

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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FULL ASSURANCE

Hebrews 10: 19-25; 6: 9-12

Colossians 2: 1-7

AMB I will be glad of the help of the brethren in enquiring into these references to full assurance of faith, of hope and of understanding. I wonder if we might be helped to see the value of full assurance. The expression conveys that we are utterly convicted as to the truth that we have to do with, the truth of God as made known in Christ. Full assurance is particularly needed to guard against slipping away, which is what is referred to in Hebrews, and to be maintained in the truth and in faithfulness to the Lord and in His testimony. These scriptures also refer to entering into God's presence, suggesting that full assurance is so important in responding to Him. It excludes doubts and fears, and brings us into the good of what God's mind is for believers. We are not to doubt or fear, but to be fully assured. Another word would be fully convicted, and Paul also speaks about being "fully persuaded", Rom 4: 21. A meeting like this gives us the opportunity to encourage one another in these things.

The reference in chapter 10 of Hebrews to "full assurance of faith" was written to Jewish believers who were accustomed to a system of sight rather than faith. The writer says earlier, "He takes away the first that he may establish the second" (v 9), so that the system of sight and religious observance was superseded by a system of faith. That system of faith is established, meaning that it is more real than the temporal Jewish system that it replaced. For us, as believers, it would provide fresh stimulation to appreciate that the great system of faith that we have been brought into through God's sovereign mercy is far more real than anything that is human or of the world around us.

The "full assurance of hope" in chapter 6 is to help us not to be sluggish. I think that the hope that is set before the believer is the coming of the Lord. That vital and living hope and the assurance that the Lord is coming - how soon that will be - saves us from settling down and becoming lethargic in our Christianity.

Then “full assurance of understanding” in Colossians seems to go further. What is in mind in Colossians is full growth and “full knowledge of the mystery of God”.

DAB These are three things that are provided by God that I can place a lot more confidence in than I actually do. We tend to think of them as partial counterbalances to our own uncertainty and so on, but they are rocks.

AMB I feel that this ministry is for myself more than anyone. Naturally we tend to relate things to ourselves and in ourselves we find doubts and fears, but the Christian has faith in the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus, Someone outside of ourselves who is absolutely unchanging - “the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come”, Heb 13: 8. We have complete confidence in that One. We say these things, but the Holy Spirit would help us to enjoy the full reality of them. Part of my exercise is that we should be established in the truth and in our faith, so that what we believe becomes operative in our souls. We are responsible to believe, and as we do so and receive the truth of what God says to us He gives us faith that becomes operative; it changes us.

DAB Hebrews 11 brings out that we naturally judge by appearances, as the world does; it is how the world of science operates, by deducing things from their appearance, although we do not learn the origin of anything from how it appears; but there are things that do not appear that are actually more substantial and more real than the things we tend to use as our reference points.

AMB “Now faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”, Heb 11: 1. Do I know about things being substantiated in my heart, and am I convicted as to things that are not seen?

RHB Does the reference to Christ in verse 23, “for he is faithful who has promised”, give us a clue as to how we could be preserved from being wavering? We may look for things happening in the world to confirm what we have been taught: if they all fall into place we are confirmed, and if they do not we might start to waver; but is the full assurance and conviction believing what God has said because it is

God who said it, and because it is centred in One who is faithful? I was thinking as you were speaking as to that reference, “No one believing on him shall be ashamed” (Rom 10: 11); does that bring assurance as we see the One in whom these things are centred?

AMB What you say is absolutely true and very helpful. We place our faith in a blessed Man; He is God incarnate. As the writer to the Hebrews has been explaining in these chapters, He has fulfilled everything that was spoken of Him, and He has accomplished the work He was given to do. He is ascended now; He is the One who is in heaven for us as our High Priest. He is beyond all circumstances; He is unassailable in His exalted and glorified position. Our faith is in Him, One who is utterly sure, the Man who is our Rock. These may all be obvious things to a believer, but we need to encourage one another that they might be worked out to a result in us.

DCW The last verse of chapter 10 is an expression of full assurance, “we are not drawers back to perdition, but of faith to saving the soul”, v 39.

AMB It is an exhortation not to draw back. Conviction would help us as to that.

DCW Following comes into it; the Lord’s last words to Peter in John 21, “Follow thou me”, v 22. So if we are following we are not drawing back. Hebrews 11 brings out the faith line, as we speak of it.

AMB We are responsible to follow and responsible to occupy ourselves with Christ. That is a very important matter; it is fundamental to the spiritual health of every Christian to occupy ourselves with Christ. We are responsible also to believe the word and as we exercise that responsibility we get help. Is that where the power of the Spirit comes in to confirm our faith?

PJW Do you think what Paul says to the Corinthians would confirm what is being said? “Now he that establishes us with you in Christ ... is God”, 2 Cor 1: 21? I was thinking of the word, “in Christ”. As we lay hold of the fact that we are in Him that would keep us steady.

AMB It would indeed. What you are saying is helpful - everything that God is doing is in Christ. He has no other man in mind and God

is operating in this present time of faith and responsibility to develop features of Christ in believers, and we need to be with God in that. As our outlook is towards Christ and our desire is to be formed after Him, to be more like Him, we have the resource and the power for that in the Holy Spirit within us. We need to use the divine resources that are available to us. As we do so, the result is assurance; we are convicted as to the truth of what we are speaking of.

AM Does the reference to the Lord as the great Priest whom we have bear on that? There is One above whom we have; we can, in that sense, lay hold on Him. Does that help us with our faith?

AMB “We have not a high priest not able to sympathise”, Heb 4: 15. He is a sympathetic High Priest, having been “tempted in all things ... sin apart”. What resource is available to the believer. In these four chapters leading up to chapter 10, the Hebrew Christians are being reminded of how Christ is the answer to everything. They were in danger of slipping back into religious legality, and Christ was the answer to all of that. He is the One who has made the new and living way through the veil, that is His flesh, and who is our High Priest. What resource! We have to prove the reality of that; it is personal experience and communion with the Lord, going into His presence. It is good to ask Him for His help as our High Priest.

DAB You read two references to assurance of faith, and together they are very general, but this one in Hebrews 10 is about approach to God, and it is also addressed to the company: it is not only personal but something that should mark the company. I wondered if you could say something as to that, especially as to the idea of approaching in faith.

AMB The Hebrew believers were accustomed to thinking in a particular way, ritual and so on, but this is a new and living way that Christ has made through His flesh, that is, through His incarnation and His dying, because we have the blood brought in. God’s great desire is that believers in Christ should come into His presence and we have to know that individually, but what is collective is greater than that.

DAB Restrictions being placed on the brethren gathering have affected the way they conduct the service of praise, which no doubt has been a focus of our prayers. The brethren have sought to maintain what they could, but, with those restrictions removed, we need to be revived in the full assurance of faith in our approach so that there is increase and advance in the praise service.

