

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 166

January 2021

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HEBREWS 10

Hebrews 10: 1-23; 32-39

TWL We are reading this book from the exercise of considering the glories of the Son, and that is why I did not read from verses 24-31 because those verses take into account what there is in the line of breakdown, and what we find in ourselves. Starting at chapter 10: 1, it is very interesting that what God had in mind is taken account of. When we think of all that there was in the Old Testament in relation to the offerings for sin and so on, there was no clearing of the conscience. The people understood what was there for God according to His commandment, but there was no clearing of conscience; but then the way it goes on is interesting in the light of what was said in our reading last week in the Acts about “him, given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2: 23). Starting at verse 5, it says, “Wherefore coming into the world he” - that is Christ - “says, Sacrifice and offering thou wilt not; but thou hast prepared me a body”. It is very interesting that these words suggest how He knew that He would have a body prepared for Him. He came into the world as taking up that body but taking it up in the light that it would become a sacrifice for His God. The committal of Christ to the will of His God involved that He would lay down that body in death. He would take it up in testimony, and lay it down in death. That was according to the will of His God; so the first part of verse 7 brings in “the roll of the book”, which brings in the counsels of God. But the second reference in this chapter, in verse 9, does not refer to the counsels of God; it has to do with the love of Christ for His God. So that He says, “Lo, I come to do thy will”. “The roll of the book” is not mentioned there, and the reason it is not mentioned there is that, speaking very carefully, Christ did not go through and take up the things of God merely because it was an ordinance, though that was involved. He took it up because of what was in His heart, and the will of God always takes into account the heart of God; so Christ took it up in relation to the heart of God.

Then it goes on in relation to “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ”. Last week we were touching on the blood

of Christ, but we are “sanctified through the offering” of His body, which is another thought because that is the Man for God: it is not just a matter of what was morally acceptable, but all that was involved in the manhood of Jesus for God; and we are sanctified according to that. What made the blood efficacious was what was seen in holiness in the body as it was for His God; so all of these things go through, and then He is perfected. Then we come to the point of our access, and it is wonderful because our access is dependent on the perfection of Christ in His manhood for God. And the more we take account of that, the more we understand our liberty and the faithfulness of God who has promised that this would be the way.

Then we come to the latter part of the chapter and there are two verses that I thought we could get help with, one being verse 35: “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense”. That takes account of the finality that faith sees, Christ where He is; so our suffering is in relation to a Man who lives there. There is suffering, beloved brethren, but our inheritance is there, not here. So, although there will be sufferings here, do not cast away your confidence in what God is doing in Christ in bringing us to Himself.

And then it says, “For yet a very little while he that comes will come, and will not delay”, and for the believer that is wonderful. Often we think about the Lord coming in relation to the rapture, when we are going to be with Him; but, beloved brethren, the thing that should be uppermost in our hearts is not the rapture when the Lord comes for us, and we shall go to be forever with the Lord, but rather the day when the Lord will come and we will see Him vindicated in the scene where He was rejected. We will see Him vindicated in the area where His body was laid in death. Beloved brethren, for the saint that is the day of the vindication of Jesus.

DCB It is wonderful to see how everything centres in this Person, and the way in which He has gone in taking up a body. We sang,

Thou art, O Lord, the centre (Hymn 259).

We see that the whole working out of the divine counsel is all bound up with this one glorious Person, and the fact that this One, who is God in His Person, has taken, in the reality of humanity, a body, in order to ensure that the will of God is fully fulfilled.

TWL And the reality of His manhood continues. There was the body He took up, there is the body that He laid down in death; and there is the body He took up again, in a different condition, but a body just the same. “They found not the body of the Lord Jesus”, Luke 24: 3. The reality of the manhood of Jesus involves His having a body; and subsequently, when we are taken to be with the Lord, we also will have bodies like His. The body of glory is the vehicle by which we will have expression Godward, but it is also that by which we will stand before God. The reality of manhood for God is seen in Christ having a body.

DCB So that all of that is in the maintenance of the will of God. The Lord went into death and did all that was necessary as to the cost according to the will of God, but He lives again for the will of God, and those who are brought into line with Him are brought into line therefore with Him according to the will of God.

TWL It is interesting that He took up things according to the will of God, but it also says here, “by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”. That was the will of God, beloved brethren. We have been brought to God according to His will, and the will of God always takes into account the heart of God. It also takes into account the purpose of God, always; so how it works out according to His will is that He will have us “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ”, and that is quite a thing because it involved His sufferings.

THB I was thinking about what you have said about the heart of God. We sing that hymn sometimes as to the Lord Jesus:

The will of Thy God and His pleasure
(Hymn 148).

Is God’s pleasure involved, the Lord having a knowledge of what is in God’s heart and going through with everything for God’s pleasure?

TWL Christ took account of what it would be for God that there would come a time when He would be able to rest in His love, and He took that up as a Man to achieve it. That is a remarkable thing to think about, Christ taking up a body that He would suffer in on account of God. He would arrive at a point where God would be able to rest in His love, in those He has sanctified through the offering of that body. Is that what you had in mind?

JTB It says in Exodus 21, “If he came in alone” (v 3), that is, if he came in ‘with his body’ (note ‘b’), but then, “If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters”, v 4. If this refers to the Lord Jesus, “His master” would refer to His God and Father. He has to lay down that body: his ear was bored through with an awl. It is “ears hast thou prepared me” in Psalm 40: 6; but in Hebrews 10 it is, “thou hast prepared me a body”. There is no part of the human anatomy more wonderful than the ear.

TWL Yes, and it is quite a thing to think about that. The Lord knew what it was to offer that body. It was not an onerous thing for Him to take it up; He took it up on behalf of His God; but it was a real thing for Him to commit that body to His God knowing the sufferings that would be involved in that. And yet He shows His committal in affection, “I love my master, my wife, and my children, I will not go free”, Exod 21: 5.

JTB Is the bondman saying “distinctly” related to His committal to the will of God?

TWL He says it “distinctly” because of His love, and that is why I thought it was so precious in verse 9 because this verse does not have “the roll of the book”. “Lo, I come to do thy will”, is what He did in His affection for His God. This verse is not exactly a matter of what is according to counsel, although that was involved, but He did it out of love for His God as having taken up a body.

JTB The question of preparation is a very blessed one, is it not? We cannot really enter into much of that, but we need to emphasise that the Lord Jesus is not a creature. In the preparation of the body His deity was ever maintained.

TWL That the Creator would take up a body, your mind just has to rest there. You cannot reason about that, but that is exactly what happened, and He took up that body that He might lay it down in death. What a thing that Christ should move that way, knowing all the feelings that were there in His manhood in relation to the will of His God.

JTB It is beyond comprehension, but worthy of contemplation, that God actually prepared His body. “The holy thing also which shall be born” (Luke 1: 35) is Christ the Lord, intrinsically holy, but divine preparation entered into this wonderful matter.

