy Spirit because without the Holy Spirit we would not have that maturity or the understanding of what we are partaking in.

**CJB** Exactly; it is something to have that bread on the table all week, as distinct from something we would maybe read daily or impressions we might have daily; we might have something that is before us all week, that we would appropriate fully at the end of the week. Perhaps the thought goes beyond appropriation; to think about what God sees in the shew bread; it is to be consumed in the light of God's apprehension of the wonder of Christ and His people - a marvellous subject.

**AML** I do think it is significant that, before the shewbread comes in, there is a reference to the mercy-seat. "And there will I meet with thee, and will speak with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, everything that I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel", v 22. Would that put us on a platform where we are able to appropriate what the shewbread means, as well as these measurements and the details, even the thought of the half measures which would bring in what is inscrutable as to what has come out in Christ? First we have the two cubits the length thereof, and then the cubit the breadth thereof and a cubit and a half the height thereof. The half measure brings out what is inscrutable and the greatness of God. That has already come out in the mercy-seat, and having a view of the mercy-seat we would be able to understand the greatness of the shewbread and the table and all the details - which are significant.

**CJB** I am very thankful you brought attention to that because I think that the order in Exodus 25 is very significant. First of all, there are all the materials that are brought, and then there is the ark; that is the first thing. God lays all of this out in chapter 25 and it was assembled or built from chapter 35 on. Are you suggesting that we cannot understand anything about the table unless first we have an appreciation and understanding and reverence of the most holy place and the ark that was placed in it - the ark first?



**AML** I think that is a kernel; we have to begin there; and then through divine grace we have access to divine Persons because it says, “there will I meet with thee”. That is for every believer. According to divine purpose we are all priests, and we are able to partake in measure and the Spirit can help us and enlarge it. I was struck with how in Leviticus it says, “Every sabbath day he shall arrange it” - the Spirit would bring in the freshness. I was listening to a preaching by John Strachan just before I came and he said, ‘not one Lord’s day is the same as the previous one’. You have the freshness, and what the Lord gives each Lord’s day is different from what He gave you last Lord’s day. So, I think the renewal every sabbath means there should be something fresh for divine Persons.

**CJB** That is really helpful, and I wonder if it would be good to talk a little bit about Leviticus 24 and how everything was arranged in order. This is not the only reference; there are other references throughout Ezra and Nehemiah too when things were in decay, and there was light brought in and things were arranged on the table in a set order. I think the order would be set by God. Is that right?

**WJK** If I may just to back to appropriation again, I was thinking about it in relation to digestion, that which would be processed and fruitful. You were mentioning the appropriation of the shewbread by priests. I wonder if it would be that which would be fruitful for God.

**CJB** You are right because it brings in the fact that they eat it in the holy place. So in a way it does not go to waste, if I could put it that way, because it is all in view of what our brother was bringing out, that there would be freshness for the next week as it would be set out. So on a practical level that would change how we think about it. If you have to see it there all week, know that it is there all week, and God sees it all week; but then they appropriate it. How would that make it a little different when you go to set it out the next week? I am being practical; I do not want to be too dramatic about things. But does that link with your thought?

**WJK** Yes. I was thinking about it over against the manna, which would be the natural sustenance.

**CJB** Responsibility attaches to what we are talking about here. It is a very holy subject.

**VMK** Just for clarification, how is the shewbread differentiated from the unleavened bread that is spoken of elsewhere?

**CJB** You mean in the oblation, for example? In Leviticus 2 we get the details, and in this case the difference is that the shewbread was in the holy place; so I think it is what God takes account of. But I think the oblation is our appreciation of Christ. What does that mean? Well, an oblation was brought by an individual. They would sift the flour, and mingle it with the oil; so that would be our own appreciation. Whereas what we have in the shewbread is really more linked with the priesthood. The shewbread is unleavened. I used to think that leaven was our flesh and that kind of thing, and it links with that, but I have been helped recently to see that leaven includes any of our own thoughts, our own pride or anything that would taint. I am starting to realise that the leaven is something that can come up very easily in our own appreciation of Christ. We sneak in something about ourselves or we want something to make us feel better. Although maybe those things do not seem wrong, they can lead to ourselves being puffed up in the wrong way and can take away from the wonderful appreciation of Christ.

**VMK** Thank you for clarifying. So the shewbread would link more to what is heavenly?

**CJB** Well the oblation was holy too, but the shewbread links more with what God sees - the children of Israel did not really see the shewbread because it was in the tent, whereas the oblation was something they brought. The children of Israel would put that together and offer it, whereas the shewbread was made by the priests - Aaron and his sons, set there for the week it became food for the priests at the end. That is what we read on Wednesday night in 1 Samuel 21: 6. David came and ate that bread that was supposed to be for the priests. That was a very unusual time in Israel. But the Lord refers back to that in the New Testament, and when we consider who He is, there is mercy and grace.

**DIJK** So the oblation is really our appreciation of Christ and the shewbread is really God's appreciation of Christ.

**MJK** I think it goes one step further - it is God's appreciation of Christ in the saints. It is a very wide thought when you get to the shewbread. I liked what was brought up earlier about the fine flour - that is what is in the believer - it is Christ; it is Christ all over again.

**CJB** We cannot have any leaven, we cannot come before God or appease God, but we can only bring Christ. We have to be in Christ. I think it leads to Mr Coates's reference to Colossians, vol 3 p269-300. You think about Colossians linked with the shewbread! It made me see Colossians in such a different way. We could read that whole chapter but it is amazing to think that first of all, he points out that we have the table which is the wood overlaid with gold; everything was measured, and the half measures, we cannot really enter into. The half measures are really distinctive to Christ. Everything is set on that table and displayed before God. It is all set on the work and the manhood of Christ. Here is a Man. Then we have the twelve loaves, the drink offering and the utensils. The loaves bring in the saints, in the way I understand it: think about all resting on the work of Christ, and then you read in Colossians 1: "because by him were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, the visible", and then it comes to "And *he* is the head of the body, the assembly; who is the beginning, firstborn from among the dead, that *he* might have the first place in all things" (v 16, 18); that brings in the divine order. It is amazing to think of the heavenly side of things coming out in the Old Testament. We can look and see the wonder of the work of Christ and the order that has been set, and it brings out the wonder of Christ and the saints.