AMB This is for God: “boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus”; the object is praise: it is that God might have a response from hearts that are fully assured and set free. The effect of full assurance here is our approaching on the basis that the Lord has indeed made the way for us into the presence of God. He is active in leading the praise to the Father.

DAB This has an immediate application; it was addressed to Jews who believed that they did not have the right to approach. It would be a very sad thing for those who do have the right to approach not to do so in spiritual vigour. Paul suggests here that one of the things that is needed is full assurance of faith in the company, developed and sustained by a mutual desire that the service of praise should have its allotted place.

AMB It is a strengthening matter and liberating as well, and that is essential. What you say is very practical and needed.

TJH Verse 24 speaks of “considering one another for provoking to love and good works”. I wonder if this is on this line that if we consider one another in faith rather than in sight, we may see something of the work of God in one another that may promote what it goes on to speak about, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”; that is assembly life. Is what this verse commences with, “considering one another”, to be with the eyes of faith?

AMB I read on to these verses that you are referring to because I think they are a consequence of full assurance of faith. What is primarily in view is approach to God in response to Him, and there is a practical consequence which comes in from verse 23 onwards: “Let us hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering”. As we consider the faithfulness of Christ and of God, certain practical features are expressed, and we consider one another with a view to

stimulating to love and good works. We come together and encourage one another. Full assurance comes out in a practical way. What is before the writer is that there should be a full response to God from those who are set free in His presence in full assurance of the work of Christ.

PM Is it a very blessed thing in seeking approach to God to be conscious that there is a living Man there? I wondered whether that underlay assurance of faith: that there is a living Man in the presence of God and that Man is real to us because we know Him.

AMB Experience of living reality is very closely connected to full assurance. Full assurance in the heart enables the Christian to enjoy the living reality of Christ in glory, and to know His help towards us individually and company-wise as well. We have to spend time in His presence individually, and then as full assurance is built up in the believer's heart, a result is worked out in a company. But we have to be assured and convicted of the living reality of what you say, that there is a blessed Man in the presence of God.

CHS It says in the psalm, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be constantly praising thee", Ps 84: 4. God has given us a home and an origin outside of this world and He would draw our hearts to it.

AMB We have to lay hold of what God has given us in Christ. We are not to see it as something that is distant or to be worked up to, so that we do not get there until we are old, or until some stage has been reached. God's desire is that we should be before Him in the liberty of sonship and experiencing and responding to His love now. So that full assurance brings us to the appreciation of God's thoughts for us, and for Himself.

AAC Do you think the truth of reconciliation helps us in the full assurance you have been speaking of? What I was thinking of was the completeness of the work of Christ in reconciliation. It says in the early part of Colossians, "has it" (that is, the fulness), "reconciled", and it brings us "to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable", chap 1: 22. If I lay hold of that, then maybe I can see how full assurance can be mine, because the work of

reconciliation underlies it all. He has reconciled us to the fulness of God. That is a wonderful and absolute thing which then allows me to think that faith is not just something I start with, but it is a complete thing?

AMB That is most helpful. It is God's desire that we should be reconciled to Him, and Christ has fulfilled that desire, He has done all that was needed to remove the distance and bring us to God.

DAB That has been done by putting the believer on entirely new ground. It is not an improvement; it is not incremental. I was thinking about the Jewish believers, that the idea that they had access to the holiest of all would have seemed too good to be true; so that if they laid hold of it, they must have understood that the ground on which they approached God was entirely new; and it is that entire newness that we put our faith in.

AMB It is "the new and living way". He has taken away the first, "He takes away the first that he may establish the second". What is new, having been established in and by Christ, is maintained and upheld by Him for God's pleasure. We have to recognise the truth of that. We need to be preserved from going back to what is old, such as depending upon ourselves naturally, and have our faith in a living Man in heaven. Christianity is wonderful and it takes us out of this scene altogether. I would covet to be more in the living gain and reality of what we are connected with: Christ in heaven and the Spirit here helping us as to what is real.

DHB Would you say something as to the approach? We have to approach with a "true heart". Would you open that up a little please?

AMB It would refer to the affections of the believer acted on by the truth, as the truth is received in faith. Our hearts can then be engaged with the things of God. Not having a true heart would be falling short of what God has in mind for us; it would mean that we had not accepted all that God says to us in His word. What is in mind is a true heart, the affections in line with full assurance of faith.

DHB I was thinking of what Paul says to Timothy, "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim 2: 22), and wondered if that was a similar thought.

AMB I think a true heart would be a pure heart. It is a heart that has been filled with the love of God as expressed in Christ, and thus set free.

RHB It says that those who draw near to God must believe two things: “that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out”, Heb 11: 6. We might think that that is very basic, but it is those two things which bring the assurance that you are speaking of, that God exists and that approaching Him will be for blessing. I do not want to be irreverent, but there would be no point in praying if God did not exist or if there would be no result from it; but to prove the reality of those things brings assurance into the soul.

AMB We are responsible to believe that God is and that He rewards those who seek Him out. We have full evidence of it. By faith we lay hold of who God is, and that is solid rock in the soul of the believer. I do feel that this is really important, especially for young people. The world is full of the notion that everybody’s opinion is as good as everybody else’s, and that if we do not express our own opinions and our own wills, then we are curtailing ourselves in some harmful way. But the believer does not think like that. We have put our faith in God, who has borne witness to us in His word and in what Christ has said and done. All this is confirmed by the Holy Spirit; it does not depend on the world at all. That needs to be laid down as bedrock in the soul of every one of us. We have particular sympathy for young people because of the world through which we all have to pass; believers are in it, but not of it.

RMB I just wondered if you would say something about “the holy of holies”, what that is. It seems a very distinctive thought.

AMB It is good to speak of that - it really is the presence of God. Jewish Christians were accustomed to think of “the holy of holies” as a physical place. It was beyond the second veil and nobody could go there except the high priest and that was only once a year and he had to take blood in. The writer has been saying that the way in to God has now been opened up by Christ. It is a new thing; it is the second - part of what is meant by taking away the first and establishing the second. So that the presence of God has been opened up by Christ coming into manhood and laying down His life,

and His blood being shed. It is a new and living way into that blessed presence. We can only go in there as sanctified persons, sanctified by faith in Him.

RMB I think that is helpful. It is a particular aspect of the presence of God. We get earlier in this book about approaching the throne of grace and that is in connection with our need, but that is not “the holy of holies”, is it? Is it right to say “the holy of holies” is the presence of God enjoyed for its own sake? In “the holy of holies” the important thing is what God says, do you think, not what we say?