KRC I was just contemplating the full scope of His life, because He is no longer a Man *here*. That body went into the grave, but He was raised, not in flesh and blood, but “flesh and bones”, Luke 24: 39. I was thinking of how He ends Matthew’s gospel, “And behold, *I* am with you all the days, until the completion of the age”, Matt 28: 20. I was thinking of the grandeur of the Person and the greatness of how He came in in the incarnation, and yet that Person is still the same and will ever be the same.

TWL And it is always a delight to me that Christ remains a Man forever. He has a body, and He remains a Man, and because He remains a Man, I have a right to be in heaven as a man. It could not be unless He was a Man there, unless He had a body there, and that is quite affecting, because that is according to the will of God.

RCT I was just looking at Philippians, “taking a bondman’s form, taking his place in the likeness of men” (chap 2: 7); it was all part of this. The fact that He “emptied himself” as well: I would like some help on it.

TWL It is quite a touching thing that the One that was there had a right to remain in glory, and yet He moved and “emptied himself” to take up this body that had been prepared for Him according to the counsels of God; and according to His own Person He took it up in love for His God. That is quite a thing to think of, that Person moving in relation to love, to take up a body, to secure for His God that which was according to His will. That is Philippians, the manner in which He moved; here it is the love that lay behind how He moved.

NRC I am seeking help as to this thought as to the heart of God. The hymn-writer says,

The heart of God is love (Hymn 59).

It is not something that has been formed through time. It was always there, and yet it has been revealed through Jesus Christ, and now that love has really extended to us, speaking reverently, through Christ, and through God being revealed as Father to us. But that love was always there. I was thinking back at the very beginning: "Jehovah Elohim, walking in the garden in the cool of the day", Gen 3: 8. There was a desire there, was there not, although the love may have been shown in a different way? I am impressed with the thought that God's heart has constantly been, and forever will be, love, but it has been revealed through Jesus.

TWL Speaking very carefully, because of what God is in His nature, which is love, there is a need there, for love seeks answers to itself. That involves His will. Counsel is how it was going to happen; will was the force behind it; and love is the character of it.

JTB "Jesus Christ come in flesh" brings out the complete answer in Christ to what God desired in men; so "every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God", 1 John 4: 2. We hold on to that, "Jesus Christ come in flesh", but then we recognise too that He came "by water and blood" (chap 5: 6); so, in order that the counsels of God could be accomplished, He had to die. There was the glory of the incarnation, "Jesus Christ come in flesh", but then "by water and blood" is the means by which God finds an answer to the work of Christ and to the desires and dictates of His own heart, do you think?

TWL That is the thing I find most touching about this, because Christ in Himself was acceptable to God as He was. There was nothing additional needed in Him; so that body was perfect for His God while He was here but then, in order that we should be brought to God, in order that we should be sanctified according to the will of that God, Christ, knowing what that was, laid down that body. So where you have made reference to in John's epistle is very touching, "he that came by water and blood". Christ came in, knowing that

there was going to come a time when He was going to lay down that holy body for God; He knew what that was. What committal there was, for God!

JTB So in the scripture, “not by water only, but by water and blood”, the emphasis is on the sacrifice of Christ to secure what was pleasurable to God in men.

DJH I was thinking how comprehensive it is that He gave Himself. That would involve His body and His blood, everything. There was nothing withheld; He gave Himself. The immensity of it is really too much for us to comprehend: He gave Himself.

TWL It is quite something when you think that, when it says He gave Himself, it meant that there was going to come a time when He was going to lie in death. All that had entered into that life, the enjoyment of things while in that body was given up for His God. I find that quite affecting, because the reality of what Christ had as Man with His God, involving His body, and the feelings expressed and known while in that body, would all for a time be given up to fulfill the will of his God.

DJH And how wonderful that one could say, “who has ... given himself for me”, Gal 2: 20. That was the cost, not only for the complete scope of the fulfilling of the will of God but for each one of us. That is something that we shall never fully encompass throughout eternity.

TWL We shall never be able to fathom what that was, but we will be able to take account of it. You come to the knowledge of what it is, not exactly in comprehension, but as you look on it you see how pleasurable that Man was for His God.

BRL I thought of the Lord’s words, “I go and shall prepare you a place ... that where I am ye also may be”, John 14: 3. It affected me freshly that, speaking reverently, that was His objective. That was His full occupation, and He did it for me. When you put the two together, it is quite affecting to think that not only did He go that way for you and me, but also that it was in the counsels of God that it should be so.

TWL Yes, and from that aspect of it, when you get to Ephesians you see “the breadth and length and depths and height”; and then it goes on “and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”, chap 3: 18, 19. The four dimensions there are what Christ has secured by His committal to His God; the four dimensions are what He has secured for His God; and “to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge” is the love that secured it. We cannot comprehend it; we cannot reason that out; but we get to look on it and see it for what it is, and that is a wonderful thing.

DCB So we see here the way in which the will of God applies: “by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”. We can look at the Lord Jesus and say, “the Son of God, who has loved me”; it is a wonderful fact; but we see also that the whole heart of God was involved in that. The will of God was that we should be sanctified, and the only way that could be done was by such an offering.

TWL Yes, the point of this chapter is that we see it in Christ, His love for the will of His God, but it is fine to see that the will of God, working according to the heart of God, took account of us too. So, what we were for the heart of God before time ever began is what is here. It is God saying, ‘This is what I want, and this is how I am going to secure it, and it is also how I am going to express myself’. He separates to Himself a race of men that is according to the Man of His counsel; that is this. Subsequently “he has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified”. God has done that because Christ lives, as Man, before God, perfectly.

DCB Scripture brings in God’s will several times. I was thinking of, “having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will”, Eph 1: 5. This is a working out of that. It is according to what God has secured for Himself: “according to the good pleasure of his will” before time was.

TWL And that is “the good pleasure of his will”. Before you have counsel and purpose, the good pleasure is there. It is God moving according to His heart, so it goes back to what was said: it is the love of God.

JTB We see how “both he that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one”, Heb 2: 11. That is in virtue of this verse, “by which will we have been sanctified”; so it is on that basis that we become one with Christ. It is very affecting, and it is “once for all”. That is a great assurance that it is “once for all”. Mr Raven said, ‘Sanctification is more positional; holiness more moral’, vol 16 p302. Of course, there is the practical side to sanctification, but according to this scripture it is “once for all”.

TWL And for God it could not be any less than that, or it could not be for God; and that is what makes all of this so wonderful. But it goes on to say, “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 after those days, saith the Lord: Giving my laws into their hearts”; so we begin to love the things of God like Christ did, in our measure, but like Christ did. That is the truth of what the Lord says in John “that they may be one, as we are one”. The character of those persons is Christ over again.

JTB There is a fine note to “those sanctified” in Hebrews 2: 11, ‘Simply the character of the persons, without reference to done or doing’ (note ‘i’); so it does not depend on us in that sense.