**AML** Do you think that the gospels would set out the oblation in all its glory, the manhood of Christ? There are four gospels and they all present the glory of Christ in a different way. As we appropriate that, and contemplate the greatness of what we have in the gospels, we really get the fulness of the oblation.

**CJB** The gospels also help us to have an appreciation of the wood for the table as well.

**AML** I was just struck with the acacia wood; the ark was made of the same material. It is just one character, one feature that is acceptable to God, and that is the glory of Christ, which is also seen in the fine flour.

**CJB** I think, for the young people, what is being referred to is that when you read each gospel there are distinctive features of Christ in each one. Some things come up in all the gospels; some come up in just one or two. But in all the pathway of the Lord, actually walking here as a Man, as found in each gospel, there are precious features of His manhood; He has used these experiences to lead us to understand the greatness of the wood representing His manhood. Then you think of that wood overlaid with gold; it is so wonderful to behold His glories! But also to think about the oblation, and the flour being sifted. We can see a great example of this when you read the passage about Satan challenging the Lord and how he attacked the Lord and tried to reason with Him and get Him to fail. When you look at all of the Lord's responses, I think you get an impression of the testing. There are no flaws in His responses; He was absolutely perfect.

**OWK** Explain a little bit more about the two states. The sifting of the fine flour seems to be one thought, but then it is made into these loaves, and that would be the saints formed according to Christ. But I would like a little bit of help on that as well. It would seem that the twelve loaves in Leviticus are all distinct; they are each in some way unique.

**CJB** In Leviticus they are set in a certain rank: 'order' or 'rank', the note says. I do not think that necessarily means that one is better than the other. I would like some help with that word 'rank'. But if the flour represents the perfection of Christ, God has taken account of what was to be seen in Christ and found nothing untoward, no flaw; but then the flour is mingled with the oil which would represent the Spirit. Then it is baked, and that is pressure; it reminds us how the judgment of God came upon Christ. What was said earlier is that there are twelve cakes, representing the whole of the tribes of Israel. For us, that represents the whole of God's people.

**AML** I think it has been said that the number twelve is divine love in activity: It is two times six, six times two, three times four, four times three. The Lord had twelve disciples; the number twelve runs through scripture; we have the names of the apostles of the Lamb in the heavenly city and they were the twelve as well. God will keep to that very number. It also speaks of administration.

**DgJK** I am impressed with the thought of holiness running through all of this. You get the holy place; the shewbread is spoken of in Samuel as the holy bread. What is spoken of as holy is all typical of what we get in the New Testament; it is either the saints, or Christ, or the things of God. I do not think this table is spoken of as holy, but it is spoken of as a pure table. I am linking that back to the breaking of bread. The table the loaf and cup sit on is not holy, even the bread and the cup are not holy, but they are representative. But what is found is the holiness of Christ which is then in the saints.

**CJB** Holiness can be found in the service of God in the saints - I think we were all impressed by that; that the work of Christ brings out something that is fragrant for God, and we come into an area of holy things. We are made holy.

**PBK** "Thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before **me** continually". It is not just shewbread on the table but "before me"; it is the holiness showing forth.

**DgJK** I think that links with the holy place; it is not that the meeting room is holy: it is God's presence that is holy.

**MJK** What is substantial in the table is that it is that which upholds that which is holy, in a holy place. It is upholding that which is holy. I think the "me" is Jehovah. Christ is looking on that which He has purchased.

**DgJK** We may not refer to particular things in the holy place as holy, but there is a dignity that marks them. So there is what the queen of Sheba observed, the deportment of Solomon's servants (1 Kings 10: 5), that is one of the things that might be taken account of; but also to further that, the only people who could partake of the holy bread were the priests, who were holy. So, linking that to ourselves in coming to the breaking of bread, does that produce a real sense of

responsibility? As we observe the shewbread through the week, as we observe Christ, we have a fresh appreciation of Him on the Lords' day.

**CJB** The oblation, the manna and the shewbread would suggest the greatness of the Lord's supper. Considering the holiness of this area, there is no leaven. I think it helps us to see that all this is for God and of God. Salvation is a wonderful thing; we are so thankful for His grace and mercies but if you think about everything being for God, I think that takes things to a different level.

**DIJK** Say something as to the covenant. I would like to know about the covenant here; and there is one in relation to the breaking of bread too. How does that come into the shewbread, the appropriation and the appreciation? God's appreciation of Christ and us taking that in and then the covenant is related to that.

**CJB** One thing that I am really struck by is that it is from God first. The new covenant also is not something man came up with; this is all according to God's plan. I would really like some help on it though.

**DIJK** I would like to hear more: it brings in the covenant for a reason here, but I was actually impressed with the covenant this morning. It is from God's side and that is the reason it is unbreakable. We come into the good of that, but the Lord drank the cup of sorrow. Everything that needed to be sifted was sifted out by Him. But with Christ when the sifting came in, everything of Christ came through. Then, we come into the good of the covenant. I was thinking about "The cup of blessing which we bless", 1 Cor 10: 16. Everything we come into is in the gain of what God has brought us into: everything is from God's side. There is no breaking this covenant, and it has everything to do with what is heavenly. I would like to know more about this side because it is gain for our souls.