AMB Yes. We need to desire to go into His presence, and then seek the power of the Spirit to help us experience it - we cannot go in naturally. Then we must listen to what God says to us. Thinking of the service of praise on a Lord’s day morning, that is what we say we do, and I think we experience it when we are together. God may speak to us in a hymn, or in what a brother says on his feet. That stirs up a holy response in the hearts of those that love Christ, and desire to be in the presence of God for His glory.

RMB Your thought is as to full assurance - there is nothing that is more establishing to our souls than the experience of the presence of God because there we see what God has before Him.

AMB That is very helpful. Part of my exercise was to speak over what leads to full assurance and maintains us in it. What you say as to experiencing the presence of God, experiencing its blessedness, is vital. The more we enjoy that the more we are going to exhibit the features that full assurance brings.

TJH Would what the Lord says in His prayer in John 17, “where I am they also may be” (v 24) link with this idea of being brought into “the holy of holies” where He is, that is, in the presence of the Father and that we also can be brought into that presence also in the service of praise, the Lord leading the praises, and with Him we are brought in where He is in the presence of the Father.

AMB It is a very, very blessed matter. We are speaking about what is in God’s mind and has been established by Christ for the Father. The saints are necessary for the fulfilment of God’s thoughts. Our

thoughts rarely rise to the level that God has in mind, which is the full thought in sonship; God's thoughts do not fall below that.

TWL Does full assurance stem from the knowledge of what it is to be "taken us into favour in the Beloved", Eph 1: 6?

AMB It would, yes. I think full assurance is needed to enjoy what God has set before us. We need to believe that that is what God has in mind for us. He acts to save us from our sins and from the world, He has that in mind, but the objective in view is that He should have sons in the enjoyment of His favour in Christ before Him. Full assurance enables us to enjoy things that God has in mind for us; the two go together.

TWL I was thinking in the light of what has been said because a true heart is fidelity to Christ, fidelity to God, so that is our love Godward, but full assurance of faith is God's love man-ward. And, the level of that is the Beloved. Would that be right?

AMB That is a very helpful suggestion. The faithful and true heart - we are responsible for our hearts, and at the same time we are responding to what God has shown us. He has first loved us.

DCW He has everything underpinned by the Lord's own assurance, "And behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age", Matt 28: 20. The Spirit will be with us forever.

AMB What assurances these are. It is good to ponder them and to understand that the One who made them is able to fulfil them. It gives us wonderful assurance to have our faith in what is upheld by a Man who has been through death and is now on the other side of it in the glory in God's presence. The Spirit would assure us of the reality of these things.

DCW The Lord is the One who is the Same and we can rely implicitly on what He says and has said and should yet say.

AMB It is interesting that that comes in later in this book.

We might just have a word on "the full assurance of hope". In faith we are able to lay hold of hope, the hope that has been set before us. I thought that the scripture we read in Hebrews 6 would particularly relate to the great hope of the believer, the coming of the

Lord. I find that brethren both privately and in meetings are speaking more and more about the coming of the Lord. We could pray that many more believers might become clear as to that hope and might have the light of the soon coming of the Lord. Thoughts about this are confused in Christendom.

DAB Although hope relates to things as to which we do not have the actuality yet, they are present realities so that we do not postpone our blessings or the certainty of them in our thoughts, but hope makes unseen things a present reality.

AMB If we truly believe in the coming of the Lord, and we have full assurance as to it, that will have a great effect on the way we lead our lives now. One of the effects is that we will not be sluggish, and I say this to myself. We need to be marked by energy of faith and zeal. Would that I was marked by it more; but the assurance of the coming of the Lord has that effect.

DAB I was thinking about what has been said about being in the presence of God and seeing what God rests upon. Paul says to Timothy, "Christ Jesus our hope" (1 Tim 1: 1), and I understand that "Christ Jesus" refers to the Man of God's purpose in whom the accomplishment of every divine thought has been secured. Our being brought into that literally and bodily we await; Christ Jesus will do that: the Man who has accomplished everything for God, has that work of redemption still to complete, but it is as certain as everything that He has already done.

AMB As we go over this together, may we be increasingly assured as to the certainty of it. The Lord will come and He does not delay His coming. It has been said, rightly, that we should not be looking for things around us, actual events, to indicate His coming. Yet we can see that the world is going on to its end. That might cause depression or anxiety but our hope is in One who is above all circumstances and entirely superior to them, the Man in heaven. The next move will come from heaven and it will be soon. We know that it is not right to make predictions about these things, but we wait for the Man, the Man who will appear and come for His own and it will be soon; scripture tells us that.

PM We have often been taught that the hope of the church is not an event but a Person, and is that hope living because the Person lives in the heart of His own?

AMB Yes. To be maintained in that requires exercise; it requires us to overcome to firmly and truly believe that the Lord is coming and He is coming soon. We have to be maintained in it.

DAB The Man in whom God came out is the Man who will bring us in.

PJW Can I ask if, in what we are saying, we can look upon the Lord Jesus as a Model for us as to the assurance of faith and the assurance of hope?

AMB The Lord was supremely the Man of faith in His pathway here; He trusted in God for everything, trusted that He was able to save Him even from death, that is, from among the dead. The Lord is the full, complete and perfect Model of full assurance of faith. He is unique, but He is also the Model.

PJW I was thinking of the way He rested on the Father's love, "On this account the Father loves me", John 10: 17. He could say, and prophetically, "For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol", Ps 16: 10. That was, we could say carefully, a hope, full assurance of hope, do you think?

AMB What you say is right; the Lord lived here supremely the life of faith, depending on the Father for everything, turning constantly to the Father in prayer and wholly dependent upon Him. He did not speak or act unless the Father indicated.

PJW We have been reading Hebrews; He is "the leader and completer of faith" (chap 12: 2), the One that sets it on.

AMB That scripture would fully confirm what you are saying. I was interested in what the writer says in chapter 6 as to the effect of full assurance of hope. His earnest desire is "that each of you shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end". That is, that we are maintained in living vital reality of hope. The writer does not define the hope that is in his mind; so it would embrace all that is set before the believer in our heavenly blessings. But I do think that

at the moment, particularly, we need to be assured of the certainty of the Lord's coming. If there is certainty in our hearts, full assurance of hope, then there will be a practical effect in us, and we will not be sluggish but "imitators of those who through faith and patience have been inheritors of the promises". That was written to Jewish believers and the writer was reminding them of those who had lived by faith previously. We should be able to observe one another. Younger ones should be able to observe older ones who are living the life of faith and who have full assurance of hope. It is a test whether a young person can see that in me.

HTF I think some of us have heard it ministered more than once as to hope that we tend to be short of it; as believers we tend to be vacillating in it and even in our view; it is a term that is used in the world, in the aspirational sense, but that is not the believer's portion. 1 Corinthians 13 says, "And now abide faith, hope, love" (v13); do you think that abiding character of hope is what really we are assured about?

