

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 198

September 2023

CONTENTS

Lord and Teacher

Page 1

Grace, Love and Communion

Mark B Grant

Page 19

The Gift of The Spirit

A Barrie Brown

Page 23

LORD AND TEACHER

John 13: 12-17, 34-35

Ephesians 4: 20-24

PAG The purpose of our enquiry is that we might become more occupied with the fact that Jesus is Lord and be formed by that occupation. We have spoken about Him as Lord of all, and Lord of glory, and in this reading we should enquire together as to His place as Lord and Teacher. I am particularly thinking of the Lord's authority in relation to the truth and the way that He exemplifies it. He says, "I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, ye should do also". But example is not confined to what the Lord was and did when He was here. The washing of water by the word goes on, and the scripture in Ephesians says, "according as the truth is in Jesus". The note there says, 'There is an emphatic article before 'Jesus': 'Jesus' is personally brought into relief', (note b). When we were speaking yesterday about the Lord, we referred to the scripture that says, "this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ", Acts 2: 36. This verse in Ephesians "as the truth is in Jesus", it is in "this Jesus"; it is in such a One as Jesus! It is not anywhere else; it is seen in Him. It is formed in us by the present activity of the Holy Spirit. There is detail here that is worth enquiring into as to the new man. There is testimony too as we touched on in John 13, "By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine, if ye have love amongst yourselves", v 35. There is what is formative in relation to the truth and in relation to the Person, the Lord who embodies the truth in its entirety.

NJH That will be very fertile ground to follow up. What He is setting out here relates to what you said about the new man; persons that are to have only their hands and their feet washed would suggest putting on the new man, would it not? The first washing all over would be judicial cleansing.

PAG What the Lord does with Jew and Gentile is to "form the two in himself, into one new man", Eph 2: 15. The new man is not Christ personally, but it is what is formed in persons. It is forming into one new man so that the one new man involves unity, and it involves the Lord's formative work. What He is doing here in John is forming His disciples, and He is forming them by example.

RHB How would you distinguish the Lord as the Teacher and what He Himself says as to the Spirit that "*he* shall teach you all things", John 14: 26.

PAG The Lord exemplifies the truth; so we can see it in Him. The Spirit forms us in the truth. If you look at John's gospel what you see is what we sometimes refer to as the truth set out objectively. It can be taken account of there, but in John's epistles the truth is set out subjectively and we are told in the first epistle that "the Spirit is the truth", (chap 5: 6); that is the truth formatively. Why I am emphasising this is that the truth is not a matter merely of knowledge. The truth is something that affects us and forms us. We are to be regulated by it. We were reminded in one of the earlier readings that what we understand as light in relation to the truth regulates us, it forms us.

RHB That is very helpful. Peter says of the Lord that He has left us a model, (1 Pet 2: 21); that is something to be taken account of, and then your thought is that it is to produce a result that we should follow in His steps.

PAG It is, and it is protective. The Lord says to the Father in John 17, "Sanctify them by the truth: thy word is truth", v 17. Sanctification involves being set apart for holy purposes. The truth sets us apart from the world. The world does not understand the truth, "as the truth is in Jesus", which is quite distinct from what the world understands as truth.

TRC Luke gives the reason at the beginning of Acts why he wrote his gospel; he says, "concerning all things which Jesus began both to do and to teach", chap 1: 1. I wondered whether you get the two thoughts there, the thought of example, and the teaching.

PAG One thing about the Lord is that what He did and what He taught were entirely consistent with one another. And again, if we apply the truth to ourselves, it develops consistency in our walk; it develops consistency in our approach to matters; it develops consistency in how we regard one another. The truth is not a series of rules and regulations; the truth is the revelation of the mind of God. It includes and involves God's thoughts about matters; it includes His thoughts about Christ. It includes His thoughts about you and me.

JTB Is the need then for us to take the place as instructed. The Lord Jesus Himself in His dependence heard as "the instructed", Isa 50: 4. It is very affecting to think of that as applied to the Lord Jesus. He is the truth, He knew it entirely, but is that a feature that should characterise us, the capacity to be instructed?

PAG Exactly; I am glad you bring that forward because the Lord taking the place of "the instructed" involved His subjection to what the

Father said. Our place as instructed involves subjection to what the Lord said. But He says it as One who as Man has Himself been subject, and so He speaks in affection, and He speaks with understanding.

JTB It requires a certain humility of mind to take that place. There are many instructors, but to have been subject as being instructed really equips us for other things, do you think?

PAG The scripture speaks about “the love of the truth”, 2 Thess 2: 10. Why would we love the truth? We love the truth because of Who it speaks about. We love it because we recognise that “as the truth is in Jesus” it involves a Person whom we love.

JL There would be a fine difference between commandments and teaching. As a commandment comes to us, we necessarily require to be submissive to the Lord's authority, but teaching seems to imply the capacity to understand and be formed by what is presented to us by way of teaching. So it is more than just a regulatory thought that requires obedience, but something that involves intelligent appreciation of what comes, and the capacity to take it in.

PAG Teaching involves structure and order and application; so the truth has a structure. It is one whole, but it has a structure. God begins with the glad tidings in order that we might be saved, and then we go on to the truth of the kingdom in order that we might be protected. We saw yesterday that you come into the kingdom to be fed and to be taught, and that is protective. And then the kingdom is protective of the assembly; that is to say that as we uphold what is due to the Lord and His rights, the assembly, which is nearest His heart, is protected in our affections. That is not by any means a delineation of all the truth, but the truth has a structure to it, and it has an order to it. There is not a separate truth of the gospel, truth of the kingdom, and truth of the assembly; it is all part of one whole but there is a structure and an order to it. But then it is applicable; in other words it involves something that we can do: “Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16: 31); that is the gospel; that is something that you can do. And then being subject to the Lord, the truth of the kingdom, that is something we can do. And loving one another which involves the working of the body and the truth of the assembly, that is something which we can do.

JL Very helpful; we will continue to build on that.

NJH The Lord coming first, “the Lord and the Teacher”, the Person would hold you in spirit and intelligence and affection so that you can be

taught rightly.

PAG Yes, and it is easy to recognise the authority of someone you love and someone who loves us. It might appeal more to the natural man to say the Teacher and the Lord; we are here to learn things so that we can add to our knowledge, but it appeals to a believer who has the Spirit that it should be “the Lord and the Teacher”. It is the Person that comes first and then what He says has meaning to us because of who is saying it.

RDP Would you say what the connection is with the washing of their feet. Previously He had spoken about “part with me”, v 8. I was wondering whether this feet washing, which is distinct from normal feet washing, might be in view of them becoming comfortable in relation to the whole matter of having part with Him. The truth of having part with Him was not to be given as a stark fact but introduced it when His own were comfortable in relation to Himself. Why is it in connection with feet washing?