**DgJK** A contract binds two parties together. But a contract as man knows it may not be for the benefit of both all the time. It may be so when it is signed, but it just shows how far short that falls of the covenant that God made; it is not only for the benefit of both but it satisfies both.

**AML** Do you think it is significant that the ark has both the name “the ark of the testimony” and the name “the ark of the covenant”? Here it was the ark of the testimony because they were going through the wilderness. As in relation to the land, it was a reminder as the ark of the covenant. Would that bring in the promises of God and His faithfulness, what He has instituted and established in Christ?

**CJB** In that way, does the covenant lead in some way to the house of God? Or is it in view of the house of God - the area that is God's?

**AML** I think you can hardly separate the one from the other. They are linked together.

**MJK** Can you say this ‘everlasting covenant’ is linked with the new covenant? When you get to Solomon's temple, it says that the ark of the covenant was in the temple and what was found in the ark was the two tables; that is the only thing that it mentions there, 1 Kings 8: 9. And so the covenant is very important in relation to Israel and even important in relation to the new covenant. The new covenant is in one sense in relation to Israel on the earth in a day to come. We carry the spirit of it in relation to that; once we are in glory, we hardly need the idea of a covenant. We are in the presence of the One who holds that covenant; but what do you say about the everlasting covenant?

**AML** It is something the Lord has secured anticipatively, and He will take it up with His people in a day to come. He will drink of the fruit of the vine afresh in His Father's kingdom (Matt 26: 27), but we are already involved and included in the spirit of it now, maintaining it for Christ. It has all been established in the death of Christ. That would give the eternal character.

**DIJK** Does that help us with the privilege of this, this covenant? It is really the covenant with Israel, but what a privilege that we can carry the idea of the new covenant today. Think about how the children of Israel let things go, let things slide. Today mankind, even Christendom, is letting these things slide. But what a privilege, and what it means to God, that we can take up with this covenant. Think

of the appropriation when we look on Christ and can see what He means to God. He is perfect and we have come into the gain of that perfection - what a Man!

**DgJK** Hebrews says, “by one offering he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears us witness of it; for after what was said: This is the covenant which I will establish towards them...”, chap 10: 14-16. I was thinking of the offering of Himself in perpetuity, the sanctified, and then the Holy Spirit entering into that too. Is that how it is perfected in us?

**EJC** Going back to the table, it seems there was a lot of gold. Can you explain why there is so much gold?

**CJB** Gold represents the righteousness of God. I remember when I was younger, I thought, ‘Well really, who came up with this?’. But when you look through scripture it is very evident. You see gold attached to all of the things that are holy. The whole temple inside was almost all overlaid with gold. The point in the gospels is that we might see the wood and the flour, all the things that could be seen in Christ walking here. But the gold is so critical - the table is holding up these things, overlaid with gold, the righteousness of Christ approved in the eyes of God as the holy and the pure One; everything is set on that, set on the righteousness of God, seen in His manhood.

**BSK** Why were there four rings? “two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side” and the staves of wood, Exod 37: 3.

**CJB** On each side there were rings and they would put the staves through, and it was carried. You might think that seems obvious but we are in the wilderness, we are not in heaven, we are moving. They were on the move so they needed to be able to transport the table. That is important because everything was holy, pure and precious, to be carried, not by just anybody, but by certain people. And so was the ark, everything in the tabernacle needed to be carried, until the temple was built. The tabernacle had to move through the wilderness until they got into the land and the temple could be built, and then everything could rest in that; everything was looking forward to that.



**MJK** All these things were in the tabernacle. Everything in relation to the tabernacle was carried by the Levites. That was one tribe; one tribe was responsible for packing up the tabernacle and moving it. Every Levite was involved in the movement. There might have been as much as eight tonnes of metals in the tabernacle, of which the gold alone was about one tonne. These rings were for putting the staves through, and then those staves were carried, the stave from each corner of the ark was put on the shoulder of a Levite and as I understand it the table was moved the same way. I think the altar of incense as well. We never read of the staves coming out of the ark until it gets to the temple. Once we get to heaven the movement of things has stopped, but right now we need to be Levites and carry the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the movement of the Spirit - that is something that is seen. When they carried the ark, they always saw the blue. The heavenly colour was what was shown as they carried it.

**AML** Is it important also to remember that the ark never journeyed backwards; it always journeyed forward. That is the testimony moving because of the greatness of Christ.

**BSK** We have talked a lot about the bread; why have we not talked a lot about the blood?

**MJK** Are you thinking about the breaking of bread, or are you thinking about sacrifices? The blood does need to be mentioned. The thought today was to speak just about the bread not about the blood but when we come, Lord willing, if we are able to continue with these readings, to the breaking of bread, then the blood would come out in the cup.

**DgJK** I was wondering if the four rings would relate to God's outlook. Anders spoke of the side of the testimony and I was thinking of the four corners of the earth; north, south, east and west, really relating to God's outlook. It was not just for them but universal?

**JDK** Something that really helped me in relation to the question about the gold is that it often says, "pure gold" or in another place you will get, "gold purified by fire", Rev 3: 18. This takes us back to

the wheat. There are no imperfections in it. Gold is secured out of a fire and there are no impurities. It is completely perfect.

**WJK** It is that which has gone through, which has been tested by God's judgment.

**ABERDEEN, IDAHO**

**17<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

## **Key to initials**

(all local in Aberdeen)

Colin J Brien; Ewan J Clark; Adrian J Croot; Brock S Klassen; Daryl J Klassen; Doug J Klassen; Jonathan D Klassen; Michael J Klassen; William J Klassen; Oscar W Klassen; Phil B Klassen; Victor M Klassen; Anders M Lidbeck

# VICTORY BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

**G Bruce Grant**

**Luke 23: 39-43**

**John 11: 23-27**

**1 Corinthians 15: 57-58**

In the first scripture I read, the thief was in the last moments of his life, and appreciated the Lord Jesus, saying, "this man has done nothing amiss". Jesus said to him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise". The Lord Jesus went there first. He said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit", v 46. The Lord Jesus was put in a tomb, and the thief probably was buried also. The thief is still with Christ; the Lord says, "To-day shalt thou be with me". He is still with Christ; his body is still in the grave, but the Lord Jesus is not.