AMB It is absolutely vital. The hope that the writer to the Hebrews was speaking about, nearly two thousand years ago, is the same hope as we have now. God has no reason to modify it; the blessings that He has in mind and the certainty of the coming of the Lord for His own, these remain the same, and the question is whether we are abiding in them as assured of them. What you say, that the word hope is often used now to express uncertainty, is true. For us, hope is certainty. Our hope is in Christ, and everything about Him is certain. Speaking about it is one thing; knowing the reality of it is another. We might encourage ourselves and we might be examples to one another as to this.

PM The two on the way to Emmaus said, "we had hoped" (Luke 24: 21), but it was not an enlightened hope, but they found that their hope was in the One who caused their hearts to burn within them, v 32.

AMB So the first was taken away and the second established for them. They were not sluggish - they got back to Jerusalem in record time to be with the others where they could share the joy of the fact that Christ was risen. What a hope this engenders in our hearts.

RHB There are a lot of things that could make us sluggish and the antidote here is faith and patience. You have spoken of the coming of the Lord as our hope and we are to be patient in relation to it, but is it right to think of the Lord Himself in patience as waiting? In Thessalonians Paul exults that our heart should be directed “into the patience of the Christ”, 2 Thess 3: 5. That brings assurance into the heart, to think that it is not only that I am waiting for His return but He is waiting to have the fruit of the travail of His soul. Is that a right way of looking at it?

AMB He is waiting for the completion – He is awaiting the Father’s time. Again, it reminds us of the perfect manhood of the Lord Jesus.

CHS We do not see Him yet but we hear His voice. The hymn writer says:

It is not with uncertain step
We tread our desert way;
A well-known voice has called up
To everlasting day
(Hymn 244).

We hear it, gathered in this company; I wondered whether that was something to help us along these lines to hear His voice?

AMB We have to be on the *qui vive*. Having ears that are attuned would help to preserve us from sluggishness. How often the Lord does speak to us. He speaks to us in occasions like this, locally too. He may speak to us in circumstances. We need to build these things into our hearts, by faith.

RJF Do these things that you are bringing before us bring in movement? I was thinking of the reference in Proverbs about the sluggard, and telling that sluggard to go and look at the ant (Prov 6 :6) “having no chief, overseer, or ruler” (v 7), but faith and hope brings about what is the “chief, overseer, or ruler” for the one who is in movement.

AMB Full assurance brings about change in a believer, and that change leads to movement, movement of heart towards God and also movement in testimony. Practical things are referred to in the

first scripture, for example, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together”. That would be a practical consequence of full assurance in the soul. Conviction that what we have to do with is real would lead us to want to be together with others so that experience can be shared and so that there is an opportunity for the Lord to speak.

DCW Arising from what has been said have you some thought about “waiting for and hastening” the coming of the Lord, 2 Pet 3: 12?

AMB We want to be with the Father and with the Lord in the anticipation of what is going to take place. I think we can hasten the coming of the Lord in the sense that we desire to be in the good now of what has still to happen in actuality. We accept that the timing is in the Father’s hand, but by being in the spirit and the good of what is coming we hasten what is coming. What is your thought as to it?

DCW It bears on our own conduct and our anticipation and appreciation of what is to come.

AMB The word anticipation does not mean simply to expect, but we are acting in the light of what we believe and we are enjoying, in spirit and by the Spirit, these things that are in actuality still future.

We might just have a word about “full assurance of understanding” in Colossians. It is a remarkable expression. Paul combated in prayer as to this, and his desire was that hearts should be encouraged and united together in love, “unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding”. It seems that hearts are affected first, and then comes understanding. This is not some kind of intellectual appreciation of Greek texts; it is the heart affected by God’s love towards us in Christ and then the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts. These hearts become, by the reception of the Holy Spirit, intelligent as to God’s matters and as a result we can enter into something of this full assurance of understanding.

DAB It does not say the assurance of full understanding. We know in part and there is a tendency for our natural minds to dismiss something because it is beyond us, but this is in the sense of an objective, and my understanding of an objective is that it may be out

of sight, but you can tell, over time, in your exercises whether you are getting nearer to it. You might say as each step brings you into the possession of something you can be assured of it, even though there may be more still before you, that you have yet to grasp.

AMB Does it help us to see that the truth is one whole, and it is all in Christ? The truth all fits together - that is what 'one whole' conveys. We can be fully assured of that. If we have the desire to learn more, and we can encourage one another in that, the result is that we are built up in the truth. It is a process; it is to go on by the Spirit all the time.

DAB I was recalling earlier today what Joshua said to Israel, "in three days ye shall pass over this Jordan", Josh 1: 11. They would not have possessed the land in three days, but in three days they could be sure that it was theirs; they could be fully assured in their understanding that this was God's inheritance which He had brought them into. The process of actually taking possession of it lay before them, but they could do that with the assurance that it was theirs.

AMB "Full assurance of understanding" - do you think one of the effects of it would be to whet our appetites to go in more for divine things?

DAB I think it is something we work on together. We must not fall into the trap that we all have to go away and try and beaver away at this. It says, "united together in love" so that these are things that could be meeting exercises that we look at with one another.

AMB It is "the full knowledge of the mystery of God", which is a wonderful thing. This is no system of philosophy: it is the living God made known in One who has become incarnate, the Lord Jesus. He has made God fully known. The mystery of God does not mean that it is mysterious; it is what is made known to those who are interested and in whose hearts God has operated first.

DAB What I understand by these references to the mystery is that they are plain if you have the key. They are completely baffling if you do not, but the key has potential to make it quite simple. I was thinking of the two on the road to Emmaus "he interpreted to them in

all the scriptures the things concerning himself”, Luke 24: 27. That was the key; it had opened the treasure box.

AMB It speaks of “all riches of the full assurance of understanding”; it is a treasure.

RHB The mystery of God is referred to in Revelation when the angels sounded their trumpets. It says, “the mystery of God also shall be completed”, Rev 10: 7. Is that the full realisation of His purpose, and is it demonstrated in that God has not been hindered in any thought of His but has accomplished what He has set His heart upon? I am trying to understand this expression, “the mystery of God”. Is that how you view it?

AMB It must involve all His purpose. The greatest thought of His purpose for us is that He should be known as Father by many sons. That is what God is securing. There is much that leads up to that, through which we learn a great deal about God and who He is. It is all made known to us in Christ. Everything that can be known of God has been made known in Christ. What you refer to in Revelation would remind us too of what the apostle says, “I shall know according as I also have been known”, 1 Cor 13: 12. That is the prospect in view for us. At that time we will know the mystery of God, but at the moment by faith and with the help of the Spirit we are to be occupied with learning and with understanding.