PAG The brethren in Glasgow have made arrangements so that we should be comfortable when we are considering the scriptures and speaking about them together. We will find that the truth will more readily have its way with us and appeal to us when we are comfortable, when we are restful. If we are agitated we become distracted. The nations were in tumultuous agitation (Ps 2: 1), and the nations are currently in tumultuous agitation, but the Lord enables us by the Spirit's power to set these things aside so we can be restful in order to take in what He is saying. He gives peace to His own, and He leaves His peace with them (John 14: 27), in order that they might continue to be restful in relation to the truth. The Lord demonstrated what He was saying; He did not just say it, He did it. Quite often a brother or a sister can tell, and perhaps unbelievers can tell too, the extent to which I have assimilated the truth by what I do, not just by what I say.

TWL I was wondering about the references to the matter of continuance. Teaching according to the truth is what makes way for continuance. I was thinking in relation to the ten days when the disciples were left here, they were continually in prayer; they had been taught that. Here the washing in John 13 was to continue, so that the moral excellence of the manhood of Jesus becomes formative and continues.

PAG The feet washing was to continue! You will remember in Solomon's temple there were lavers, and they were on wheels, they

could be moved to where they were needed; so the thought of the continuance of feet washing was demonstrated there. But one of the things it says about the bases of the lavers is that they had “one casting, one measure, one form”, (1 Kings 7: 37); they all took pattern from Christ. There was not some different pattern here and there; they were in that sense all the same. They could be taken to where they were needed; so they were adaptable to the circumstances of the moment but there was still only one Lord and Teacher.

GBG Is the Lord drawing attention to Himself here? He says, “If I therefore, the Lord and the Teacher”. We have to be affected by the greatness of the Person who does this.

PAG That is exactly right, and that is why it is important that we take account of the fact that in Ephesians it is “as the truth is in Jesus”, and Jesus is emphasised, the Person is emphasised. One thing about the truth is because it is “according as the truth is in Jesus”, it is inexhaustible. Just to be simple, if you learn at school to multiply numbers together you start with small numbers, such as two times two is four, and you learn to multiply for bigger and bigger numbers and maybe you use a calculator, but once you have learned how to do it that is it, you know how to do it! The thing about the truth is because it is in Jesus there is always something more. It is worth going in for.

PJW We had ministry recently in Strood as to Mary of Bethany; she “sat down at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word” Luke 10: 39. I wonder if she is an example in whom the truth became formative. We went on to chapter 12 where she anointed the Lord's feet.

PAG That is helpful, and what the Lord says is that she “has chosen the good part”, v 42. The Lord has authority in relation to the truth, but you still have to choose to go in for it. You can choose what you do with your time. Now there are some things you cannot choose. Of course, if you have to go to work or look after family or other responsibilities, these you must do; we must be righteous. But for what you do with what you have left, it is a question of what you choose to prioritise. I can tell you that if you prioritise the Lord, if you put the Lord first, the reward so greatly outweighs the sacrifice that I could not really put a limit on it. You will benefit in ways that you would not currently consider in putting the Lord first.

PJW That is helpful. One of the sisters was distracted but they both got help together from subjection to the Lord. I was thinking what you said about the kingdom being protective, when the attack came on

Mary, Jesus defended her immediately.

PAG Yes He did! He protected Mary, and you might say Martha was distracted, but He loved Martha too. He loved Martha, and He loved Mary, and He loved Lazarus; He loved them all. If we get some touch of the Lord's affection for us it makes it all the more simple to go in for the things that He values.

QAP When the Lord Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me" (Matt 11: 29), I wondered if there is a link between the reference to the yoke and a recognition of His lordship, His authority, but then it leads into what is more intimate and the understanding that He is "meek and lowly in heart".

PAG Mr Darby says in his hymn:

There is rest in the blessed yoke,
And in proving no will but His (Hymn 85).

There is something not only regulating but restful in taking His yoke upon us. A yoke was what was placed on the shoulders of an ox. If two oxen were to walk together, to pull a cart or to plough a field, the yoke held them together. They did not have one each; there was just one for both. The Lord's yoke, is what He has. Think of the Saviour of the world, the Creator of the universe, so arranging things that you and He can walk in step, and He does not say, 'learn about me' but He says, "learn from me". He shows us how to do things.

AMB Attention has been drawn to Matthew 11, and the Lord's desire is that His own should be meek and lowly in heart too; that is the tenor of the passage. Do you think that the Lord's earnest desire is that the blessed features we see in Him in manhood should be found again in our measure, and that is the objective of His teaching?

PAG It is to make us like Him! As to the end of Psalm 16 and verse 11 where it says,

Thou wilt make known to me the path of life:
thy countenance is fulness of joy;
at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

I have read in ministry that this is like John's gospel: we see the truth set out in all its perfection, "at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore". But then the end of the Psalm 17 it says,

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be

satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness (v 15)

and in the same place that has been related to John's epistles. In John's gospel we see the truth set out, and in John's epistles we find it formed in us. John in his epistles gives us reassurance. We may ask how we know that things are true: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren", 1 John 3: 14. The consequence of our loving the brethren is that we know that we have passed from death to life. We have in the atmosphere of the brethren something that the world doubtless would envy, but has no idea how to achieve; and they cannot. But brethren have it; every believer can have it because we have one Object, and that Object is Christ. The hymn 328 says,

Be Thou the object bright and fair
To fill and satisfy the heart.

The opportunity available in subjection to the Lord Jesus and in interest in the truth is boundless and it is glorious.

AJMCK Is there subjection to one another as well? I was thinking of what we sang in the hymn:

And in subjection bow. (Hymn 306)

It is the spirit of subjection, is it?

PAG I think that enters in. Our brother was mentioning feet washing which precedes this, and I think that enters into the Lord's activity in feet washing. He made Himself subject to His disciples. He served them! The Lord and the Teacher served His own disciples. So therefore must we! If ye love one another, "By this all shall know that ye are disciples of mine, if ye have love amongst yourselves". How do we demonstrate that? Well the scripture says, "by love serve one another", Gal 5: 13.

AJMCK I was thinking of what we had yesterday, "For let this mind be in you" (Phil 2: 5); that going down mind. The spirit of subjection makes room for the Lord primarily, "the Lord and the Teacher", but it makes room for one another.

PAG The going down mind does not occupy ourselves with ourselves. I could become preoccupied with how humble I am, but that is not what is in mind: "each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves"; occupation with Christ and subjection to our brethren has a liberating effect on our spirits because we stop being occupied with

ourselves.

DCB I was wondering if Mary in John 20 gave us examples of this. She begins with the acknowledgement, “my Lord”; “they have taken away my Lord” (v 13), but when He comes before her view she says, “Rabboni”, (v 16), acknowledging, 'my Teacher'. She was taking it to herself and then you see how much opens up in the teaching because of that.

PAG Say more for our help about how we make the Lord personal to us, and how we make the truth personal to us as Mary did.

DCB I suppose you see Mary having come to the point where there was nothing else before her view. The Lord was in death as far as she was concerned, and therefore there was no other prospect; everything was closed up. I wondered if it was like “the truth as it is in Jesus; namely ...”; it is not just “the truth as it is in Jesus”. It brings in that there is the end, and any life that there is, is in the new man being formed.