The Lord Jesus will yet go to that grave and raise the thief, and what pleasure He will have in doing that; as He will have pleasure in raising all who believe in Him. Our brother's portion is with Christ; how blessed that is. That is one aspect of death being annulled. Believers who are with Christ have a blessed portion with Him, enjoying His love, enjoying communications from Him. Paul says, "it is very much better" (Phil: 1: 23): much better than our present experience. The Lord Jesus is not in the tomb: He was there three days and three nights, but death could not hold Him! The thief is still there, millions of others are still there, but there will come a time - the Lord is waiting for the Father's time, when the Lord Jesus will raise *all* who belong to Him.

I read in John 11: Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, had died. Martha says, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day"; that was true. Although we know there will be two resurrections - all will not be raised together, what Martha said was true. The Lord Jesus wanted to be appreciated *Himself*, not just for her to have light as to the last day; so He says, "I am the resurrection and the life". It is no miracle that the Lord was only in the tomb three days and three nights. That was not a miracle: the miracle was that

He died! He has resurrection power inherent in Himself; He *could not* stay in death. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life". Martha was looking to a future day; the Lord Jesus, at this point, made the future present; only a divine Person can do that. The Lord would do that for us today. We have the light that believers will be raised, and it is a living power in our souls. The apostle says, "the first-fruits, Christ", 1 Cor 15: 23. No other person that had been raised was the first-fruits: that is Christ's distinction. It means that there are others to follow after Him. "The first-fruits, Christ; then those that are the Christ's at his coming". Well, what a blessed thing that is. Therefore, there must be after-fruits: every believer *must* be raised; there is no doubt about it. Faith lays hold of that; it gives power to your soul and hope and comfort. "I am the resurrection and the life".

He says, "Lazarus, come forth", v 43. What a moment in time it was when that blessed Man could stand at a tomb and, because of the power that He had in Himself, He could call Lazarus forth: that had never happened before. Only the Lord Jesus could do that because of the power He had in Himself: He could bring a man out of death. And soon He will bring all believers, all the dead in Christ, out of death: what a triumph! What a glorious Person this is! These persons appreciated the Lord Jesus like they had never done before.

We have faith in Christ and appreciate His work, and every one of us who has that must be raised, because we are linked with Him, and He is the First-fruits. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes on me, though he have died, shall live". It is amazing that this comes from the Lord's own lips. It is the truth: persons who have died, "he that believes on me" - there you have it - "though he have died, shall live; and every one who lives and believes on me shall never die". The Lord Jesus either has to do with us Himself in putting persons to sleep, or - there are only these two things for believers - He comes Himself for us. Believers in the Lord Jesus are not waiting for resurrection: we are waiting for the Lord Jesus to come. The hymn says,

The sky, not the grave, is our goal.  
(Hymn 238)

Of course, some of us may, if the Lord leaves us here, be put to sleep through Jesus. But that is not our hope; our hope is for the Lord Jesus to come for us.

I read in 1 Corinthians 15: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all fall asleep”, v 51. Another aspect of death being annulled is this: the believers in the Lord Jesus who are alive when He comes will not see death. We will not pass through that article of death; we will all be changed, and that is what we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus coming with an assembling shout; the Lord *Himself* shall come. How attractive that is. That Person who has died to save us will come Himself. He will not send another; He will not send an angel: He will come Himself. I read, “thanks to God, who gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ”. The Lord Jesus is the Victor; He has broken that power of death; He has come out of it. Because of what He was Himself, He could raise Himself. The Father raised Him; here is another aspect of death being annulled, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. God gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ. What hope the believer has; what faith we have in the Lord Jesus. We have the victory in our souls through our Lord Jesus Christ. Death has been overcome. The Lord has gone into death as the Conqueror and broken that power. We have that victory in our souls. The Lord Jesus ‘sits in the calmness of conscious victory’, JND Collected Writings vol 12 p35. He *knows* He is the Victor; He knows He annulled death; He has dealt with the enemy, every opposing force; He knows that He will raise all His own. He is there in the calmness of conscious victory. We are in the light of that - His victory. That gives us the victory. Paul had the victory in his soul. That is what made him go through life as a believer and a servant of the Lord; not overcome by awful circumstances, he was buoyant, he was triumphant because he had a link with the Lord Jesus who is the Victor. We all have that; it gives us buoyancy in life to know this One who is there in the presence of the Father in conscious victory.

So it says, “knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord”: the fruit will be seen in the resurrection. How our brother laboured, toiled in the Lord; he spent long hours working, so much of it in private, and also in publicly serving the Lord. There will be fruit from that yet. There has been and there will still be fruit.

Well may we be encouraged. It says, “who gives us the victory”; that is present. The Lord Jesus made the future present in John 11, and this is present for us also. We have been given the victory by God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless the word.

**DUNDEE**

**23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020**

(At the meeting for the burial of John Strachan)

# THE SHEPHERD

**Allan P Grant**

**John 10: 10 “I am come”-15**

**Psalms 23: 1-4**

**Acts 20: 28**

These scriptures speak of shepherding, particularly relating to the Lord Jesus. This occasion is to occupy us with the glory and greatness of Christ, and I was thinking particularly of His glory as Shepherd. The Scriptures speak of “the good shepherd”, “the great shepherd” (Heb 13: 20) and “the chief shepherd”, 1 Pet 5: 4. It is here in John 10, He says, “I am the good shepherd”.