RHB “In which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge”. Elsewhere in Corinthians the apostle speaks of “wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who come to nought” (1 Cor 2: 6), but the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are bound up with that full assurance as to the mystery of God.

RMB The reference to the mystery of God in Revelation includes the fact that God has allowed evil to triumph outwardly. There is something of a mystery about that, ‘evil’s challenge long permitted’, but what that reference in Revelation brings out is that the time for that is now over and God is resuming His direct dealings and ordering things in a way that would be secured for His pleasure.

AMB The permitting of evil’s challenge has also brought out the glory of His grace. We shall be “to the praise of the glory of his

grace”, Eph 1: 6. We are to be that now, as we shall be in the day to come. That is a tremendous substantial response to the mystery of God being made known.

RMB I wondered whether the reference to it in Colossians links with what has been said as to the accomplishment of God’s purpose, that you might say God has been working away at that behind the scenes in a way that the world has no conception of, yet He is bringing to pass His very greatest thought.

AMB Divine wisdom enters into all of that.

DAB If we put those two references together we can see that in allowing all that has entered into God’s ways He has had to yield nothing of what He had in His purpose. You might ask how that could be. Surely there is a price to pay for allowing evil? But God has secured everything He wanted in spite of taking that way and glorified Himself in doing it.

AMB God has so arranged things in His wisdom and His love that everything that can be known about Him should be demonstrated and known. The word ‘know’ may make us think of head knowledge, but God has made Himself known to us, He has manifested who and what He is, through what He has allowed and by what He has brought in in Christ as the great answer to every challenge.

RMB Not only has God not had to alter any of His purpose in relation to everything that He set His heart upon before the foundation of the world, but also He has not had to alter the way in which He would accomplish His purpose, which too was all predetermined before the world was. That is a marvel that God has not had to alter one detail of His perfect plan.

AMB It is, and what a heart of love lies behind it all! God’s nature gives character to everything that He does, and also to how He does it. Every aspect of that purpose has involved Christ.

RHB It produces a worshipper. The sense that God has used what has risen up to challenge His rights and to frustrate His will, that very matter has been used by God in the accomplishment of His will - there is nothing you can do but bow and worship.

AMB Do you think the full assurance of understanding would lead to worship? The more we know about God the more we love Him and the more we want to worship Him. God wants us to know Him. He has made Himself fully known, and He wants believers to be interested and vital and energetic in receiving that knowledge into our hearts.

GW I was wondering about the early part of Acts, the man whose hope was to be able to walk, but his hope became something greater: he was leaping. I was thinking of the responsible side; Peter gave him that hand to lift him up, and his ankles were made strong, but then he went with them, his hope was in a Man in another scene altogether, Acts 3: 7,8.

AMB He was praising God. He progressed very quickly; I think that full assurance in faith, hope and understanding, leads to growth and assured growth. It gives evidence of itself in life, vitality and energy. It is a word to myself. What we are touching on as to the “full knowledge of the mystery of God” is not something that we should regard as being beyond us, because God has made Himself known in Christ and has given us resources to enable us to appreciate that revelation. We should greatly desire to make progress in knowing Him and knowing the mystery of God. It is a wonderfully attractive, but also an exercising matter, and should stir up greater exercise in myself to have this “full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God” before me.

Norwood

19th March 2022

Key to initials -

D H Bailey, Maidstone; A M Brown, Linlithgow; R M Brown, Strood; R H Brown, Maidstone; D A Burr, West Norwood; A A Croot, Sidcup; R J Flowerdew, Sunbury; H T Franklin, Grimsby; T J Harvey, East Finchley; T W Lock, Edinburgh; A Martin, Buckhurst Hill; P Martin, Colchester; C H Smith, Chelmsford; P J Walkinshaw, Strood; G Wallace, Sidcup; D C White, Sidcup

THE HEART OF THE BELIEVER

Alistair M Brown

Proverbs 4: 23

2 Corinthians 3: 2-3

Ephesians 3: 14-19

These scriptures speak of the heart of the believer, and I would seek the Lord's help to say something about that to help us and lead us on. When the Scripture speaks of our hearts, it is not referring to the internal organ that pumps blood around our bodies, although there are some parallels. The Scripture is really referring to the seat of our feelings, and particularly the affections. A lot of things are said about the heart in Scripture. Some of them are very sobering, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and incurable" (Jer 17: 9), for example. We have to accept the truth of that, that as away from God, man's feelings, affections and motives have been corrupted. The heart speaks of what is inward and related to motive too, I believe. Man, as away from God, has corrupted affections and a heart that is wicked. I do not want to occupy the brethren with that, but it is nevertheless true.

The heart speaks of what is inward and feeling, and God is interested in our hearts. He is interested in your feelings and affections, dear brother and sister. You might think if you are very young that God is not much interested in you. I can tell you that He is; He is even more interested in your young heart and in your affections. He wants to secure your heart for Himself, and He has given the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, so that we might believe on Him. We are told that "with the heart is believed to righteousness", Rom 10: 10. God would appeal to our hearts in having given Christ for us. It is right that we should speak about what God has done to secure our hearts for Himself through the giving of Christ. Then we become responsible to answer to His word, to what He tells us about Jesus. We are responsible to take in what God says, and we are responsible to believe, to take God at His word: "with the heart is believed". It involves the feelings of a person responding to what God presents, and God loves to see that. God loves to see a heart

affected by Jesus and His love, by what He has done for us, and what and who He is as a blessed living Man. The gospel is presented to our hearts for the acceptance of faith and God loves to see a response in these hearts. He loves to take account of a response in all of our hearts, and particularly in those that are young.

God sees into our hearts; He is “the heart-knowing God”, Acts 15: 8. Peter speaks of Him in that way. We cannot hide things in our hearts from God. We might hide things from our parents, or our friends or the brethren, but we cannot hide anything from God. He has access to our hearts, He sees what is in there, our feelings, our motives, and our affections, but He does not look into our hearts to condemn us. He would reveal to us “the thoughts and intents” (Heb 4: 12) of our hearts. The Scriptures discern and penetrate into the heart and make known the “thoughts and intents of the heart”. God, in searching our hearts, makes known to us the reality of what is in them. How do I feel about God searching my heart? We are responsible, as the scripture that we have read in Proverbs says, to keep our hearts. So, as believers in Jesus, we are to keep our hearts for Him; our affections are to be directed to Him. God would search our hearts. David says,

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
prove me, and know my thoughts;
And see if there be any grievous way
in me; and lead me in the way everlasting,
Ps 139: 23-24.