PAG I think that is why the emphasis is placed on “Jesus” in the passage in Ephesians 4 to draw out that it is nowhere else; it is not to be found elsewhere. There is an incomparable aspect to the truth, and Mary thought for the moment that she had lost contact with the One who meant everything to her and that weighed on her spirit in a way that we can scarcely credit. But He spoke to her and said, “Mary”. If we are feeling at all disorientated or uncertain the Lord would speak to us, and He would speak to us by name that we might hear Him and see Him with the eyes of faith.

JB Do you think we come into these things through discipleship, through being subject to the Lord Jesus? He did not teach the crowds like He taught the disciples in the house.

PAG That is very helpful, but please expand on how He taught the disciples and what it means to be a disciple.

JB I would like help about it because that is the way to come into the truth; through discipline in knowing His affection for us.

PAG Yes, and we spoke about the truth having structure and order, and therefore we get help on the truth as we approach it in a structured and orderly way, setting aside time, seeking to read things, reading a book in the scriptures, and then perhaps seeing what help can be found in ministry about the subjects under consideration. As we take it up in an orderly way the Lord helps us, and all that would enter in to being

disciplined about how we go about things, and into being orderly in our minds in relation to the truth.

NJH What he has is a treasury to him; new and old, it is treasure to him.

PAG Yes, “every scribe disciplined to the kingdom of the heavens is like a man that is a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old”, Matt 13: 52. There is always something fresh about the truth and yet it never changes.

EJM In Matthew 11 He was rejected, and yet He says, “learn from me”. The structure follows that, and the truth as to His sonship and the truth as to the assembly.

PAG We have been taught helpfully that at that point in Matthew 11 and into chapter 12 Christ becomes the turning point and model, JT vol 1 p73. These two things are important; the first thing is the turning point. For His disciples it was turning away from Judaism and for us it is turning away from the world and its whole system. And then the model; it is not just that you turn away from something and say what shall I do now? You have a model to follow. Peter says, “leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps”. He gives the characteristics of the Model; He “who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously”, 1 Pet 2: 23. The model is perfect and has been through every exigency of the testimony, has been through every difficulty and faced it in perfection.

JL I was thinking of the binding element on account of the truth being held in love. Can you say a little more on that particular point in regard of how it is held, and the binding element between our own affections and Christ Himself?

PAG That is important. I have the impression that “holding the truth in love”, (Eph 4: 15), involves that you can scarcely handle the truth rightly if love is not in operation. The Lord always loved His own; it says, “having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end”, John 13: 1. He went through with everything! Whatever happened, He loved “his own who were in the world”. He says, “as I have loved you, that ye also love one another”. So in His setting out of the truth He did it in love! In our application of the truth, it should be in love. I believe it is.

RDP I was thinking of Peter and what has been said as to Mary, “To you therefore who believe is the preciousness”, 1 Pet 2: 7. Peter

speaks about what is structural, a spiritual house, “to whom coming” (v 4, 5), the building up of a spiritual house. You also get the royal priesthood, v 9. It is just that word “preciousness”, a Peter word is it not; “To you therefore who believe is the preciousness”? It seemed to be the binding thing; this picture of the living stones coming together in relation to Him and there is something being built up together.

PAG What you say is good: things became precious to Peter, “the greatest and precious promises”, 2 Pet 1: 4. He speaks about “precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world”, 1 Pet 1: 19. Things do become more valuable as you go in for them; you see the value in them and they become more valuable; they become precious.

KNP I was wondering about the two that were on the way to Emmaus; the Lord opened up to them “from Moses and from all the prophets the things concerning himself”, Luke 24: 27. There is nothing new there, but they were learning from Him on that journey and as a result of that they knew something of this love for one another because it was one heart that was burning.

PAG Yes, “Was not our heart burning in us”, v 32. It is a good thing to read the books of Moses and all the prophets with Christ in mind. If you look at the books of Moses some of the chapters in Exodus about the tabernacle system, and Leviticus about the offerings, and in Numbers about the movements of the camp and the setting up of the camp, it could seem quite complicated, but once you begin to see Christ in it then it begins to have meaning. Our brother was helping us yesterday about the ark and the different aspects of it. The ark as an object might be momentarily interesting, but as a type of Christ it is a wonderful thing, the gold that is there. When you come to the table of shewbread, where the saints are represented, you find that one of the dimensions of the table of shewbread is the same as one of the dimensions of the ark. It suggests what is being formed in the saints. These are simple examples of the depth that is there if we are willing to go in for it. And “from all the prophets”; we read recently in the minor prophets and touches as to Christ illuminate every chapter. And then at the end of Luke, once these two have been recovered, the Lord also takes up the psalms and that is the formative experience of the saints. Having set out the glory of His Person He then brings forward the psalms in view of the formation of what He has taught in the hearts of believers.

JAB What we are enjoying now is something that is living and attractive, and it is incumbent on all of us, especially those of us who are older, to show that the truth is living and attractive. What I want to ask you about is the role of the Scriptures as the word of God. Throughout church history men have taken the truth and added things to it. Could you say something for our teaching about the link between the Scriptures as the word of God and all that you are saying about the truth, because there is a very strong link and yet they are distinct things?

PAG There is a link, and it is good that you bring it up. The Scriptures are spoken of as “the scripture of truth” (Daniel 10:21), and they are the word of God; so they have authority, and they have a source, and their source is in God, and persons wrote them in the power of the Holy Spirit. They contain the complete written expression of what is to be known of God. There is not something else; so if anything is additional to the scriptures then it is not right: it is just as simple as that. The scripture says, “a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly” (Eph 5: 31-32); that regulates us and anything that goes outside that is not according to Scripture. The Scriptures are one whole, “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10: 35); so if we are being asked to take something on that is not according to Scripture then it is easily seen and quickly rejected. What of course is important is that we understand the spirit of Scripture: Christ is the spirit of Scripture, He imbues it, He gives life to it. We do have teaching about the Scriptures and the interpretation of them, but the Bereans searched “the scriptures if these things were so”, (Acts 17:11); they traced everything back to the Scripture. The Bible forms the way believers think.

When I was a child whenever we asked my father a question about almost anything he would tell us what the Scripture said. The Scripture guided the way he thought, and I learned from that. If the Scripture guides the way you think you are on safe ground; you are not using your own mind to calculate how might you go about this, and if something arises the Scripture can guide the way you think. The Spirit who indited it will help you understand it, and the Lord who is the subject of it, gives His authority to it. So even in a situation where you might be a testimony to the Lord's name the Scripture has its own power. Does that help?

JAB It helps very much. Christ is the spirit of Scripture; the

scriptures are living. You can read a verse that you have read a hundred times and get a fresh impression from it. It is not a manual: it is living, and we have to hold both of these things. The Scriptures do function like the banks of the river, so you do not go beyond them, but what flows as a result of these banks being there is what we are speaking about in this reading, and it is living.

PAG The apostle Paul alludes to two situations in which there was difficulty and in one he says, "But what says the scripture?"(Gal 4: 30); and in the other he says, "But what says the divine answer to him?", Rom 11: 4. We need both! We need Scripture, and we need the divine answer. Well, how does this apply? What are we to do? Both are available: "But what says the scripture?"; "But what says the divine answer to him?".