DCB So the practical exercise you refer to depends on us seeing this first. Our position in the sight of God is “sanctified”; seeing that, we have the grace to take on the practical exercise.

JTB We marvel at the way God has operated; so, as you see the example in Christ and what He has done - “by which will”, as has been referred to - it becomes a great lever for how we conduct ourselves.

TWL It moves on then to our side of the matter: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness for entering into the holy of holies”, and then it goes on, “let us approach with a true heart, in full assurance of faith” - that is the whole system of affection opened up for us - “sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience, and washed as to our body with pure water”. It is a wonderful thing to take account of that, because the blood of Jesus stands; the manhood of Jesus stands, the reality that He is there, so that it is “entering into the holy of

holies by the blood of Jesus,” - that is the moral side - “the new and living way which he has dedicated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh”. That is the body of the Man, and because He remains a Man we can have boldness for entering in because of all the perfection of the Man, not just what He did and what He removed but because of what He *is*, and that is the point. It is because of what Christ *is* and not just because of what He has done. You cannot put aside what He has done, but He has done it so that He can be, speaking carefully, a Man where He is for His God. The systems, the operations, the love of God in function are known because Christ is a Man as He *is* there.

NRC There are three sections really to verse 19. It starts first of all with “entering into”: that comes from us first; there is movement from our side. There has to be a desire there to want to move. And it is “into the holy of holies”, which has been made manifest by the something which covers all, which is “the blood of Jesus”; so there are three parts to that verse which is very interesting. But over it all is “the blood of Jesus, the new and living way”. It is really interesting to see the way that we have been able to come to it that we can move towards God and go into His presence, “the holy of holies”. It has all been made known to us through the blood of Jesus Christ.

TWL Yes, exactly, and going on from here it is very interesting, because we move on from this point to the point of faith, and faith, beloved brethren, is something which takes account of *finished things*; it takes account of finality. So faith does not just work for what is testimonial, although it is taken up there. Faith takes account of *finished things* with God, and we will go on to that in the next chapter in more detail, if the Lord will; but faith here is in relation to going on: “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense”. The confidence is that Christ is enough for God and my standing is in that Man; that is what gives me confidence in God. It is not because I am something; it is because Christ is everything; and I have confidence in that. Faith takes account of Christ as He is for God. Now I stand, and that is why I stand. Is that right?

JTB The word is “boldness”, a remarkable word for any of us to have that attitude. It is not something that is characteristic of us. An

Israelite of old would never have the audacity or temerity to seek to enter the holy of holies; he never could; he would be consumed: but we have boldness to do such a thing. It is remarkable, because it is underpinned by the blood “dedicated for us”. Think of God being so gracious that through the work of Christ He has been able to dedicate this place and this entering into the holiest for us. How reassuring that is!

NRC You have a right; somebody who is bold thinks they have a right to something: does that bring this out? We have a right to this, do we not? I often think of that as we enter into the Father’s presence. It is our right as sons to be there, is it not?

JTB The “assurance of faith” really garrisons us, gives us the ability, really comfort, to enter there.

THB I was wondering if the enjoyment of being in the sense of justification would be involved in that. We have that sense that it is our right to go in.

JTB That is right. “Sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience”; that is a complete matter, is it not? Everything is completely cleared. Then “washed as to our body with pure water”; so you are wholly suitable to enter into this place of nearness and the enjoyment of the most precious of divine things.

KRC What does it mean by approaching “with a true heart”? It seems challenging to me, because it is a full heart matter in that sense. Am I approaching it just because it is something I am accustomed to, or is it something that I have a genuine desire for, or am I bringing everything to God that would be suitable to Him?

JTB Because of the work of Christ within us we can be in this attitude as approaching “with a true heart”. That is that everything is cleared; the work of Christ has proceeded in our hearts; and we have that sure foundation as opposed to what is false. I suppose one of the things that Hebrews deals with is the apostasy, persons resiling from what is true, and what is appropriate and proper to the divine presence, but “a true heart” would be contrary to that, do you think?

DCB So there is One who is in the divine presence who is faithful and true: “having a great priest over the house of God”. He has a wonderful administration under His hand, which would involve drawing us in to have part in that response to the divine heart.

TWL The Spirit of God is also involved in that. In verse 16, which I know is slightly different because it is referring to the house of Israel, it says, “Giving my laws into their hearts”. “A true heart” is one that loves God without sin attached.

DCB So, would the exercise, “washed as to our body with pure water” relate to coming “with a true heart”? We can look back with full assurance to the sprinkling, what has been done “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” but we need to be maintained morally in accord with that, and there is sufficient in the work of Christ to allow us to “approach with a true heart” because we have that constant exercise to be washed.

TWL The water aspect of the death of Christ takes account of our testimony after we are Christians. You maintain yourself by the water, by the death of Christ; that is how you wash. So the “true heart” is in relation to what you are as morally acceptable to God; the washing has in mind that you are *testimonially* acceptable to God, and those two things stand; consequently you can have this boldness because the Priest operates according to that.

DCB I wondered about the boldness. In chapter 4 you have boldness to approach the throne of grace (v 16), and we can understand that, God’s full favour towards us, but I wondered if, practically, as we learn to approach the throne of grace with boldness, we learn how to come into the divine presence and the holiest. It might be the same event: the same time of getting down on your knees might be to approach the throne of grace, but not only that, you are going to enter into what God has in His view, in His mind, rather than simply an answer to your need.

TWL The principal thing you find when you enter into the presence of God is Christ. You see God’s Man. If you do not see Christ before the face of God, how can you have the liberty of boldness to

approach? But the Priest is there; who He is and how He functions makes all of this possible.

DCB So He is “a great priest over the house of God”; it is an administration under His hand. That is how I would understand “over the house of God”, that He is the One who is in control. In chapter 8 He is referred to as “minister of the holy places”, v 2. We wonder at the glory of that, that there is One who is able to set everything according to the divine mind, and that it should be in function for the pleasure of God.

TWL So the One who set it up is Son over it; the One who makes it function is Priest over it; and that is important. Both of these are in Hebrews but it is important to see that; so this is the Man who operates for God and for us, and it is quite a touching thing, beloved brethren, because this is literally going on in heaven. Are we conscious of that? When we go into the presence of God are we conscience of being there in Christ? Are we conscious that He is operating on our behalf there? It is a very real thing.

NRC How do we get help to have a better understanding when we do pray, when we are on our knees and praying, that we are in that position because - and I speak only for myself - it is very easy to pray for things of need; so how do we get help to realise the position that we are in when praying?

DCB Well, you are perfectly right to go before the throne of grace. We have boldness to do that, and, if you have any concern whatever, you are absolutely entitled to be there before the throne of grace and to receive all the grace that is needed for it. But it is a matter of seeing that really God does have in mind answering your needs, but not only that. I think we are perhaps particularly helped to do it collectively. It is not exclusively collective, I do not think, this approaching the holy of holies, but we have particular help in doing it collectively.