David was one who went in and sat before God, 2 Sam 7: 18. He understood that God knew what was in his heart. David knew about confessing his sins; that was a heart matter. He knew about God searching. How do you feel, how do I feel, about God searching my heart? Is your heart true? Is my heart true? We read earlier about approaching in full assurance of faith and with a true heart (Heb 10: 22), having come under the shelter of the blood, cleansing us. Well, it is an exercise to be maintained in that, to keep our hearts true; that involves guarding our hearts.

How important it is to guard our hearts. We only have one heart; that is physically true, and it is true in a moral sense as well. And our hearts are sensitive; our feelings and affections are sensitive; they can be led one way or another; it is part of the human condition. God desires to secure our hearts, to secure our affections for Him, through Christ. The question for us, for me, is whether I keep my heart for Him. Again I would say to my dear younger brethren, when we are young our hearts are particularly impressionable and they can be led. Of course they can be led when we are older as well, but to beloved younger people in particular I say, how blessed it is to keep and guard our hearts. Who is going to have the first place in your heart? Is it the Lord Jesus? The One who has given Himself for us, suffered and died to secure your heart in faith for God forever? Or are you going to allow something or someone else to have that first place? Responsibility for guarding our hearts means excluding what is not according to God, what is out of keeping with affection for Christ, and receiving and protecting and guarding what is of God so that our affections are rightly focused on the Lord Jesus.

People guard what is precious. Wealthy people will spend a lot of money on installing systems to guard what they have invested their money in, and then it is all going to turn to dust anyway, but people guard what is precious to them. And your heart is precious. My appeal is to myself and to all of us, to guard our hearts, not to let in what is opposed to God or does not honour Christ. There are so many influences and ways of thinking and speaking that mark the world, that would damage our hearts, young hearts especially. I appeal to all of us to keep our hearts pure and keep them true for the Lord Jesus, for His interests, and to preserve our affections for that blessed One. How worthy He is of our affections. Jesus is well worth knowing; He is well worth loving. He loved us first, "We love because *he* has first loved us", 1 John 4: 19. It is a personal thing: I am loved by Jesus, He loved me and gave Himself for me, and He loved you and gave Himself for you. He attaches great importance to the affections of our hearts; He wants them for Himself. In order for that to be so, we have to take responsibility for guarding our hearts against what is around us, and from what is within us too,

keeping ourselves in self-judgment, refusing and denying the flesh in us. We must deny any place to what would lead our hearts away from this blessed One.

If this sounds too difficult, remember that as believers “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit”, Rom 5: 5. The love of God in our hearts in warmth and light has power to exclude what would interfere. The help of the Spirit is available to us. Dear young believer, make sure you have received the Spirit - He is available to all those who obey God and have the desire to know His power. If you feel your affections are being diverted from Christ, ask the Spirit for His help to guard your heart. Go through this world as a light “in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation” (Phil 2: 15), and hold your heart for Christ: “For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be”, Luke 12: 34. May our treasure be in Christ; may our hearts be focused on Him.

The heart, as we have said, involves inward feelings, and if we keep our hearts more than anything else, the issues of my life will make that manifest. What I am in my heart will come out in testimony and in response to God too. What is inward has to be right and has to be held for Christ. The heart is the source of things; then there is what flows out of the heart, these issues of life. Young persons looking ahead to the rest of their lives may see opportunities and potential. But put Christ first, have Him at the source of these issues of life. Is He going to be the source for you, your object, and strength, and satisfaction, and joy? Then guard your heart more than anything else and give Him the first place in it. What we do when we are young is very, very important to the rest of our lives. In a natural way that is true, but in a moral and spiritual way even more so. We would not want anything to enter into the heart of any of us, and our young brethren particularly, that would impair or harm us morally, for we may find that it stays with us. Thus our hearts are to be protected as the sensitive seat of the affections. We must guard them.

A heart in which Jesus has the first place is a softened heart. We read about that in 2 Corinthians. Paul had a great yearning for these dear brethren in Corinth; he had powerful feelings as to them;

his heart was towards them. Paul's heart was like God's heart; our hearts are to become, in their measure, like God's heart. We seek the blessing of those that we come into contact with, seek the blessing of our brethren, seek the blessing of men. That is what God's heart is like. Our hearts are to be like that too. Paul speaks about these Corinthian brethren as being his epistle, that is, the result of his ministry. The Corinthians, as secured through his ministry were "written in our hearts", he says; that is, they were in Paul's heart. What God had wrought in his heart! The truth that had been given to Paul, was immense; it was light from heaven, from Christ risen and glorified in heaven. That is what was in Paul's heart, and he had seen the effect of his ministry in the Corinthians. Here he speaks of that effect figuratively, as what was written on their hearts; "Ye are our letter, written in our hearts", that is, the ministry had come from Christ through the heart of Paul and those with him, "known and read of all men, being manifested to be Christ's epistle ministered by us, written not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God; not on stone tables, but on fleshy tables of the heart". So here is a great feature of a believer's heart, that it is impressionable, and it takes in the truth given by Christ. What Paul is writing about here is what he had ministered verbally to the brethren in Corinth, and no doubt also what he had already written to them in his first epistle. He is speaking about the result, the result impressed upon the Corinthians, upon their affections. I think Paul was crediting everything he could to the Corinthian brethren. There were still things that needed to be set right, but he credited to them everything that he could. The point I seek to make is that we are responsible to receive the truth as it is set out in Scripture and as it is ministered too, all based on Scripture, so that it is impressed on our hearts and something is written there. We sang about that; things have to be engraved on our hearts permanently, and thus to govern our affections (Hymn 172). The truth is to be taken into our affections and is to govern them, so that we obey. It says in Romans, "thanks be to God, that ye were bondmen of sin, but have obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which ye were instructed", chap 6: 17. The truth of God set out in the Scriptures and made living to us in the power of the Spirit is to govern us; so we

obey “from the heart the form of teaching into which ye were instructed”.

Truth governs the feelings and the mind of the believer, and they go together; you cannot separate them. How important our feelings and affections are; they are to be formed by the truth. That is the way to growth and formation, so that God’s end - that He should have many before Him who are like Christ - might be furthered. God’s objective in us is furthered by the truth having its way in our hearts, and that requires our hearts to be soft and to take on the truth, take on impressions. We often speak about receiving impressions of Christ. When impressions of that One are imparted to our hearts, they are to have a permanent effect there. God will have more from us as impressions of Christ are formed in our hearts, as our affections are drawn out towards Him, and we see fresh glories and attractiveness in Christ that we did not see before: that permanent, living impression of Christ is one that I did not have before. That leads to growth and to greater likeness to Him.