Our brother knew Jesus as his Lord. He had a personal link with the Lord Jesus as submitting to Him as Lord. He knew Him as his Saviour, as taking his place in dealing with the whole question of sin and sins. He could speak in this personal way, as we read in the psalm, “Jehovah is my shepherd”. What a precious thing to have such a knowledge of Christ. The Shepherd speaks of divine care. God, all through the Scriptures, makes much of shepherds. The first man of faith in Hebrews 11, Abel, was a shepherd. Moses, Abraham, and other great men of the Old Testament were shepherds, but the Lord Jesus is the One who is distinguished as “**the** great shepherd”, as it says in Hebrews: “But the God of peace who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep ...”. What a shepherd we have in Christ, One who has broken the power of death.

The verse from Hymn 103 has been much in my mind:

What love from this Shepherd did flow,  
When in care for the sheep He was led  
To stand between them and the foe  
And lay down His life in their stead.

What a cost, dear brethren! What a full expression of love! “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”.



In John's gospel, the sheep do not go astray; the sheep are those who value Christ. Our brother had an appreciation of the Lord Jesus as his Saviour and Shepherd. He valued the Shepherd's voice and His word. He knew His voice, and he followed the Shepherd. The sheep in John's gospel follow Him. We know the sheep in Luke 15 goes astray. The Lord in grace goes after it and recovers it, but in John's gospel the sheep are those who are drawn to Christ through the Father's operations and who appreciate Him, and appreciate His greatness. The object in shepherding in John's gospel, I think, is to bring the saints into the enjoyment of divine love. John speaks much about love, the Father's love for Christ, and Christ's love for His own. In John's gospel the word has in view that we are brought into the circle of divine love. The man in chapter 9 of John was brought into the flock, a distinctive example of John's sheep. Our brother was one of these sheep, as every believer is, an object of divine care and security. They are in the Lord's hand, in the Father's hand, v 28, 29. What a comfort it is to know such security in a time of sorrow. So the Lord says, "I am the good shepherd ... and I lay down my life for the sheep", the fullest expression of love in view of the saints coming into life. "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly": that life speaks of the enjoyment of the spiritual blessings, the enjoyment of divine love. That is what the Lord as shepherd would bring us into. He says, "I am the good shepherd; and I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine". This was very much the main occupation of our brother's life, gaining knowledge of Christ. Christ says, "I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine"; His knowledge is perfect. He knows each one; He knows each one by name; and He has taken our brother to be with Himself. What a knowledge He has of every circumstance. Believers regarded as sheep suggest our place down here; the sheep are defenceless, but we have the security of knowing the protection and blessing of the Lord's shepherd care.

Then in Psalm 23 we have David writing from experience:

Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.

The impression we get in the psalm is not of David wandering or going astray. He is speaking about his experience of the Lord as his Shepherd. "I shall not want"; the shepherd care of Christ brings us into lasting satisfaction. Our brother, I think, proved this satisfaction; he did not seek the things of the world.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;  
he leadeth me beside still waters.

The shepherd care of Christ would bring us into the enjoyment of spiritual refreshment, spiritual food. The shepherd supplies everything for our spiritual care:

He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in paths of  
righteousness for his name's sake.

One of our brother's carers was reading this psalm to him when the Lord took him to be with Himself. He appreciated the care in the home, and received it from God's hand. May we be kept in the sense of that hand. Martha said at one point to the Lord, "dost thou not care?", Luke 10: 40. She lost the sense of the Lord's care and love as shepherd, but what a blessing to be kept in the conscious enjoyment of it.

And then we read in Acts 20. Paul at Ephesus had brought out the fulness of the counsel of God. He says, "I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God", v 27. The saints in Ephesus had received it but Paul felt the need of shepherds, that the saints might be maintained in the enjoyment of the greatness of divine purpose. So Paul says here, "wherein the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers, to shepherd the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own". Think of the value that God placed upon the assembly! I think our brother had a sense in his heart of what the assembly is to Christ, and of what the assembly is for God's pleasure, and his service had that in view. I think that is the character of true shepherd service. The Lord is the chief Shepherd, but we can all play our part as serving under Him as shepherds, caring for what is most precious to Him. Paul speaks of taking care of the assembly of God (1 Tim 3: 5), the most precious

thing that God has here, and He requires persons who in love are willing to take on this service of care that we see so fully in the Lord Himself as laying down His life for the sheep. I think our brother filled out his part in shepherding; we locally knew that especially. The brethren universally too appreciated his service in supplying food for the saints.

Shepherding is a service that both brothers and sisters can undertake. Rachel was a shepherdess, Gen 29: 9. We can all be involved in some measure in shepherding the assembly of God. We are left here in an adverse scene and Paul goes on to speak of the dangers that would come in. We would be concerned that the saints are maintained in the enjoyment of divine purpose. The epistle to the Ephesians brings out the great light that is ours, and I think the shepherd would have that in view, the saints enjoying the fulness of divine love and divine purpose, and maintained at the height of our heavenly calling.

May we be encouraged and comforted as knowing the Lord's service in this way. For His Name's sake.

**DUNDEE**

**23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020**

(At the meeting for the burial of John Strachan)

# VICTORY

**Kenny J Walker**

**1 Corinthians 15:57**

**Exodus 14:31-15:2 (to “glorify him”)**

**Joshua 14:10-13**

We are gathered together today in the presence of death, and also in unusual circumstances where men are affected by fear, anxiety and despair. Perhaps we feel these things too, but I want to say a word for our encouragement and our blessing at the present time about triumph, and the victory that has been won.