DJH Is it therefore important, or essential, for this that we are praying in the Holy Spirit? That would all enter into this question that has been asked as to how we approach, and what is before us as we approach, whether we have the divine interests and God's

interests in view rather than what is according to our need, but it all shows the importance of praying in the Holy Spirit.

DCB So that would include His guidance but would be beyond His guidance, the Holy Spirit really acting with our spirits.

TWL The holy of holies goes beyond need. The holy of holies is where God rests; it is for Himself.

DCB Is it a view really of the Person who is there that changes our experience?

TWL Yes, and that is really my exercise, to see the Person there. We might go in with our need and we might go in with the things we need as to the testimony, but if you are going to touch what is eternal, that goes away past your need. It goes past that onto what God sees for Himself and what you see for God; that is the reality of the holy of holies.

JTB Does Asaph set it forward? He went into the sanctuary a burdened person, and he understood the end of things. He found an answer to all the turmoil that was afflicting him, but then he says, "Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel, and after the glory, thou wilt receive me", Ps 73: 24. That is the great end that we are at home in the divine presence according to God.

NRC Would it be right to say that Stephen was one who was in the gain of the holy of holies? It does not say that he was literally praying, but he had his eyes "fixed". It says as well, "being full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7: 55); so that would coincide with what our brother has said. And "he saw": he saw the Man that was there in glory.

DCB Yes; it supersedes everything he might have to pray for regarding need, because he had the glory of God before him and Jesus.

RCT Stephen had a true heart. You can see it in what he says, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge", v 60.

TWL Yes, he had a true heart, and it is very interesting because he lost his life because he was faithful in relation to the glory of that Man; and that, I suppose, is what lies behind verse 37 here: "For yet

a very little while he that comes will come, and will not delay". That will be a wonderful day, beloved brethren. The day of the vindication of Jesus will be a wonderful day.

EDINBURGH

2nd August 2020

Key to Initials
(all from Edinburgh):-

T H Bailey; D C Brown; J T Brown; K R Cumming; N R Cumming; D
J Hutson; B R Lock; T W Lock; R C Trotter

SUFFERING

Richard J Gray

1 Peter 3: 17-18 (to "... us to God")

I have been impressed by the number of references that come into Peter's first epistle as to suffering. I think if you look through the epistle there are perhaps sixteen references. Some of them are references to suffering of believers but at least half of them are references to the sufferings of Christ.

We get it in this verse - "Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God". I want to say something very simply about that, dear hearers. It is an affecting thing to think that if we are to be brought back to God, if we are to know what it is to have our sins forgiven, this has involved suffering for the Lord Jesus. In the first chapter, Peter refers to the fact that these sufferings had been prophesied of in past times. He says, the prophets "prophesied of the grace towards you, sought out and searched out; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them pointed out, testifying before of the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these", v 10, 11. I was very struck with that. It seems a remarkable thing that the incoming of the Lord Jesus was prophesied about long before it happened. We think of our own situation as sinners away from God; that fact has not caught God unawares, if I can put it like that. God has foreseen what was going to come in and He has provided for it.

I take it each one here would accept that that they are a sinner before a righteous and holy God? If you accept that then it is wonderful news that God has anticipated a need and has brought in the remedy, the answer to it. And it has not been a light or easy matter for your sins to be dealt with. Maybe you do not know yet what it is to have your sins forgiven, perhaps the burden of your sins is still upon you, but I would desire simply to present to you One who has suffered for sins. There is no need for you to suffer for your sins

because you can trust in the One who has done the work, and who has suffered for them.

Think of the prophets all those centuries before, prophesying as to Christ. I suppose it would be right to say that they did not always understand what they were prophesying of. They spoke of things which were yet to come, and it says that they searched out what it was they prophesied about and when it was going to come about. Peter says that they were prophesying as to Christ, as to the Lord Jesus. And not only that, but as to His sufferings and as to the glories after these.

In chapter 2 there is a very affecting reference to the Lord Jesus having left us a model. It says, “for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps”, v 21. And it seems to me, dear hearers, that if you are going to follow in the steps of the Lord Jesus, there must come a point in your soul history when you turn to Him in your need. I trust everyone here has done that. It is not enough to hear about the preaching or to read the Scriptures, but, as many of us have been told in the past, it is necessary that each of us should have a personal transaction with the Lord Jesus. And that means that if you feel the burden of your sins upon you, there is a remedy for it; and you must lay hold of it for yourself through repentance and faith.

The writer goes on in that second chapter to speak of the Lord Jesus suffering at the hands of men. I do not know whether it affects me enough, dear hearers, the greatness of the fact that in order to take up the matter of our sins the Lord Jesus has had to come here. He had to come into this world in which we are, and in doing so He has made known the love of God in all its depth. But it was a suffering pathway. We have been reading locally some of the psalms which refer to the Lord Jesus particularly and especially as to His sufferings. You get an insight in some of them as to the feelings of the Lord Jesus when He was here. What a thing it must have been to the Lord Jesus to come here. One who was perfect and without sin to come into a world which was so far away from God with sin and darkness and misery on every hand. The Lord Jesus

came into such a world, and He came in that you and I might be freed from the guilt and the bondage of our sins. But speaking very simply, what a strange world it must have been to the Lord Jesus. He came down from the heights of glory into this poor world, and He had to do with man in all their suffering and need. It was a suffering pathway from beginning to end. Whatever aspect of it you look at, it involved suffering for the Lord Jesus.

Chapter 2 speaks of these particular sufferings at the hand of man. It says, “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not”, v 22, 23. How different to ourselves! I would like to present the Lord Jesus to you. I feel that, as I go on in my soul history, He becomes greater; and I think that would be God’s desire in the preaching, that the Lord Jesus in all His glory should come before your soul so that you, as a sinner, might lay hold of Him and His finished work for yourself.

But you think of this, that when He was reviled, He reviled not again. When he was in suffering He did not threaten. It says, “but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously”. That is, that He saw that there were injustices being done to Him but He did not seek to justify Himself; but He left everything in the hands of God. So that the Lord Jesus endured a pathway of suffering from man when He was here, but it led him to the cross where He took upon Himself the judgment that was due to sinners. And so Peter says, “who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree”, v 24. I would just appeal to each one here that if you are still labouring under the burden of your sins, if you do not know what it is to have the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, if you have never in the history of your soul come to Him in repentance, I appeal to you as to this verse. Can you say that He bore your sins in His body on the tree? What that meant for Him I do not think we can enter into. It has been said that it is in our body that we feel things, and the Lord Jesus bore our sins in His body on the tree. There was no one else who could do it. There was no one else who was perfect before God who could take the matter up on your behalf, but the Lord Jesus has done it. I

just simply appeal to all here, especially to some younger ones who do not yet know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. It says, "in order that, being dead to sins, we may live to righteousness: by whose stripes ye have been healed". Perhaps you have been under the sound of the gospel many times, but the word comes to you afresh tonight that God has, as it says in Genesis, provided Himself with a sheep for a burnt-offering, chap 22: 8. He has provided the answer to your need in the Lord Jesus.