Such impressions must also have an external effect: it says, “known and read of all men”. So as the heart is formed by the truth, as it had been in its measure among these Corinthians, this is seen publicly, in testimony – “of all men”. People could see that in the city of Corinth, which was a wicked city. In that city there were those whose hearts were for Christ. Paul’s ministry had had its effect, had impressed itself on the hearts of these early Christians, and people around took account of that and saw that they were different. That immediately raises the question with me, whether people can take account of the way I live my life, whether it is consistent with the truth and whether in its measure it is according to Christ. Can people see that, can people read that in me? Can they take account of it? That is a positive exercise. And we are not left to our own devices – by relying on the Holy Spirit’s power, the believer is given strength to show outwardly what has been formed in us inwardly. God has His return from that. God has His satisfaction and pleasure in seeing hearts that are faithful to Christ here. How important that is.

Furthermore we can encourage one another in taking on these impressions. We can remind one another of the attractiveness and

glories of Christ in our conversations. We do that in our reading meetings. It is a very healthy thing if we listen and take care to receive and seek to understand what is said. In that way, Christ is impressed on our hearts, we take in impressions of that blessed One. It is a wonderful thing to be in the company of believers, whose hearts are engaged with Christ and who love Him and want to speak about Him. There is no better company in the world, absolutely none. And it is a safe place. A company of believers, those whose hearts have been taken over by Christ, who belong to Him and who love Him, is a safe place to be. It is the place where I want to be, and I trust it is the place where all of us want to be, and to be preserved there in living commitment to the Lord Jesus. We should also have the desire, especially those of us who are a little bit older, to help one another to grow in the things of Christ and to encourage and strengthen each one.

A dear brother years ago said that the real way of coming into fellowship is that you want to be with people who appreciate Christ, and that Christian fellowship derives character from appreciation of Him, CAC vol 3 p253; vol 30 p538. How wonderfully attractive to appreciate that blessed One. A preacher at home recently said, 'Have you ever been detained in the presence of Christ, having come to Him in awe and in affection?'. Well, have you been detained in the presence of the Lord Jesus and looked on Him with awe, One that is superior to any other, God manifest in flesh, and a real Man with real affections? How great Christ's heart is. Do you know that you have a place in Christ's heart? His heart is big enough to have a place for everyone, and He loves you. What it is to come into His presence and get some impression of His greatness and of His love for you. How marvellously attractive that is. How wonderful a Person Christ is! Does He have the first place in my heart and in yours? Has He been written on that heart by the Holy Spirit, an impression written not with ink but the Spirit of the living God, an indelible impression of Christ left there? How safe and blessed it is to be in the company of those whose hearts are impressed with Christ, and want to become more like Him and to be more devoted to Him. I commend Christ to every one of us; I commend Him to our affections, that we should give Him the first

place. How impressionable is my heart? Flesh is sometimes spoken of in Scripture in a negative way, but “fleshy” here simply means impressionable, that which takes on what the Spirit would write. Do not have a hard heart, friend; have a heart that is soft and impressionable to take on the writing of the Holy Spirit. He writes Christ; that is what the Spirit does, He writes Christ in our hearts as being lovers of Him.

Something more is said about the hearts of believers in Ephesians 3. You might think that Ephesians is difficult to understand. Christianity involves our stretching out into spiritual things, exercising ourselves to seek to understand what God is saying to us in His word. We have the Holy Spirit to help us. Paul writing to the Corinthians speaks about the things “which have not come into man’s heart, which God has prepared for them that love him”, 1 Cor 2: 9. Ephesians speaks of the most wonderful things that God has prepared for those that love Him, and they certainly have not entered into man’s heart naturally. But friend, if you are a believer in Jesus these things have begun to come into your heart, and if you have the Holy Spirit, ask Him for help to understand what God says about His greatest thoughts - for example, that the saints are God’s portion, or inheritance, and what that entails, Eph 1: 18.

I cannot give a discourse on chapter 3 of Ephesians, but I would like to point out some things that are written here. Paul bows his knees to the Father; that is, he is praying; and he prays for the brethren in Ephesus, that God might give them “according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man; that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts”. There is a close connection between “the inner man” and “the heart”. Paul was praying that the Spirit’s power would be known and experienced by these brethren in Ephesus. It has been said that Paul’s ministry took the Ephesians so far, and after that it was not ministry that Paul engaged in, but prayer, so that the Spirit’s power would be known inwardly in the hearts of these Ephesian brethren and that heavenly things might be opened up to them further. Paul wanted them to be in the good of the truth that he had ministered, so that they might together know what it was to have Christ dwelling,

through faith, in their hearts, “rooted and founded in love, in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height”. You might say, ‘the breadth and length and depth and height of what?’. Paul does not need to say, ‘of what’ because it is all the mind and purpose of God for us, in all its blessedness and glory and joy; that we should take character from Christ and experience the blessings that God has prepared in His heart for those that love Him, and that we should be before Him in love, blameless, ministering to Him. We should extend the apostle’s prayer for the Ephesians to ourselves; it is for believers who desire to grow in the truth and come to full knowledge. What he prays for is that we should be “strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man; that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love”.

It is a wonderful matter to go over these scriptures prayerfully. Paul’s desire was that Christ should dwell in our hearts. How does Christ dwell in the heart of the believer? It must be by the Spirit, because the Spirit indwells, and if the Spirit indwells then Christ is dwelling there. It also carries the thought that He presides there: He presides in my heart. The sway of Christ’s love is known. He is to dwell, through faith, in our hearts, being rooted and founded in love. That is, the knowledge of Christ and His love is rooted and founded in the soul. We were speaking about full assurance: “rooted and founded” is unshakeable assurance. It cannot be disturbed. It is living and it is strong. You get the thought of plant life, and what is rooted, what is living. Then ‘founded’ means that Christ’s dwelling in our hearts is on an unassailable and strong foundation of love; His love. That is the ground, you might say, in the believer’s heart for Christ in His love to take possession of, and to be rooted and founded there. Nothing can shake that. This is the result of the heart of the believer coming under the power of the Holy Spirit and giving Christ the first place there. Then there are results of that, “in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints” - here we were speaking about the blessing of sharing Christian fellowship with those that love Christ - “what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ”.

We cannot overstate the importance of what is individual, our communion individually with Christ, and with the Spirit, and with the Father. Then there is something even more blessed in what we enjoy with “all the saints”. Our apprehension is increased as we enter into true Christian fellowship and enjoy the blessings that flow from it. That is God’s thought, that He should be enjoyed in the saints; and His portion is in the saints. He has His portion in measure in each of us individually, but there is what is very great indeed and according to God’s heart in the thought of the saints together, what is collective, of assembly character. In the present day of breakdown we can claim nothing, but we can enjoy the spirit of it, as having fellowship with those who are available to us and who love Christ and desire to be governed by the truth. “With all the saints”, and in the power of the Spirit, opens up to us a realm where we appreciate the extent of God’s purpose and His thoughts for us and experience “the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”.