RWMcC Could you say something about principles in relation to teaching and what you have just said? I was thinking back to your illustration of two times two; big numbers are broken down so that the same principles apply.

PAG A brother said that divine principles always work, and they never vary. If we think of the way that nature teaches us, gravity works in a particular way and it does not vary; light is available to us in a particular way, and that way does not vary. Divine principles are there to protect what is according to God, what is pleasurable to God.

You will remember that in the tabernacle system there were curtains; they were protective. Now a curtain is not a rigid thing, but each of the curtains had the same measurements and had the same function, and they protected the whole system, and they protected not only the sides but the back and the front as well. There were other protections provided; the badger skins and the rams' skins dyed red; the cloth of blue was placed over the ark. The cloth of blue was placed directly on the table of shewbread, and it is worth as a matter of interest to enquire why the ark and the table are slightly different in that regard, but the principles, that is to say what is protective, covered the whole system. The measurements were not variable. We talk about principles, and principles are the things which allow us to make our way through even when conditions are adverse. In the next reading, if the Lord will, we will come to speak about the fellowship and the fellowship is governed by principles. It is not governed by my ideas or convenience, or what I might happen to prefer; it is governed by principles, in order that the Lord's rights might be upheld; that is what is

in view. Why do we uphold the Lord's rights? Because He is Lord, but also because it makes way for the maintenance of the service of God. Principles are not an end in themselves; principles are there to protect what is precious to God and to allow the service of praise to proceed in righteousness.

RHB There is the expression 'the present truth'. There is the sense that the truth does not change but there were great changes for Peter. You spoke about the change from Judaism to Christianity; that was the present truth: it was the Spirit bringing the truth and the Scriptures and what is contained in them to bear upon the need of the moment.

PAG That is right, and you see that in the way that the Lord is presented in the various epistles. In Romans He is Head to us on moral grounds, in Colossians He is Head to us on personal grounds, and in Ephesians He is Head to us on official grounds. To the Thessalonians He is "our deliverer from the coming wrath" (chap 1: 10), to the Galatians He is the Deliverer "out of this present evil world" (chap 1: 4), and in Romans He delivers us out of "this body of death", chap 7: 24. It is the same Person, and the same principles, but applied to the need of the moment. As soon as we bring Christ into the matter we are going to get help.

RHB I was thinking of that passage in Luke 24 that our brother referred to; they heard the greatest exposition of Scripture that there has ever been! We are not able to delineate the whole truth, but they were in the presence of One who was able to and did it! And yet their feet still went in the wrong direction until they recognised Him and then all that they had been taught fell into place.

PAG I think that is of the greatest importance because the truth only works if the Lord is our object; otherwise it is just a system of rules. As soon as the Person comes into our affections then everything finds its place because it finds its place in relation to Him.

NCMcK In regard to what was said earlier as to how our minds are formed through the Scriptures and the truth, and we think differently, it speaks in Ephesians where we read as to "being renewed in the spirit of your mind". I wondered if you could say something about that.

PAG I am looking at Romans 12 where it says, "And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind", v 2. The renewing of our minds involves the work of the Spirit and subjection to the Lord; it involves yielding our bodies "a living

sacrifice” (v 1), and it gives us the capacity to think differently. But being “renewed in the spirit of your mind” means that it has become characteristic to think differently. A feature of believers is that characteristically they think differently from the world; they do not approach things in the way that the world approaches them. That is why Paul says to these Ephesians saints, “But ye have not thus learnt the Christ”. They have not learnt the Christ in the way that the world proceeds; it is something completely different, and it is the spirit of our minds. If Christ is the spirit of Scripture then the spirit of our minds is formed by that Person who is the spirit of Scripture.

WMP You referred to the structure of the truth, and the invariability of principles, but you also spoke about applicability, and I wondered about the place of our local meetings. They have a very important place in this whole matter of how we individually progress in the truth.

PAG The local meetings are available, and each locality arranges them according to the resources that they have; we respect that, and the local meetings that are available are of immense value. It is almost unthinkable, but think of a situation where you learned nothing at all until the first day you went to school. So in your home your parents taught you nothing; you did not learn to speak, you did not know anything at all. If you think of the home as being like the local meeting, that is where you learn as well, so that when you have to face wider circumstances, whatever they may be, you have already learned something; you go out equipped. You might learn more as you go along, but the local meeting is like our home.

It says in Leviticus 10 where a difficulty had arisen, “the breast of the wave-offering, and the shoulder of the heave-offering shall ye eat in a clean place, thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee; for as thy due, and thy sons' due, are they given of the sacrifices of peace-offerings of the children of Israel”, v 14. It is Aaron and his sons and his daughters, it is usually just Aaron's sons that are mentioned, but it is the whole family here, his sons and his daughters. The peace-offering we have been taught relates to the fellowship, and the priestly family have the breast of the wave-offering and the shoulder of the heave-offering; that is to say, they have impressions of the affection and power of Christ in that local setting. That is why it is so valuable, and we can learn, and we can ask questions. We can, speaking for myself, make mistakes and the brethren help us and we do that, and it is like being at home.

WMP Do you think that the conversational aspect of our reading meetings for example is very contributory to this line of instruction?

PAG It is! We have been speaking about it locally both in the meetings and in private conversation, but I wonder if we understand how valuable it is to have these conversational meetings for enquiry, to be able to speak about the truth and to ask questions and to hear what the Lord has to say. What we call temple enquiry, when we come into a place where the Lord's rights are acknowledged and where His voice can be heard, and we speak in restfulness over the scriptures, is a very valuable thing. Beloved brethren, do not miss the readings if you can avoid it. I am not telling you to be there every time, I know there are responsibilities, but they are very valuable; they are where you learn.

NJH Teaching in the house would support teaching in the assembly, would it not? I was just thinking what has been said is important; it is not like a different atmosphere, it is confined, family affection, but it is still love for Christ in the house, and when you come to the assembly it is greatly expanded.

PAG It is a fine thing to live in a house where the Scriptures are valued, to live in a house where a Bible is opened and read and there is interest in it. How many people in the world have that? What is to be gained by having the Scriptures opened is immeasurable because we have been given access to something that is without limit.

TRC We spoke earlier as to the order of the truth. Locally we take up a book, and there is order in that; we follow a course of teaching and that is how we grow and learn in the truth. No occasion of gathering is repeated. I was thinking of Thomas; that occasion was never repeated, he missed something that the other disciples cherished.

PAG It is orderly, and often a book is taken up, sometimes an enquiry may be made as to a subject. I remember we had some enquiries in our evening readings about prayer. If a brother has an interest in a subject, or an exercise about it, or a desire to understand more about it, then temple enquiry is a good place to bring these things forward.

CJMCK In Acts 17 Paul "reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and laying down that the Christ must have suffered", v 2, 3. Do we prove something of these things, the reasoning, the opening, and then the laying down? I wondered if it involved the authority of the Scriptures and also too what is constructive.