Now I want to come to this verse in chapter 3. Again, we get a reference to the sufferings of Christ. The context is that Peter says it is better if it is according to God's will that we should suffer as well-doers than as evildoers. I suppose we might know something in our soul history of suffering as evildoers, but the Lord Jesus was never an evildoer. He was perfect; and you think of Him suffering as a well-doer in His pathway here. And then Peter says that "Christ indeed has once suffered for sins". Think of that tremendous moment on the cross when He underwent the judgment of God for our sins. I feel very limited in what I can say about it. Indeed, what can we say about it? He was not suffering there on His own account (He was perfect), but for us. It was a matter that happened once, and it did not need to be repeated. I think it is a tremendous thing to lay hold of in our souls that the finished work of Christ is a work which has been done once, and it has satisfied God as to the whole matter of sin.

I linked it in my mind with that passage in Hebrews where it says that there would have been no need to repeat the sacrifices which took place yearly amongst the children of Israel if they could have perfected those who approach; it says in chapter 10: "would they not indeed have ceased being offered, on account of the worshippers once purged having no longer any conscience of sins?", v 1, 2. The writer says, "For blood of bulls and goats is incapable of taking away sins". You think of what that must have meant to the children of Israel, that as each year came around the sacrifices had to be offered again because in actual fact they could not take away sins. The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is the only thing, dear hearers,

that can satisfy God as to your sins. I think it is a tremendous matter that as you have to do with God in repentance, the question of the sins which lie upon your conscience can be removed and you can come into God's presence as totally free to be there because of the finished work of the Lord Jesus. The matter was gone into once, and the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus has not had to be repeated. Think of how He Himself uttered those tremendous words on the cross: "It is finished", John 19: 30.

So I appeal again as to whether you have accepted in full that the Lord Jesus has suffered for your sins. He has been here - and it was a suffering pathway from beginning to end - but it culminated in the cross. It culminated with Him taking up that great matter, the sin which lies between you and God. What a work the Lord Jesus has accomplished. It says, "for Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust". You think of the Lord Jesus being the Just One. The note makes it clear that there was one just and there were many unjust. How great the sins that you and I have committed; perhaps we can remember some of them, but many of them we do not even remember, but you think of God remembering every one of them. He does not miss anything, but now as He looks upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus He can look upon you, if you are a believer, as one who is justified.

And I link this reference with what Paul says in the epistle to the Romans. He says, "For as indeed by the disobedience of the one man", that is Adam, "the many have been constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous", chap 5: 19. So that, when we preach we are not presenting ourselves, or a creed, or a doctrine, but we are presenting Christ - the Lord Jesus - and His finished work. There is only One that can save you from your sins, and I ask you whether you know Him as your Saviour. Is the Just One your Saviour? How affecting it is that by His righteousness, by what He has done, we can be constituted righteous. It is not in our own works, not what we have done, but by what He has done.

It has impressed me that God is satisfied with what the Lord Jesus has done. You may be in turmoil in your souls as to your own need and what you have done, but you think of God being satisfied with the work that the Lord Jesus has accomplished. How do we know that He is satisfied? Well, we know that the Lord Jesus has been into death but, as it says elsewhere, He “has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father”, Rom 6: 4. So that the Lord Jesus is not in the grave now. Many churches have a figure of the Lord Jesus still upon the cross, but He is not there now. He is not in the grave but He has been raised, and He has ascended to the right hand of God. If there is anyone here not certain as to whether God is satisfied with the work of Christ, consider that the Lord Jesus has been given the highest place in the universe, ascended up to God’s right hand. What a thing it is to think, dear hearers, of the One who has suffered here, who perfectly demonstrated the love of God to needy sinners, and was only given hatred and despisal by men here, that One, that God has given Him the highest place in the universe. And we can know in the reality of our souls that the Lord Jesus, the Saviour, has suffered and died for us, and He has shed His precious blood which cleanses us from every sin. And today He is living at the right hand of God and from that position the gospel goes out. The gospel goes out because the Lord Jesus is risen and ascended, and you can have to do with Him there where He is. If you are a sinner still in your sins, then you can turn to the Lord Jesus and you can have to do with Him about your sins. You will find that He will not turn you away; He will listen to what you have to say, and as you confess your sins to Him you can come into all the blessing, and all the good of His finished work. You can know what it is to have Him as your Saviour and your Lord. How precious these things are!

You say, ‘Well, I do not know whether I am good enough to come into His presence’. Well, this verse goes on that He “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God”. And it has impressed itself upon me, dear hearers, that the object in the glad tidings is not just that you might find relief but that you might be

brought back into God's presence, that you might know what it is to come before Him in all the worth of Christ. God has in His mind the greatest blessings for you and His desire is that you might be brought to Him. I link this reference with what the Lord Jesus says to His own in John's gospel. He was telling them that He was going away and He says, "I go to prepare you a place; and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be", John 14: 2, 3. I feel for myself that I have not taken in sufficiently the greatness of the love of God, and that God has seen us as poor guilty sinners, and He has moved from His own side that He should have us again for Himself.

So as we become believers, as we come to the Lord Jesus, it is not a question of us continuing as before. If I can put it like this, the whole outlook is changed and we have hopes and desires in a different place because we know the Lord Jesus, who is no longer in this place. He is no longer in this world, but He is risen and ascended; and He is at the right hand of God. And He has gone there to prepare us a place. I think it is very affecting that the Lord Jesus should tell His own as He was preparing to leave them that He was going away to prepare them a place and He was going to come again and receive them to Himself. He was going to be in a place where He would be glorified and He wanted His own to be there with Him there. That is open to each one of us, that we can come to Christ, and can have this hope that the Lord Jesus is coming again and that He will receive you to Himself.

How sorrowful to think of only having hopes in this world. I suppose we have known something of it in our own experience to strive for things here because perhaps that is the only hope we had. We seek to build up things in this world but secretly in the depths of our hearts we know that death is going to bring an end to them all. But what a thing to have a hope beyond this world, to have a hope in Christ and to have a hope in His coming again. I was affected by something that someone has said, that he could understand God's goodness that would take care of his material needs, but to be assured every hour that God liked his company seemed too much to

take in, J B Stoney, vol 8 p467. And so it is that when we come to the gospel we find that God actually wants our company. God wants us near to Himself. The end in the gospel is that we should be saved not only from our sins, but that we should know the love of God and that God should have us for Himself, that we should become His property through redemption. As it says, "Do ye not know that ... ye are not your own? For ye have been bought with a price", 1 Cor 6: 19, 20. What a price, dear hearers, has been paid in the shedding of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus so that you and I might be brought back to God, not in our own righteousness, but in the finished work of Christ.