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as our brother was, we are in the gain of a victory and triumph that has been won. We can say from this scripture that we have read in 1 Corinthians 15 that we are on the winning side. The victory has already been won. In spite of the despair and the fear of death upon the human race, believers can take comfort, and have confidence and stability, that God gives us the victory by the Lord Jesus Christ. We could do nothing ourselves, but God has done it in a blessed Man who is alive for evermore; a Man who has triumphed over the power of death, and over all that stood between God and man. We sing of the wonder of resurrection, the wonder of the power of victory that Christ has accomplished. Today, as in the presence of death, we can speak about the glory that our brother is now with Christ, and about a realm which has been established in victory by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Think of what we can say at such a time as this: at the end of our brother's long life of 94 years, we can say, “thanks to God, who gives us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ”. Think of the Lord Jesus going into death, and facing the might of sin and death! That fear of death that was, and is, upon the human race has been conquered; the might of death has been overthrown. Christ is now on the other side of death, a living glorious Man. Our brother has drawn attention to that: “I am the resurrection and the life”, John 11: 25. We can have confidence at such a time as this, that our brother

knew this Man for himself; I trust that we all know this Person as our Saviour and our Lord. We can take comfort at this time; death has been conquered; He has given us the victory; victory has been won.

I want to refer to the scripture in Exodus as to the great victory which was won at the Red Sea. There was fear on every side, with the power of death behind them in the pursuing Egyptians, and the Red Sea ahead. Think of the feelings of fear and anxiety; death was behind them, and death was ahead of them. The Red Sea was a barrier ahead, how were they going to get through and escape? I think it can be said that God came in and gave them the victory. As it says here, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel". I wanted to draw attention to the words of this song of victory, which becomes very personal. How many of the children of Israel were there at this point? It has been suggested around two million, a great company anyway, but then it becomes very personal. How many are in the gain of the triumph of Christ's victory over death and the grave? Millions can rejoice in the salvation secured in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and the many who have been "made alive".

Millions have placed their faith and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ, but I want to bring it down to us individually. Our brother, when he was a boy, at the age of eleven, confessed Christ as his Saviour. I think throughout his long life thereafter he could say, as the word here, "I will sing unto Jehovah". Jehovah had become his "strength and his song". He had come to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, not only as Saviour but as Lord, and had come to serve Him in the scene of His absence. That was our brother's portion. I would encourage us all that it may be our portion. I trust we can say and sing,

My strength and song is Jah,  
and he is become my salvation:  
This is my God, and I will glorify him.

It is like a response or a note of praise and thanksgiving. Our brother was committed not only to the service of the Lord Jesus

Christ, but also engaged in worshipping Him and praising Him: "This is my God, and I will glorify him". May we be engaged in it too.

I would just like to close with a reference to the scripture in Joshua. Our brother has had a long life, as had Caleb. Caleb had known the difficulties of the wilderness and known the murmuring and turmoil, but he also knew victory. What was in his heart was Hebron, which I think speaks of the purpose of God; and I suggest that our brother was one who was also in the gain of this. Caleb had the land in his heart, did he not? Think of these two men, Caleb and Joshua, going on in triumph. They knew in anticipation what it was to have the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ; they overcame everything that stood in the way. Caleb says, "give me this mountain". He was elevated above the scene of despair, and enjoyed what was heavenly and spiritual. Our brother did not draw attention to himself, but lived a life of piety where he drew attention to the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything was centred in that blessed One, and as we go on through this scene, let us have our eyesight lifted from this scene of despair, anxiety and fear, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Mountains suggest an area of elevation, and a heavenly area is opened up, which our brother knew something of. I trust we all know something of this area of blessing and are in the good of victory. The victory has been given to us, not because of anything we have done, but because God has given us the victory by our Lord Jesus Christ.

May we be like a Caleb and a Joshua triumphing in the victory that has been won. Let us go on in strength and encouragement. We need to find strength in faith to give us the victory at the present time. May we be encouraged and comforted, and may we be given strength and be in the gain of the victory.

May we be encouraged for His Name's sake.

**DUNDEE**

**23 March 2020**

(At the meeting for the burial of Mr John Strachan)

# THE LORD'S DESIRES

A John E Temple

**Mark 5: 41-43; 8: 5-9; 10: 46-52**

My thought, beloved, is simple. These scriptures refer to desires of the Lord Jesus recorded by Mark, who writes the servant's gospel. This is different from what was mentioned elsewhere on Saturday as to John 17, where we had the Lord's blessed outgoing to the Father. What a heavenly setting that was; the Lord Jesus, having "lifted up his eyes to heaven" (v 1), addressed the Father. Near the end of that prayer He says, "I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me" - "desire that where I am they also may be with me", v 24. Our brother commented that there were other desires of the Lord Jesus in that chapter. The word 'desire' is not used elsewhere there, but there are other things mentioned that were His desires, such as, "I do not demand that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them out of evil", v 15. There was what was very broad in that way in relation to the testimony.

There are other suggestions of the desires of the Lord Jesus. In the Old Testament, for example, there is the longing seen in David when "the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem", 2 Sam 23: 15, 16. What a desire that was, in type, of the Lord Jesus. What a deep desire He has that His own are to remember Him. We pray about young ones; we would love to see them having sufficient exercise that they desire to remember Him in the breaking of bread.