PAG I think that and we have had brothers who have served us in opening the Scriptures, and then laying down; the ministry we have available to us is authoritative. It is not Scripture but it is founded on Scripture, and it has authority, and we should, and I am sure we do, value it. We have to recognise too that what the apostles said was authoritative; it came from the Lord directly; they had a commission to deliver it; so the ministry of the apostles is not an optional matter. It has been laid down, and as our brother has been enquiring about principles, what is laid down in the apostles' ministry, teaching that we have in Scripture, is authoritative and to be followed.

TRC At the beginning of Acts “they persevered in the teaching”, (chap 2: 42); that needs to continue until the end.

PAG “The teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers”; these things go together. If you are interested in what is being said today, what has been said over the weekend, if you love the Lord, the breaking of bread is there for you. If you have not taken it up, there is an opportunity to do so, and as you take that up then you have an opportunity to contribute to assembly prayer. That opportunity is available, and it is not an exclusive opportunity: it is available to every believer who has the Spirit.

JW I was going to ask about the renewing of the mind; that would be a constant matter, it would not be a once for all matter, and it says, “be not conformed to this world, but be transformed”. I am not sure if it is the same word in the original, but it is the same word as 2 Corinthians 3: 18, “transformed”; so that is a constant matter with us.

PAG The Lord is constantly acting in a refining way to bring out more fully what is pleasing to Him and what will be available for the worship of God eternally. I feel there is always room for refinement in spiritual things; the detail of them is important.

JW If we neglect these matters we feel the difference ourselves. We are not to be conformed to the world, but we are to be transformed; if we are diligent in that matter we know the benefits of it spiritually.

PAG When my wife and I were not long married we needed help about a matter, and we prayed about it, and we went to see an older brother and sister in their home, and we got a great deal of help. We commented on how much we had enjoyed the conversation, but also how we felt safe in raising our exercises in the presence of believers who loved the Lord. To me there is something about our interactions

with one another that helps along that refining effect, and there is no safer place than the company of the brethren.

DCB Is the Holy Spirit pervasive in all that you have been speaking about?

PAG What we are speaking about only functions because the Spirit is present.

DCB We have spoken of the Scriptures: they are indited by the Holy Spirit; we have spoken about ministry: that is given in the power of the Spirit; and we have spoken about local assemblies and working things out, and things are only effective as they are done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

PAG This dispensation is sometimes referred to as the Spirit's day; the day of the Lord is the millennium, and the day of God is the eternal day, but this is the Spirit's day. The maintenance of the kingdom of God rests entirely on the power of the Holy Spirit; that is how the kingdom of God is maintained in power, by the Holy Spirit, not by any other means. The Spirit is essential; there can be no progress without the Spirit.

AMB We need constantly, personally to turn to the Spirit. We do not get help from the Spirit one day and think that that can last us for the rest of the week; it is a daily matter. His service is very broad to the believer. He preserves us from evil and temptation when we turn to Him, but He also helps us to understand the truth and to have it in our hearts as well as in our minds. He helps us to appreciate the Lord so that He is more attractive to us. We need to seek His help all the time and be accustomed to turning to the Spirit.

PAG We do; the Lord said to His disciples as to the Spirit, "but ye know him", John 14: 17. If I put that the other way, how would you know someone if you never spoke to them? He knows you, and He knows me; the question is whether I speak to Him. We do so reverently, but He is available at all times. If you take up the Scripture and there is something in it that you cannot quite understand, ask the Spirit.

RDP In Hebrews it speaks about the great salvation, "how shall we escape if we have been negligent of so great salvation", chap 2: 3. It lists what began by being spoken by the Lord, then it was confirmed by those who heard, who would be the apostles, and "God bearing, besides, witness with them to it, both by signs and wonders, and various acts of power, and distributions of the Holy Spirit, according to his will?", v 4. The subject there is the great salvation which is really the

background to what we are speaking of: “the distributions of the Holy Spirit”, a lovely thought.

PAG There is an unstinting character about divine giving. Peter says of the giving of the Spirit “and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which ye behold and hear”, Acts 2: 33. Various “distributions of the Holy Spirit” would involve that the Spirit was applicable in the circumstances in which these persons found themselves; the Spirit was available to help.

RHB On the basis of that scripture it was not only that the Lord was the truth, but He brought all the truth out in His own teaching in its essence. The apostles were used by Him to develop what He brought out, but in its germ every feature of the truth, if we seek for it, can be found in His own ministry.

PAG Yes, because He is “the Word”, John 1: 1. There is nothing outside of that; He is “the Word”; He is the One who expressed the mind of God; He is the effulgence of God’s glory “and the expression of his substance”, Heb 1: 3. He is the One who is complete in His expression, and we are complete in Him. “In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”; that is to say, it is accessible to us on account of His manhood and, “ye are complete in him”, Col 2: 9. So He is the complete expression of all that is to be known of God, and we are complete in Him; both in a sense work together.

22nd October 2022

At 3-day meetings in Glasgow

List of initials -

A M Brown, Linlithgow; D C Brown, Edinburgh; J A Brown, Linlithgow; J T Brown, Edinburgh; R H Brown, Maidstone; T R Campbell, Glasgow; G B Grant, Dundee; P A Gray, Linlithgow; N J Henry, Glasgow; J B Ikin, Manchester; J Laurie, Brechin; T W Lock, Edinburgh; E J Mair, Buckie; R W McClean, Grimsby; A J McKay, Witney; C J McKay, Glasgow; N C McKay, Glasgow; W M Patterson, Glasgow; R D Plant, Birmingham; Q A Poore, Swanage; K N Pye, New York; P J Walkinshaw, Strood; J Webster, Fraserburgh

GRACE, LOVE AND COMMUNION

MARK B GRANT

2 Corinthians 13: 11-14

Verse 14 was particularly in mind; this verse is so full. I just read the other verses for context. The verse refers to three things: “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ”; “the love of God”; and “the communion of the Holy Spirit”. The apostle's desire is that these three things should be with them all, these saints in Corinth. You could attribute each of these three things, grace, love, and communion, to each divine Person, but I am aware that the apostle speaks of them here as perhaps the greatest expression of these things.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ”: there is not a greater expression of grace than by and in the Lord Jesus Christ. We just sang a hymn (No 211) that speaks of the glory of grace, and that is attributed to the Father, God the Father, and I think that is the way the vast extent of grace will be manifestly seen and known. Of course, there is the glory of the operations of grace as well, but “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” is distinctive in the way that the Lord Jesus Christ came in and was here, “found in figure as a man” (Phil 2: 8); and expressed all the attributes of God as a Man. There are so many features we could think of, righteousness, lowliness, meekness, humility, patience, longsuffering, kindness; all of these features are seen in perfect blend in the Lord Jesus, but one thing that was certainly prominent was grace.