So that the gospel is really very attractive. All the wealth that is in God's heart is available to us. As we accept the fact that we are sinners, and that the Lord Jesus has suffered for us, then it is really the entrance point into all the blessings of God. God has in mind that we should be brought into a knowledge of Himself. He will give us the gift of the Holy Spirit that we might know that we have a hope beyond death. We can know, even now at the present time, perhaps in smallness and in weakness, a circle where the things of the Lord Jesus are treasured and where He is loved. How precious it is to know something of that: even now as we wait for the return of the Lord Jesus, we can know His love and we can enjoy that with others. There are others who love Him and who have had soul experience with Him; in the reality of their souls they have known what it is to come to Him and to prove His love and to find that He is everything that they need. So the preacher does not know the needs of those in the audience but God knows, and God knows the heart. He is presenting the Lord Jesus to us as the One who has once suffered for sins and who desires that we should be brought back to God.

There are other references in the epistle to the sufferings of Christ but in chapter 5 Peter refers to the fact that he was a witness of the sufferings of the Christ. He says, "who am their fellow-elder and witness of the sufferings of the Christ" and then he says, "who also am partaker of the glory about to be revealed", chap 5: 1. It is

quite striking that those two thoughts seem to go together, that you get suffering and then you get glory. When you come to the second epistle, Peter can say that he was one of those who had “been eyewitnesses of *his* majesty”, 2 Pet 1: 16. You think of Peter having seen the Lord Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, having seen the Lord Jesus in His glory, and then it says he was a witness of the sufferings of the Christ. I suppose he saw the Lord Jesus being delivered up to the Jews and handed over to Herod, to the Gentile power, and remembered seeing the Lord Jesus being mocked. He was a witness of those things. I suppose that it affected him when he thought of the fact that he had denied the Lord Jesus at that point. Peter was a sinner and he needed a Saviour, and the Lord Jesus was going forward to the cross to meet his need as well. He says he was a witness of the sufferings of the Christ.

And then in the second epistle he can speak of having been an eyewitness of His majesty. As Peter reflected on those things, the greatness of the Lord Jesus and the way that He had gone, the glories that he had seen and the sufferings that he had witnessed would have become deeply impressed upon his soul. And so it is to be with us. I am limited as to what I can say about it but the greatness of the way the Lord Jesus has been is to impress itself upon our souls so that we should not only turn to Him in our need but so that He should become the Object of our affections. What an Object God has provided for us in the Lord Jesus: One who has been here but who is now at the right hand of God. And He suffered for us, “the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God”.

May we be freshly affected by the way that He has been, and too by His present position and that all here, including the young ones, might be certain that they have a link with Him. I desire that you might come to Him in repentance, put your faith and trust in Him and in His finished work. How essential that is that you start there and then as you go on in your soul history you come to a greater appreciation of the Lord Jesus and all that He has done.

May we be freshly encouraged by these things. For the Lord's name's sake.

SUNBURY
28 September 2008

FOOD FOR RECOVERY

Peter S Barlow

1 Samuel 25: 12-14, 18, 21-24, 27-29; 30: 1, 5, 11-14, 16-18

I have read a fair portion of scripture, but the main impression that I have carried for a while is in relation to what Abigail brought by the way of provision, and how similar it is to what David used for the Egyptian, which led to the recovery of all from the Amalekite.

It is interesting that David speaks of “the enemies of David”, whereas Abigail speaks of David fighting in relation to “the battles of Jehovah”. David is coming down here, where we read in chapter 25, and in the way that shows that he has fallen far below what he was. We know that he is often a type of Christ; but we see David in a different character altogether here. However, my impression and exercise is, what provision is there in order to meet the attack of the Amalekite?

I read in the last portion that four hundred of the Amalekites escaped, and it is interesting to see that it was also four hundred men that had gone with David. I wonder whether that gives some indication that there is with each and every one of us the possibility - whether inadvertently or directly - of the Amalekite feature being found in us. It speaks to us of Satan working through the flesh, and being set against the people of God, using the fleshly features that mark the first order of man. I speak carefully because David was a great person, but I wonder whether these features were inadvertently coming into expression in David. His pride had been touched; his overtures had been rejected; his concern for his young men had been cast aside. He came down, and he was going to kill every man. Yet it was only one man who had insulted him.

It is interesting what Nabal's young men did. They did not immediately set up barriers and arm themselves. What did they do? One of them took the matter to Abigail. Abigail speaks to us of the assembly. They took the matter to her, and asked her do what was best. She had the intelligence and wisdom to do what was best. What did she do; did she go out to negotiate or reason with David?

No, she provided what was needed and she provided in abundance. We get the “five sheep ready dressed”. David was a shepherd and it may have affected him that here were five sheep that had to die to meet him and what he was set to do. Five speaks to us of man’s weakness, but Abigail had that intelligence; five sheep. I wonder whether that touched the heart of David, as a shepherd. Does it touch your heart, beloved, to know that one glorious One has had to die because of what you are, because of the features of what may come out in you? I feel challenged by that. What do I really appreciate of the death of Christ?

The parched corn and the loaves would also speak to us of Christ. The “parched corn”, the old corn of the land, the “loaves”, the bread that comes out of heaven. All these features would speak of Christ and the wine is that which cheers God and man, Judg 9: 13. Beloved brethren, what Abigail provided she provided in abundance.

Now she also had “a hundred raisin-cakes, and two hundred fig-cakes”; I have been pondering them. We had a reading here where we saw what the fig-cake meant. It is something very sweet and has numerous seeds which are bound tightly together, it is almost impossible to separate them. This would speak of what God would delight to find amongst us. Are we one? Are we bound together by what is sweet? There is one Man who holds us together, and one power, the blessed Holy Spirit. Abigail provides this: she provides fig-cakes. The raisin-cake is a bit different. They are all individual but they are bound together again. They are together, not the same as with the fig, but there is that which keeps them together. There is sweetness in the raisins and that which gives energy, that which sustains, and it is to be found in each one. Each one of us has that, the energy, the sweetness of the activity that sustains us all. Not just one of us, but all of us as we work together enjoying these things.

We know the fig-cake speaks of healing too. Abigail brought healing in by meeting David like this. I suppose he had a wounded heart, as his concern for his young men had been cast aside; Abigail brought in that which heals. We read of the “cake of figs” put on “the boil” of Hezekiah, Isa 38: 21. Beloved brethren, how precious it is to

have our part in the local assembly, and to be that which represents the fig cake and that which represents the raisins, all centred in feeding on Christ and what He is.