I take up these three scriptures now from the servant's gospel, the levitical gospel, in regard to the Lord's desires as seen in how He may bring others in in a simple way as He is serving. This is the gospel where persons are brought to acknowledge Him as doing "all things well" (chap 7: 37): "He does all things well; he makes both the deaf to hear, and the speechless to speak". If they had continued with Him further, they would have seen that not only did He do all things *well*, but everything He did was in all perfection. He does not

complete every matter Himself at times, but He brings in others. You can understand Mark writing as having service in mind, and so we get these three scriptures well known to us. They were concerned that the child was dead, but the Lord Jesus said, “the child has not died, but sleeps. And they derided him”, v 39, 40. He, “having put them all out, takes with him the father of the child, and the mother, and those that were with him, and enters in where the child was lying. And having laid hold of the hand of the child, he says to her, Talitha koumi, which is, interpreted, Damsel, I say to thee, Arise”. All that He needed to do He did. He brought this child back to be presented as living; it had immediate effect, “the damsel arose and walked, for she was twelve years old. And they were astonished with great astonishment”. Then there is this at the end: “And he charged them much that no one should know this; and he desired that something should be given her to eat”. The Lord does not get something and give it to the child. If He had done that, we know it would have been exactly what she needed. Nor does He command; but He desires that something should be given her to eat. Those few that were there would have heard that. The primary responsibility would actually have been upon the parents of the child; it was their house, and they would have known what was in the house, what could be provided for her. I am not taking exactly that aspect, but the Lord Jesus brings in others, and we should be ready if He gives me something to do, however outwardly simple.

He uses His own for proceeding with the testimony. You may say, ‘This is needed and that is needed, and these things are beyond me’. But you may find that is just how it works out. The Lord does what was greatly needed here. The prime thing that was needed was the Lord’s work. He alone could do that, but He brings in others. He does not specify whom, although it was probably the parents that would take this child. He desires that something should be given her to eat. He does not specify what food; just that food was to be given her to eat. In doing something, the Lord would raise exercise with us as to what we are able to do in that way. We may have to go back to Him. What is suitable to be given? What is suitable to be given to one that He has just raised, a twelve-year old? Something to be given to her to eat so that she can take in



nourishment for herself; she “arose and walked”. The Lord’s desire would be that she continues to walk, continue to walk here for Him. If she was to be left, she needed to be fed, and the Lord expresses this, not as a command, but as a desire. This prompts in another way: if it is not specified as to whom, who is willing and ready to respond to the desires that the Lord expresses? This is one individual, one soul and the Lord may give us something to do with regard to one person.

When we come to chapter 8, it is another desire. Here the Lord is working and providing for many. There was derision of the Lord in the previous section, but here the disciples had doubts: “Whence shall one be able to satisfy these with bread here in a desert place?”, v 4. Do we not know the One who is able to do that? However, we have to see that He may have in mind to employ others in it. He alone is the One who can make seven loaves and a few small fishes sufficient for all those that were there - it says that “they that had eaten were about four thousand”. He alone can do that. But am I ready to do what He might have in mind for me? Am I near enough to Him to hear not only a direct word as with the loaves but the desire He expressed about the fishes: “he desired these also to be set before them”? He “gave them” - that is the loaves - “to his disciples, that they might set them before them”. That would be particularly the twelve. Then it says, “And they had a few small fishes, and having blessed them”; He blesses them separately. He gives thanks for the loaves in this account. These few small fishes had been blessed, and the Lord wants them to be set before them; “he desired these also to be set before them. And they ate and were satisfied”. How wonderful! Am I ready for some service in this way, service to many? It is not recorded that the disciples went and distributed them; for it is not to make anything of us. The One it makes all of is the Lord Jesus Himself. That must be so; “they ate and were satisfied”. I am sure there were those who responded to His desire for these to be given. No one had to come and collect anything for himself. The response is to His desire; and it is to be anonymous. That is the way we should always be serving the Lord; He is the One who has the great place.

In chapter 10, there are many here that rebuked Bartimæus. He wanted to come into blessing and “many rebuked him”. He would not be silenced, but cries out: “Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus, standing still, desired him to be called”. Well, beloved, at times I may not be in accord with the Lord’s mind. The Lord was ready to bless. I could have been one of these here rebuking the man for crying out. The Lord was going out from Jericho; the men do not want this man to detain Him. The Lord would have me accept His word and be ready to act immediately in the way that He desired. “Jesus ... desired him to be called”. It is wonderful. I could have well understood if the Lord Himself had immediately gone to the man and spoken to him, but no, He “desired him to be called. And they call the blind man”, as if those who had been rebuking him now realise that the Lord has a desire contrary to what their thoughts were.

May we, dear brethren, realise that we may misunderstand or have our own thoughts; but it is wonderful how the Lord would adjust me and at the same time in another simple way make me available to do what He desires to be done. He desired this man to be called. They do not only call him, or just say to him, “He calls thee” but they say, “Be of good courage, rise up, he calls thee”. It is as though they realise that “rise up” is sufficient: they do not say, ‘Do you need a hand, as you are blind, to reach Him?’. It is as though they have come entirely round; “Be of good courage, rise up, he calls thee. And, throwing away his garment, he started up and came to Jesus”. He gets his sight and follows Jesus in the way. However simple a part I may have had and that one for which I may have had to be adjusted, is it not something to rejoice in that someone has followed Him in the way, continuously in the way?

Where we read yesterday, we had about those whom the Lord would have follow Him in Matthew 4, the two pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John. They continued. They may at times, like us, have been not altogether with the Lord in the way He was going, but you find at the end of John’s gospel, not long before the Lord left this scene, John still following. Peter had the word to follow, and I presume he did follow. I just commit these thoughts to you: three

desires of the Lord in regard of simple service that He brings out here. May we be ready, may we be conscious, not only of His word in the way of command to be followed, but when His desires are expressed may we be ready and close to Him to hear Him and to follow Him.

For His Name's sake.