And then His pathway here led Him to the cross, and on the cross He said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23: 34), and that has been described as the 'zenith of grace', James Taylor vol 95 p243. You could not think of a greater expression of grace in a single moment than that. All that was around, all that was against Him publicly, all that was being done to Him, here He was bearing the injustice of it, in the perfection of who He was, the perfection of His life and manhood, and all the powers of darkness and various groups of men all against Him, and He says, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”. He puts what they were doing down to ignorance or inadvertence because they did not know what they were doing. It is an amazing thing that that was the attitude of the Lord Jesus at that moment, as it always was, but it is particularly brought into relief at that moment. The whole dispensation that we are in has been marked by that, by that grace, and that character of grace has been

active for about two thousand years, the attitude of forgiveness towards each one of us, towards sinners. God has answered that request of the Lord Jesus, if you can put it that way. The gospel, for example, has been preached for about two thousand years. Men were responsible for what they had done, but the gospel went out first to those in Jerusalem. Therefore, free forgiveness is available, and it is really the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that has been expressed while He was here. But then it is still available; it has not ceased because of the fact He is not here. In fact, it is even more widely available because He is on high, and He is available for all of us everywhere. Wherever we are, no matter what our circumstances are, whatever setting we are in, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is available to us.

It says here it is to be with us, which is more than being towards us, although it is towards us; and that is very blessed, and we can know that. We can know it individually; we can know it together; but if it is with us, I think it is experienced by us but also can be expressed by us, and then it circulates amongst us. That is a very blessed thing, and it *is* possible and it *is* known, and we are very thankful for that, that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is known amongst the saints. These three things are essential for there to be the enjoyment of what is collective. It is essential for each of us individually, but also if we are going to enjoy things together.

The love of God likewise would be the greatest expression of love. The love of Jesus and the love of the Spirit are known and enjoyed and would be included in the love of God, but the love of God is the greatest expression of it and the greatest source of it, involving He is the centre of it too. Love is God's nature, of course, but it has been expressed so greatly. It has been expressed and made known by Jesus, but the source of love and that kind of love too, "the love of God ... be with you". It is not only that we are loved *by* God, which is true and very blessed, but the love of God being with us is that kind of love. We have been made "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1: 4) which means that we are not only loved by God, but that love produces the same kind of love in us, which is an amazing thing. We here, though feeling our weakness, and we feel various circumstances and pressures and all of these things, but there are actually persons here who have been affected by the work that Christ has done and have come to Him, been converted, there is a work of God in them, and therefore this kind of love can be known by each but also expressed,

formed in each and therefore expressed.

Again, that is essential for each one of us for our own enjoyment but also for the working out of things together. It *is* seen and it *is* known and it *is* enjoyed, but I feel the word is for myself that of the need to be maintained and draw on these things, and lay hold of them too in a greater way. We may be quite familiar with some of the terms of these things, although they have not been formed in me as much as they should have been, but I am very thankful for divine grace that has formed them in some measure. And I think it is encouraging to be able to identify these things in ourselves as well. I certainly have known it and experienced it amongst the saints, but we are to be able to identify these things in ourselves as the work of God - and the work of God is perfect - and we are to value it in each other. It is a wonderful thing that the love of God, that kind of love, is actually formed in us because it is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit”, Rom 5: 5. It is also formed and it is a very large part of what will go through into eternity. What has been formed after the divine nature and what is formed at the present time is what will answer to God, to divine Persons, eternally.

And then, “the communion of the Holy Spirit”. Each divine Person would be involved in this, but it is the Holy Spirit that is the great power for unity and oneness, and we have been given the Holy Spirit; it has been poured out. Think of the possibility of a company of persons who each have the Holy Spirit, making way for the Spirit, because their relationship with the Spirit is characterised by nearness to the Spirit. May this communion be known! I feel the test of it myself. You see and experience the benefit of it and certainly in gatherings, you see the fruit of it, but for myself the test is how much am I part of this myself and contributing to this. There is no greater power for the enjoyment of divine things. In fact, there is no other power for the enjoyment of divine things together. The links that we have are not natural. Natural relationships are, of course, right and precious and valued, but these links are more than that, greater than that. Our natural links in this scene will not go through in the way that we know each other now, but the spiritual links that we have, the common bond that we have, will go through. We can enjoy what belongs to eternity now in the Spirit.

These thoughts are not very well formed but I was just struck by what was contained in one short verse and the fact that it conveys the greatest expression of these three things, grace, love and communion; and they are to be with us. That is a test, but it is also very encouraging

too because the apostle did not write this as some impossibility; he writes it as something that should be a known reality, and it is a reality, and we are very thankful for it. It is something to be enjoyed. I trust they may be for our encouragement.

May the Lord bless the word!

Malvern

10th October 2022

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

A Barrie Brown

Exodus 17: 1- 6

Proverbs 13: 17 (from “but”)

1 John 4: 13

The gospel is preached that you might avail yourself of the free offer of pardon for your sins, available because of the work of the Lord Jesus, that your never-dying soul may be secured and safe, with the fear of death rolled away. All these wonderful and blessed things are available; that you should be covered by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus, that you should come by way of faith in believing and true repentance for your sinful history. God is willing and able and ready to bless.

The burden on my heart for this time is particularly in relation to the gift of the blessed Holy Spirit as being an integral part of the glad tidings. Sometimes I feel for myself that I may just add this truth as having to bring it in. It is the joy of the preacher to bring it in. I feel particularly how important it is to emphasise the absolute necessity of having the Holy Spirit, and knowing His help, and knowing the power that flows from that One. That is why I was led to give out the hymn that we sang (Hymn 109). God's word comes into verse 3 and God's word in the preaching is about the Lord Jesus and what He has done.

What affected me particularly where we have read in Exodus 17 is to consider that the Lord Jesus suffered that you might receive the Holy Spirit. He suffered too that your sins might be put away, a glorious, wonderful fact; a stupendous fact. God in unparalleled goodness gave His Son for sinners: “we being still without strength, in the due time Christ has died for the ungodly”, Rom 5: 6. When there was nothing to commend us, when all we had to plead was our exceeding need, God provided the answer; and I trust that each one of us knows what it is to have their need met. If you have not, have it met now, as the forgiveness of your sins is the first rung of the ladder. It is vital, it is necessary and we should not trifle with these things.

The hymn also mentions the Spirit striving with men, and God says that in early Genesis, “My Spirit shall not always plead with Man”, Gen 6: 3. That would put us in mind of this current time, the gospel time, the day of grace. God in His goodness is going on with people despite their indifference, despite even their opposition or antagonism; God is

wonderfully good. You being here gives another opportunity to listen to the glad tidings. God is striving with you; He is speaking with you. He is pointing you to Christ; He is pointing you to the good things that He has given, the blessed things that He has given. Will you respond, dear friend?

I have spoken of the blessed Holy Spirit. Each one of us has our own spirit. Later on in Proverbs it tells us that "Man's spirit is the lamp of Jehovah, searching all the inner parts of the belly", Prov 20: 27. Each one of us has a conscience. Each one of us has a soul too. We referred to a never-dying soul and you are responsible for your soul. Do not be heedless as to it: "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?", Mark 8: 36. We are body, soul, and spirit. For the believer our body will be changed; our souls too will go through. Then there is the thought of our spirits, a link God has given us with Himself. Are you one who has their trust in the Saviour, and knows what it is to turn from the cloying grasp of sin and sins and the despair they bring? Perhaps you are one who is going on heedless, in which case God in His goodness will come here to where you are; the striving will go on until the day of grace closes for you. Think of that, God coming to you; He has come here in the person of the Lord Jesus.