David is not only recovered and brought back in some measure to what he was, but he makes use of what Abigail provides. He also makes use of the same things where we read in 1 Samuel 30. Here they are for an Egyptian. The Amalekite has a use for you in serving him until you are no good; then he casts you aside. The enemy does everything that he can to set himself against God and the children of God. The Amalekite refers to the nations that in arrogance set themselves in inveterate hatred against the nation that God had chosen, Israel. God has made the Lord Jesus available through wondrous grace; He is available for all nations, and that is why we have come into blessing. We see this feature typically coming out with David here; the Egyptian had no claim to a part with God's chosen people; far otherwise, as we know from the bondage the children of Israel had in Egypt.

We could say that David had in some measure kept what Abigail had given him, and he used it here for the revival of the Egyptian. The Amalekite would not do what David did. We read in Deuteronomy that he attacks the stragglers, and those that were falling behind, chap 25: 18. I feel the burden of this upon my own heart and soul for we *must* take account of the stragglers. We need to be bound together to hold fast and to work together, to go on, to be maintained in this by feeding on Christ. This is important as the enemy will never let up, for he is ever set against the people of God. Oh that I may not be one that is used of him to allow those Amalekite features to come in and set me against the people of God. It is so easy if there is a straggler for the Amalekite to get in in that way, to attack one who is being left behind; the Amalekite gets in through the straggler. I feel the burden and urgency in my own heart in relation to this. Here David uses only a piece of a fig-cake. Does that matter? It is representative of the whole: we live in a broken day, but we can enjoy the fulness of these things. It is no less; part of a fig would still represent what is bound together - to try and separate those seeds is very difficult - we are to be bound together in this

way. It may be a broken day, but if we are bound together in the enjoyment of these things, the features of the fig apply. The result was that the Egyptian - the straggler - was revived and he did not need the whole fig-cake; part was sufficient - he fed on what David had fed on as given by Abigail.

The enjoyment of things together and being held together is sufficient to meet the need. He ate two raisin cakes and "his spirit came again to him". What joy that is as we see the spirit come again in one who may have become cold in their affections. What joy that is. Oh that I knew how to bring it in, as feeding on Christ. They "gave him bread, and he ate; and they gave him water to drink"; bread would speak of providing what is of the Lord Jesus, and the water would speak of the Spirit. You think of all these things working together, for those two things are essential for the binding together; feeding on Christ and the power of the blessed Holy Spirit. Here David with the four hundred men went down and "smote them from twilight even to the evening of the next day"; he smote the Amalekites: it is a continual daily exercise. We have to be wary of these Amalekite features coming into our hearts, and must constantly guard against them; that is made possible by the power of the blessed Spirit and feeding on Christ.

There will come a time when there will be no more remembrance of the Amalekite. That is all in God's hands; that is God's doing, but He looks to us to answer to that now. I raise this question with my own heart; are there any inroads for Satan, allowing him entrance into me, that means I am set against the people of God? I may not mean it, but if he gets any inroad, he will use whatever opportunity he can to set me against the people of God. There were four hundred of these young men - Amalekites, who fled on camels. The young men are strong, they have the energy, but these were Amalekites. John cautions young men in his epistle in relation to the world: "ye are strong ... and ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, nor the things in the world", 1 John 2: 14. May we be strengthened in this, to be strong and marked by energy, but free of the Amalekite features.

Another interesting thing with the Amalekites was that they were the first nation to set themselves against the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. “And it came to pass when Moses raised his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. And Moses’ hands were heavy; then they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on this side, and one on that side”, Exod 17: 11, 12. I find peculiar interest in the meaning of the names of these three persons. Moses is, ‘drawn out’ from the water which would give us an impression of baptism, the death of Christ which sets me free from this world. Drawn out of the water; set in relation to Him in another life and another order of things altogether. Aaron speaks of lights or ‘light-bringer’. We are so privileged to be brought up in an area where I believe the light and the truth is known - may we be encouraged to be maintained in it. Hur’s name means ‘purity’. Being pure, being unspotted from the world, kept from the scene around; our eyes centred on Christ.

These are features that will sustain us in this day and maintain us until Christ comes; feeding on Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, set together as expressed in the fig, and bound together in what we are as individuals in energy and activity as seen in the raisins. All this in relation to the importance of being true to our baptism, seeing that everything has gone in the death of Christ, such that we are to be maintained in purity and holding fast to the light and the truth to which we have been recovered. I speak these things to encourage us, not in any way to cast us down, but purely because I feel the challenge in my own heart and soul.

May each one of us be encouraged in it for His Name’s sake.

Word in a ministry meeting in Sunbury

13th May 2019

BUILDING AND WHAT IT PRODUCES

Paul A Gray

1 Chronicles 4:14, 21 (“and the families of the house of byssus-workers”)

1 Chronicles 23; 6:1, 31-33 (to “Heman the singer”), 39 (first clause), 44 (first clause), 48-50

It would be easy to pass by these early chapters of Chronicles because they do have a lot of names; but we are told, “Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable”, 2 Tim 3: 16. We have mentioned recently in readings the thought of edification or building, and I would like to speak about building, and what it produces. Everyone has something to do, and sisters are included in this. I do not know if any of the names I have read are names of women, but they are mentioned in these lists, and so I do not want this word to be something exclusively about one group of people. There is something in these scriptures for everyone.

Building is very important. We were reminded, rightly, in a recent reading locally that it is important that we have something to bring. We come with right desires, but if nobody brought anything, what would there be? We may say that the Lord will bring something; we can always rely on Him, but these thoughts of building involve exercise that takes place in the hearts of believers. And then what we have can be brought out. It is not always in something that is said, but there is what is contributed in spirit by the sisters as well, as a result of the impressions they have, and that is why this is important.

First of all there is “the father of the valley of craftsmen; for they were craftsmen”. Now what does that mean? Well, a craftsman has certain skills. Craftsmen know how to follow a pattern, and our brother has just spoken of the well-known scripture, “as the truth is in Jesus ...”, Eph 4: 21. So all the truth, all the pattern, is there; and it is there in a blessed Man. But then there are persons who particularly desire to be skilful in relation to that. It says in Exodus

35, “And Moses said to the children of Israel, See, Jehovah has called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and he has filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, and to devise artistic things”, v 30, 31. And then it says, “and he has put in his heart to teach, he and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan ...”, v 34. And further, “Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every man that was wise-hearted, in whom Jehovah had put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work of the service of the sanctuary - according to all that Jehovah had commanded”, chap 36:1. These were craftsmen. You may say that you have not such a skill. But the scripture says, “all that were wise-hearted”. If you have the Spirit you are a craftsman: you have that potential, and not only the potential but the power to be a person who can do work in relation to the pattern that God has given.