The heart being filled with the love of the Christ is a wonderful thing. We can say from experience, that our hearts are filled with the love of Christ on a Lord’s day morning particularly, as we remember Him, and as He comes into the occasion, telling us of His love, and of His own glories and the Father’s glories. We experience what it is to have our hearts filled with the love of the Christ. We should desire to know it more and to be maintained in it. It is not that things stop when the service finishes on a Lord’s day morning. Very often the brethren sit in silence, reluctant to move away from what they are enjoying. What a blessed thing it is to experience the love of the Christ filling our hearts: it is a wonderful and blessed matter that surpasses knowledge. And then it says, “that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God”. What can we say about that? Our hearts are full and overflowing. The fulness of God speaks of completeness in the saints, a full answer to the revelation of Himself.

We need to be preserved in reality, so that we do not claim things that are not true in us, but at the same time the Scripture encourages us to stretch out to the full thoughts of God. Well, our hearts are vital to that. God wants to fill our hearts with Christ, and

as He does, there is a flow: the psalmist says, “My heart is welling forth with a good matter: I say what I have composed touching the king”, Ps 45: 1. A heart full of Christ rejoices in responding to Him and in responding to God. That is how we will spend eternity, and we will be absolutely rejoicing in it. It is wonderful and it will be wonderful. We can have some foretaste of it now, as having hearts softened to take on impressions of Him, held by Him and for Him, and full of Him. Hearts like that need to be guarded. If we want a heart like that, and each one of us does, we have to guard it. We have a responsibility to guard and keep our hearts, for out of it are the issues of life. These things that we have been speaking about are the issues of life, life according to God. I trust that these few thoughts may be for our encouragement and help.

For His Name's sake.

Norwood

19th March 2022

THE WORKINGS OF DIVINE LOVE

Keith D Drever

John 3: 35

Matthew 17: 5

John 17: 22-26

Jude 1: 20, 21

We had hymn 348 on Lord's day morning. I was impressed that the hymn was sung to the Father Himself.

How good and great, O Father,
Thy wondrous thoughts are shown!
Concealed from wise and prudent,
Revealed to babes alone.
But having understanding,
And Spirit-given joy,
To bless Thee, God our Father,
We heart and voice employ.

Father, Thine own Son praised Thee,
Of heav'n and earth the Lord!
Thy sovereign operations
Great joy to Thee afford:
For all those coming to Him -
The meek and lowly Man -
Are held by Him for ever,
The fruit of Thy great plan.

Each knowing Thee as Father
Revealed so by the Son -
We share His joy before Thee
In all that Thou hast done.
The Son Thou, Father, knowest;
But in that Man so blest,
To whom Thou'st given all things,
Our souls find perfect rest.

The thought came to me as to the workings of divine love. Any understanding of divine love has been made known to us through

the Lord Jesus because divine love was set out in Him.

The first scripture we read says, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand". What a One, dear brethren, for the Father to put His complete and full trust in. There is no one like that in this world. We see what is happening around us, all the problems and issues of men; no one that could come even close to this divine standard: "has given all things to be in his hand". What a standard of love, what a One that can maintain that standard of love, the Lord Jesus Himself, because of who He is, the blessed Son of God. What a One for God to make Himself known through in love. What a way He made it known by His going into death! His pathway here was in total, complete and full devotion to the Father's will, totally pleasing to Him. He was making known divine love. I trust first of all for myself, dear brethren, that divine love has come into each one of our hearts, and drawn us to the Lord Jesus.

In Matthew 17, the Father makes that love known in such a wonderful way. "*This* is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight: hear him". What a One He could take pleasure in! The Spirit descended upon Him in other scriptures, as a dove descending on the Lord Jesus. How fully and completely the Spirit could descend on such a One because He was pleasurable to heaven, in making divine love known. Divine love can come near to each one of us. Divine love can characterise and work within each of our hearts, and each of our spirits, in working out our pathway here. The Lord Jesus was such a One; the Father had complete and full delight in Him. The Lord Jesus would delight to make known that character of love to each one of us.

John 17 is a favourite chapter of mine. We see the Lord Jesus, in chapter 15, 16 and 17, these great chapters where the Lord Jesus is preparing His disciples for His going away. Here He is praying to the Father. He is making the divine plan and divine love known. He says, "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one". We have been taught that this refers to the glory of sonship. What an operation of divine love, that we should be brought into the position of sonship. I think we have also been taught that sonship is really the highest relation in which

we stand to God, JT vol 67 p592. What an attractive position, dear brethren. It goes on to say, "I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me". That is the blessing that we receive, dear brethren: "thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me"; what a character of divine love! We can be loved as the Lord Jesus was loved. He has made that known by the way that He has gone.

The Lord Jesus goes on to say, "Father, as to those whom thou hast given me"; what a One in whose hands to be, the hands of the Lord Jesus, to direct and care for us. "I desire that where I am they also may be with me", a relation of sonship, "that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me". The Lord Jesus stands pre-eminent in that place: "that they may behold my glory" - that is the glory that the Lord Jesus has been given as the blessed Son of God - "which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world". What a thought, the love which the Lord Jesus was loved with: there is not much said about it, but it goes back before the foundation of the world. What those relationships were is not revealed, but we know that love was there. The divine character of love goes back before the foundation of the world. "Righteous Father, - and the world has not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." We are conscious of knowing that the Lord Jesus has been sent. "I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me". What a blessed Man to fulfil the Father's will and to make the Father's love known: "I have made known to them thy name". Think of how the Lord Jesus speaks to His own when He was here, expressing the character of His Father: "and will make it known; that the love with which thou has loved me may be in them and I in them". What a standard, that the love of the Lord Jesus, "the love with which thou hast loved me", the Father's love made known to us in the Lord Jesus, may be in each one of us and the Lord Jesus in each one of us. I think it is a wonderful thing to know and experience the love of the Lord Jesus. We have the Spirit. The Spirit was sent once the Lord Jesus had ascended into heaven; the Spirit was given to make these blessed truths known in us and by us.

This scripture in Jude was on the text calendar this morning, and I thought it fitted very well: “But ye, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith”. We have been speaking about faith: “building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit”. What a strength and power we have. I feel tested because I do not use the power of the Holy Spirit enough. I am tested about these things as to how much I display the character of the love of God. It says, “praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God”. What a standard that is: “keep yourselves in the love of God”. That would be how we walk on our day-to-day pathways, how we move about with one another, how we gather when we come together, every character of our life; and I feel tested by that.

I was impressed by these characters of divine workings, this character of divine thoughts, divine love; that all three divine Persons would desire to help us to appreciate and to know and prove the blessedness of these characters of the love of the Father and of the Lord Jesus. May we be encouraged by these simple thoughts, dear brethren, for His Name’s sake.

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