There was murmuring in this chapter we read in Exodus, not long after God's deliverance of the Israelites. What a matter it was, a great testament to God's intervening for the people, telling us about the truth of redemption, "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea", Exod 15: 1. Everything has been met, the power of death has been met, Satan has been conquered, the Lord Jesus has led captivity captive and He has ascended up on high, friend. Yet the people had lost sight of their deliverance. I trust that I have not lost sight of the wonderful truth of redemption, of being purchased by God, being held for Him for ever.

In chapter 6, the manna would speak to us about the attractiveness of the Lord Jesus and His life here, the way that He pleased God in every way. Are you attracted to the Lord Jesus, or is there some other person or some other thing that fills your view? I trust it would not be. How attractive the Lord Jesus is. Perhaps there has been a point in our soul history when we once said, as it says in the prophet, "there is no beauty that we should desire him", Isa 53: 2. I trust for all here that the Lord Jesus is One that we find beautiful, One that we find our all in, One that we would seek to please, One who we know has

died for us, to set us free. The people were murmuring. They had seen how God came in for them by way of the Red Sea and then in the manna. Did they really think that God would lead them this way “to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?”. How unpredictable, how fickle the flesh is. Let us not trust in it; it has been put away in the vicarious death of Christ.

The people had murmured, the people had opposed God; what would God do? God's goodness comes in here, and His grace. It is His grace and His goodness that is towards you now, His love in activity. He desires that you should be blessed. The word to Moses was to take the staff “and thou shalt strike the rock, and there shall come water out of it”. Corinthians tells us that “the rock was the Christ”, 1 Cor 10: 4. It speaks to us of the Lord Jesus. It would speak too of the way that He endured the suffering, the suffering that was due to you and to me because of the sins we have committed, the sins we could never atone for, the dark blot of sin that we could never rub out. The Lord Jesus was smitten on my account. Can you say He was smitten on your account? It says in Isaiah that Jehovah was pleased to bruise Him (Isa 53: 10); it brings out the divine prerogative. It is not exactly that there was pleasure in it for God: consider what God felt as His only Son hung there on the cross. Of course, the Lord Jesus was pleasing to the Father, pleasing to God on the cross, was ever pleasing to Him. The fire of judgment poured was upon the head of the Lord Jesus by a holy God; certainly it was not on His account but on my account and yours. What it brought out was His deep, eternal, blessed perfection. What an offering He was for God. God has been satisfied by what the Lord Jesus did on the cross. Smiting implies the terrible judgment that there was due to you and to me that has been borne by the Lord Jesus vicariously. The rock would perhaps suggest to us something of the deep, enduring capacity of the Lord Jesus to endure that judgment for you and for me. Have you availed yourself of the work of the Lord Jesus; are you covered by His shed blood?

I trust that this will remain with you, that the Lord Jesus, as well as suffering that our sins might be forgiven, as well as going through with the whole matter and completing the work to God's eternal, lasting, satisfaction, also suffered that we might receive the Holy Spirit. Truly that is in God's purpose and desire for every believer. It goes on to say here, “thou shalt strike the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink”. Perhaps you are satisfied with the work of the

Lord Jesus for salvation, but looking to the world or other things for satisfaction. God has provided for your satisfaction. He has provided for your life, here. It is in the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit.

In relation to the cleansing of the leper in the books of Moses, it speaks about the anointing oil having to come on the blood, Lev 14: 14, 17. The Holy Spirit can only be given to people - men and women, boys and girls - who believe in the Lord Jesus and have accepted Him as their Saviour; it can only be thus. There was someone in the Acts who sought to give money, so that he would have the power to give the Holy Spirit, Acts 8: 18,19. What a terrible thought that would be. We were affected by that in our earlier reading that God desires to give the Holy Spirit. I have been so impressed afresh by the need to have the Holy Spirit, to make room for Him and to know His presence. I have also been impressed by the greatness of the Holy Spirit. I was going through recently some of His titles; there were over thirty titles I could find in a brief consideration of the Holy Scriptures, each of them implying some of His glories, some of His services, His patience. Think of the way that the Lord Jesus speaks about the Holy Spirit in John's gospel. Firstly, He tells us that "It is profitable for you that I go away", John 16: 7. We may wonder as to that; how profitable it would be if the Lord Jesus was here. What can we say as to that? We would accept what the Lord Jesus says, how profitable it has been that the Lord Jesus has gone on high. It says earlier in John's gospel that "the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified", John 7: 39. Jesus has been glorified; He has been received up above all the heavens; He has been raised by the glory of the Father. God's full satisfaction is invested in Christ and what He has done in putting away the matter of sin.

I have been impressed by that too, how the Lord Jesus has not only dealt with our sins: He has dealt with the man that has sinned. It links with what it says in Corinthians where it speaks about the Lord Jesus being made sin, 2 Cor 5: 21. Think of that. It goes on to say, "that we might become God's righteousness in Him". "Him who knew not sin" brings out His stainless perfection; "he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him". The Holy One of God was made that which He abhorred, and thus was putting it away from God's sight forever. He is raised a glorious and living Man, having had to say to sin and sins completely. It is true of every believer that the matter of sin has been dealt with. In our experience we have to come to it and to

prove it. Although the children of Israel were safe from judgment and from the Egyptians, they were still murmuring; and does that not perhaps remind us of our soul experience, how perhaps we murmur and maybe we doubt and maybe we go back? How like my own history the children of Israel are: they go up and they go down. Later on, they lusted after the leeks and the onions (Num 11: 5), and all these things. They had not enjoyed Egypt one bit; it had been an exacting place. How the flesh is duplicitous but we are entitled to view ourselves as alive in Christ. The Spirit would help us in that; He is absolutely essential for that.

The Spirit also brings in the matter of satisfaction. If the Lord Jesus said, "It is profitable for you that I go away", it means that the Spirit would come. There is a divine Person here. We would absolutely accept that the blessed Holy Spirit of God is a divine Person. There is plenty of testimony to it in the Scriptures. Firstly, it speaks of Him as the Spirit of God. That comes in right at the beginning of the Bible where He is said to be "hovering over the face of the waters" (Gen 1: 2), feeling the effects of sin. The Spirit has feelings; He has feelings for you. If there is a stirring in your heart towards God and towards the Lord Jesus, it is on account of the Spirit's work: may you heed it; may you answer to it. May you accept the Lord Jesus as your Saviour; may you be one who will receive the blessed Spirit. The Lord Jesus says, "I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter", John 14: 16. He is One whom "the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him; but ye know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you", John 14: 17. That would be a question. Do you know the Spirit? He is a divine Person. In chapter 15 it says He is "the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father", v 26. We have One who is a divine Person who has moved "forth from with the Father". I trust that you are not going after things in the world for satisfaction. There is One who abides with you and shall be in you. The Lord Jesus is looking on to the Spirit's day after He went on high. It also says that he may be with you for ever. What commitment there is on the part of the Spirit. Perhaps you find there are murmurings arising in your heart. Perhaps you find doubts. Do you have the Holy Spirit? - if not ask. The Father would be delighted to give the blessed Holy Spirit; what grace on the part of the Holy Spirit to come and be with us. What a gift that is, how it would govern our conduct, how it would govern our lives, and how it would govern the way that we would move about, the fact that we have a divine Person dwelling in us.