There was “the father of the valley of craftsmen”. I simply say, to those who are fathers and mothers - and I mean that in a spiritual sense, not necessarily literal or natural - that we do have a responsibility towards those who are younger. We have a responsibility in relation to the truth, and the teaching, and we have a responsibility to demonstrate what the love of the truth actually means. It is not the knowledge of things for the sake of knowledge, for the Scripture tells us that “knowledge puffs up, but love edifies” (1 Cor 8: 1), but rather to build one another up in relation to the truth; and I go back again to “as the truth is in Jesus ...”. It is a Person! The truth is in a Person. And we love Him. And because we love Him we love the things that He loves, and we are interested in the things that He is interested in. The truth has a structure; it is not that it involves, exactly, an intricate knowledge of form or doctrine, but you can see in the beginning, in Genesis 1, how God worked on the basis of a structure. He did things on certain days, in order; and what was produced as a result of that order was a place in which man could dwell, and what God desired in producing such order in such a place was that man should respond to Him. Now I know that sin came in and God had to act, but He comes back to His original

thoughts. The whole of the tabernacle system is established, and offerings are given, so that even *if* there is some fault or deficiency, the praise that God desires can be offered to Him. And the tabernacle system was built according to a pattern, and the centre of it was the ark. The centre of God's building is Christ, and Christ is God's builder. He says to Peter "on this rock I will build my assembly", Matt. 16: 18. The confession of Christ, "*Thou* art the Christ, the Son of the living God", (v 16), given by revelation from the Father, is the rock on which Christ is building the substance of what will be eternally available for the praise and glory of God.

So if you want to understand how to be a craftsman, a workman, there is an example. Paul says to Timothy that he was "not to be ashamed, cutting in a straight line the word of truth" 2 Tim 2: 15. The first thing is: read the Scriptures. Read the Scriptures and ask the Holy Spirit to help you with them. They were written by those whom He inspired. And ask the Lord Jesus to help you because He says of the Scriptures that they "bear witness concerning me", John 5: 39. You will see the glory of what emerges in Scripture as the Spirit helps you. And then the ministry will help you in the understanding of it. But the basic foundation of a grounding in Scripture is something that cannot be overestimated in its value. The knowledge of the Scriptures is valuable, even if you just read a verse. Start to read a verse a day: then try to carry on until you get something, and you always will: you always will, I promise you. It might not be easy, and time is pressing, but read the Scriptures, beloved brethren. I know you all do. Learn to love them and what they say; your mind will be formed by the Scriptures. And the craftsman will know what his pattern is by the Spirit, by spiritual instinct. John says, "ye have the unction from the holy one, and ye know all things", 1 John 2: 20. There are things that are not according to the pattern. But John sets out certain conditions whereby "...we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error", 1 John 4: 6. It becomes instinctive. In Romans you are to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (chap 12: 2): you have the capacity to think differently. But in Ephesians you are "renewed in the spirit of

your mind” (chap 4: 23): It has become instinctive and characteristic. And that is what the craftsman does; he knows what is right.

And then we come to “the house of byssus-workers”. Byssus was part of the priestly garment. That is why I mentioned that. In the days of recovery in Nehemiah one of the things that was brought was priests’ coats, chap 7: 70. These garments were brought out so that the priests could be suitably clothed. A brother was reminding us recently about what it is to be heavenly and what it is to be spiritual. One example of that is that the priests are consecrated or anointed. That in a sense is their heavenly calling; that is conferred upon them. Then the priests are given food to eat, and that is really what spirituality involves: feeding on Christ. But, am I making what would be conducive to spiritual growth in me and in the saints? That is what the byssus-workers would be doing. They would be making what is conducive to spiritual growth and response in the service of God.

I could give you a list of things *not* to do and *not* to make, but I would rather give you some things that you can do, as opposed to tell you a lot of things you cannot. The Spirit will tell you what you cannot do, and I will leave that for the moment.

Then there were “the potters, and those that abode among plantations and enclosures; there they dwelt with the king for his work”. You may or may not feel that you understand the point about the tabernacle system, and the gold, and the silver, and the blue, and the purple, and the scarlet, and the byssus, and all the other things that enter into it. We may understand to a degree that these have spiritual significance, but we may feel that the potters are engaged in more menial work. We need the potters too; the potters make vessels. If there had not been a potter there would not have been a man “carrying a pitcher of water”, Mark 14: 13. Think of potters as persons who make way for the leading of the Holy Spirit; it is very important. They make vessels; they make something that can be serviceable. It could be said that it is not at the highest level; it is not making vessels of gold, and all that would be used in the tabernacle system. Perhaps not, but it is what we might do in our

houses to entertain the saints; we are building something. We are making something. They dwell among the plantations and enclosures; that is to say, there is fruitfulness in view, but also the protection of what is due to God. One of David's mighty men defended a plot of lentils, 2 Sam 23: 11. Some may think little of a plot of lentils. What of it? He was protecting food for the people of God, and Jehovah wrought a great deliverance as a result. Another fought until his hand clave to his sword (v 10); he went on right to the end; he carried the matter through. But this is the point I want to emphasise: "there they dwelt with the king for his work". It may not be prominent service, but they are dwelling "with the king for his work". There are persons going on in quietness and humility and service unseen that will have a great place in the kingdom. We must keep in our minds that brethren who are contributing by whatever means, as the Lord has laid upon them, are "with the king for his work". And that is the level at which we ought to regard one another.

This so far relates to the sons of Judah. Judah means 'praise', but how is the praise going to be carried on? Well, here we come to the sons of Levi, the priestly family: Gershom, Kohath, and Merari. You know, there is something for you to do. There were three families. Perhaps you understand that the Kohathites carried the ark, and you might say that this was something, surely, that would only be given to spiritual persons to do. Yes, I trust so. Priesthood and spirituality are similar thoughts. But each of the families had some spiritual service to perform; each of them had something to carry. Some of them carried items on their shoulders, and some carried them on wagons, but in order for the whole system to function each had to play their part. I just want to be simple about it. There was not only the ark, which was the centre of everything and required to be handled with great care, with due regard to the rights and the holiness of God. But the curtains were needed. All the other parts of the tabernacle system were needed. If you had curtains, which represent principles, without boards, which represent persons, the curtains would lie on the sand and that would be no good. If you had boards without curtains you would have persons

without principles and the whole system would be exposed to the dry winds of the desert. You need both, and somebody carried each of these items. Each of them knew what to do; they were all under the direction, I suppose, of “the prince of princes of the Levites”, Num 3: 32. It was “according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded”, 1 Chron 6: 49.

So David set them over the service. He is a type of Christ in this setting, the setting up of the service of song. These craftsmen, these potters, the persons who looked after the plantations, the byssus-workers, they were all producing something that would contribute to the service of song. The reason I read about Asaph standing on the right hand, and the sons of Merari on the left, was that they supported the service of song. It is a good thing to support it in our spirits; and I would judge that something that the sisters can and do participate in, is the support of the service of song, standing on the right hand and on the left.

I read in verse 50 because Aaron had sons: these are generations. Beloved brethren, you *are* the generations. It is not somebody else: it is you. And there is no greater privilege. Matthew 1: 1 says, “Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham”. You are part of a generation that is going into eternity, but you have some work to do *now*.

I trust that we may be encouraged to do it for the glory of God and for His Name’s sake.

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