**SUNBURY**

**9 March 2020**

# SHARING THE FATHER'S DELIGHT IN CHRIST

Alfred J Gardiner

**Luke 3: 21, 22**

**2 Peter 1: 16-18**

I think these scriptures would give us an impression, dear brethren, first of all of the positive delight which the Father has in Christ, and then how He would share that with us. That is a wonderful thing to contemplate, how the Father is prepared to share with us the pleasure that He Himself finds in Jesus. So we find in this third chapter of Luke's gospel that Jesus was baptised, "baptised and praying". It says, "all the people having been baptised and Jesus having been baptised and praying". Well now, these are simple statements but they mean a good deal; "Jesus having been baptised", it is a wonderful thing that Jesus should be baptised. There was no necessity for it from a personal point of view, but the people had come in a spirit of repentance and had accepted baptism as the expression of that repentance, and Jesus in wondrous grace identifies Himself with them, so that He Himself was baptised. It says, "and Jesus having been baptised"; and then it adds, "and praying". Jesus having been baptised in identifying Himself in wonderful grace with the repentance that marked the people who had come to be baptised, and then it says, "and praying": "Jesus having been baptised and praying".

Well now, prayer, if it is genuine prayer, is the expression of dependence on God; but where do you get the most complete expression of dependence on God? I believe you get the most complete expression of dependence on God when Jesus came into the world as a newborn Babe. That has impressed me greatly, dear brethren: I doubt if you can find anywhere any greater expression of dependence on God than you see in a newborn babe. A newborn babe is dependent on others for everything, *everything*, and hence a newborn babe is the absolute expression of dependence; and when One of the Godhead came into human condition He came in in that way: not in self-confidence, not in self-sufficiency or self-assertiveness but as a newborn Babe. Now that should impress us,

dear brethren; if any of us tend naturally to be self-sufficient, self-reliant, self-assertive, let us recognise that the way that Christ came into the world was as a newborn Babe; and that means that dependence, I think I am right in saying, is the first feature of moral excellence in the human condition. You might say, 'Well, surely obedience would be the first expression'. Well, I would not quarrel with that, but you do not expect a newborn babe to be obedient. You cannot look for obedience in a newborn babe; it is not capable of it; it needs to be developed a little before the sense of responsibility is there. But a newborn babe is essentially an expression of absolute dependence; and that shows that dependence is the first feature of moral excellence in the human condition that God looks for. What a contrast to the world around where men are self-assertive and self-reliant, and what God loves to see is dependence.

Well now, let us just allow that to sink in, dear brethren. I realise that as I say these things you may say to me, 'Well, are *you* dependent?'. And that is the normal result of having these things brought before us; they present a challenge to us, and we seek grace to accept the challenge; because if God sets out that a certain feature of things is morally excellent in His sight in manhood, then it is for us as His creatures taken up in infinite grace to see to it that the Spirit is allowed liberty to develop those features in us. So it says here, "Jesus having been baptised and praying, that the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form as a dove upon him; and a voice came out of heaven. *Thou* art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight". But now, that is a positive statement on the part of God that He found in Jesus positive delight, and it was in Jesus in human condition and as praying; notice that, as praying. "Jesus having been baptised", that is He identified Himself in baptism with the repentant people. A wonderful thing - He has done that in the most absolute way when He gave Himself for us, and bore those sins that repentance expresses acceptance of, a wonderful thing, and so Christ has gone that way. And then it says, "a voice came out of heaven, *Thou* art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight".

But then Peter, in his epistle, carries us somewhat further; he says, "he received from God the Father honour and glory, such a voice", *such* a voice; not merely *a* voice, but *such* a voice, as though on the holy mount Peter and James and John were privileged to hear the very *tones* of the voice in which the Father spoke to Jesus; "such a voice being uttered to him by the excellent glory: **This** is my beloved Son". At the baptism of Jesus the voice says "*Thou*", but now on the holy mount the voice says "This"; that is to say, the Father is addressing Peter, and James, and John; He is, if I may so say, addressing us and calling *our* attention, calling the attention of others, Peter, and James, and John, to the pleasure which He Himself found in Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom *I* have found my delight". So Peter says, "this voice *we* heard uttered from heaven, being with him on the holy mountain". Before that he says, "such a voice". When we think of what actually happened on the holy mountain, we can see the change that has come over Peter. What actually happened on the holy mountain was that Peter said, "it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said" (Luke 9: 33); that is what scripture says, "not knowing what he said". But Peter rejects all that, he lets all that sink into oblivion, and so we do not want to bring it back again from that point of view; what we want to concentrate on is the exceeding moral glory of what actually happened when it is divested of all the wrong thoughts that Peter at one time attached to it. We are allowed now to see that Jesus "received from God the Father honour and glory, such a voice" - such a voice, the Father's own voice and the Father's own tones of voice, "being uttered to him by the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom *I* have found my delight; and this voice we heard uttered from heaven, being with him on the holy mountain". Well, we have not been literally with Him on the holy mountain, but I think in this day of the Spirit we are privileged to have some entrance into what Peter, and James, and John were given entrance into. We can get some impression by the Spirit of what that voice was - "such a voice", and of what it said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom *I* have found my delight". It means that the Father is willing to share His own pleasure, His own joy in Christ; He is willing to share it with

us. He wants to share it with us. That is the wonderful thing; that is what is possible in virtue of the indwelling Holy Spirit; wonderful thing.

The more we touch of these things, dear brethren, the more we increase in our appreciation of the Holy Spirit Himself, that He has taken His abode in us in order that these holy things of God might be known by us in actuality. Well, that is our portion through grace. We can well rejoice in it, and God grant that we may increase in our appreciation of it. We do not want to be occupied with things that are not worth being occupied with. Christ has already gone “up above all the heavens, that He might fill **all things**”, Eph 4: 10. That day is not far distant, and there is not going to be room for anything that is not of Christ. Let us bear that in mind. Let the younger brethren here bear that in mind that it may regulate their outlook that there is not going to be anything remaining that is not of Christ. He has gone up already “above all the heavens, that he might fill all things”.

So let it be that He obtains the place in our hearts that the Father intends that He should obtain, and as He does obtain that we shall find that we are more and more at home in the Father’s presence because we are being given to share by the Holy Spirit that in which the Father Himself finds His full delight.

**ABERDEEN**

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