The people drank. Moses was obedient; Moses did as he was told and the water flowed out, as consequent typically upon the Lord Jesus suffering, including the work of atonement, the work of redemption for God's full and eternal satisfaction; Christ has gone on high and the Spirit has come. He came in totality, blessed matter, on the Lord Jesus. He came on the day of Pentecost, the inauguration of the assembly, and every believer with the Holy Spirit is added to that great vessel. What about you? Without the Holy Spirit, and perhaps without making room for the Holy Spirit, there will be murmurings and doubts. It is of note that just after where we read Amalek came in. It has been suggested that it is Satan really working through the flesh to deflect us, pull us down in our thoughts. We need the Holy Spirit.

In Numbers 21, there are many references to brooks and springs and that is really where they began to make progress. It speaks about the matter of hollowing out a well with their staves. There was an exercise to make room for the Spirit; that means that we have to make less room for other things. If we are to make spiritual progress, we need to make room for the Spirit; and then too they sang unto it, in Numbers 21. How grateful we should be to have the Holy Spirit, how delighted He is when room is made for Him. May we make more room for that blessed One. Always bear in mind what a precious gift it is; the Spirit was given consequent on the immeasurable sufferings of the Lord Jesus for you, not only that your sins might be forgiven. Without that however, you are nowhere; you are in great peril without accepting the Lord Jesus as your Saviour. May you do so now. May you also have a fresh view of the gift of the Holy Spirit because He is given consequent on the sufferings of our Lord Jesus.

In Proverbs we read, "a faithful ambassador is health". An ambassador in the normal sense of the word is someone who is sent from one country to another to represent the interests of his country. The blessed Spirit being who He is in His Person is far more than that; He has come from a far country. Heaven is so removed morally from this scene, so above this scene. It is a blessed area where we are to have our spiritual roots and the Spirit comes from there. He brings reports from that blessed place. As the Lord Jesus again tells us, He brings things to our remembrance, and then He also says in chapter 16, "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you", John 16: 14. He constantly glorifies Christ; He glorifies Him in believers who have a living view of the Lord Jesus. That is another

matter; the Lord Jesus is near. He is interested in you; He is interested in this gospel preaching. As to His position He is in heaven but He is interested in you, He loves you, He desires your blessing, but it is the Holy Spirit who is actually with us. He could not be any nearer. Is it any wonder that in these chapters the Lord Jesus makes so much of the Holy Spirit? If the Lord Jesus says a great deal about a matter, it must be most important. Surely the blessed Spirit is faithful; all divine Persons are faithful. They would be faithful in that they are true to themselves and they will never let you down. He would ever speak to you of the Lord Jesus; whatever time of day or night, the Spirit is ready. If you are ready, friend, you must relate yourself to that blessed One.

The scripture speaks about sowing to the Spirit (Gal 6: 8), and there is also the practical matter of putting to death the deeds of the body that we might live, Rom 8: 13. That is another great matter. We experienced that this morning, the matter of quickening, being made to live. He is the Spirit of life, "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus", Rom 8: 2. To live we do need to put to death the deeds of the body, because although sin has been judged, it is still in our being. It is no longer to be the domineering influence, but an intruder. We have the flesh in us until the Lord comes, but the Spirit helps us. We need to have the desire to put to death the deeds of the body. This faithful One is ready to help. He stands by, ready to help each one of us. He is ready to help you.

It goes on to say, "is health". What a healthy spiritual matter it is to be engaged with Him and to speak to Him. Those of us that are in households speak to those that we live with. Surely if there is One that is even closer than that, we would speak to Him? I challenge my heart as to that. We speak to the Father and the Lord Jesus. There is a constant companion who is to be our Friend, our Confidant, our Comforter, the One who is able to manage our affairs exceedingly above all that we could ourselves. Do we speak to Him? Is it your experience that the activity of the blessed Spirit is health? I can say it is, but we need to prove these things individually. How fine the book of Proverbs is. That is another thing the Holy Spirit has done: He has indited the Scriptures. He makes them live to us. Are you in the good of that?

Then we have a blessed thought: "Hereby we know that we abide in him", that is God, "and he in us, that he has given to us of his Spirit", 1 John 4: 13. In the previous chapter, there is a similar thought. At the end of the chapter it says, "hereby we know that he abides in us,

by the Spirit which he has given to us”, 1 John 3: 24. It would emphasise God's readiness to give. John gives us things plainly and attractively; you are to be conscious that you have the Holy Spirit; and are you conscious that God Himself abides in you?. Abiding is a characteristic word of John which relates to settled conditions. Are there settled conditions in our lives where God can abide? Where we read in chapter 4, it seems to go a little further, “we know that we abide in him and he in us, that he has given to us of His Spirit”. It seems to be a closer thing. It seems to be something that is very wonderful to consider that He has given to us of His Spirit. Is that not an amazing matter to consider that God has given to us of His own Spirit?

Corinthians speaks to us of what “God has revealed to us by his Spirit” (1 Cor 2: 10), and also tells us that “we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God” 1 Cor 2: 12. This seems to be infinitely blessed; God has given to us of His Spirit. How could the creature ever ask the Creator to give of His Spirit? How could we ever conceive these things. These things are being conceived in God's heart for those that love Him. “We know that we abide in him and he in us that he has given to us of his Spirit”. It would perhaps also involve being partakers of the divine nature.

In saying these things as to the blessed Holy Spirit, I would reemphasise that without knowing the Lord Jesus as your personal Saviour, you cannot avail yourself of them. You may be interested in them in some way, I trust that you are, but I just felt it laid upon my heart to emphasise the necessity of the gift of the Holy Spirit, consequent on the Lord Jesus' suffering, His work and His glorification. I am sure many of us have been given the Holy Spirit, perhaps when we were younger without perhaps identifying a point in time exactly, because God is very gracious. He gives the Spirit to those who ask and also to those who obey. I think the exercise would be to cultivate our relations with that blessed One and to be continually impressed, reverent, thankful, and worshipful that God has given to us of His Spirit, God's Spirit.

May each one of us be absolutely assured as to our eternal salvation. What a world we live in! We have spoken about divine feelings, and we should have feelings for the race and those that we move about amongst. Reference was made recently to the way that the Lord's prayer is sometimes said publicly and we are glad when there is any evidence of God's things being spoken of; even to the

extent of at Christmas time, when you may hear a hymn sung in the schools. It may be the only time little children take the name of Jesus on their lips, but that name means something to God. Does His Name mean something to you? Make sure that you have your sins forgiven. Make sure that you know the Lord Jesus as your Saviour, and make sure too that you are one who knows what it is to abide in God, and God abiding in you, for He has given of His Spirit.

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

Linlithgow

8th January 2023