

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE MAN OF THE FATHER'S CHOICE

Genesis 37: 1-14; 22: 1-19

BWL I feel encouraged by the hymn we began with and the line:

Man of the Father's choice (Hymn 33).

That is simply what is in mind for our enquiry. We have read these two sections in relation to Jacob and Joseph, and Abraham and Isaac, and the outstanding feature in them is the father's love for the son. We are going through Genesis locally, and I was struck when we read chapter 37 recently as to the end of verse 14, "And he sent him out of the vale of Hebron". Hebron would speak of the purpose of God, and it led me to one of the hymns we have:

O glorious Lord! what thoughts Thy mind did fill,
When from Thy God Thou cam'st to do His will! (Hymn 226).

It goes on to speak about sons having their part with Christ, brethren of Christ, the church, and the day of God. All these thoughts were in the Lord's heart when He came in. He was sent from the vale of Hebron. We know, of course, that the Lord is not spoken of as sent from heaven. As a divine Person He came in, "Lo, I come", (Heb 10: 7); that was His own act. "And the Word became flesh", (John 1: 14); that was His own act. But as here as Man in a position of dependence, He is viewed as having been sent and, indeed, in John's gospel the Lord speaks of being sent on numerous occasions, but what was in His heart was really for the divine pleasure, and that is what I had in mind that we might enquire into. We read the whole section just to get the scope of it, but we are told that "Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was son of his old age". We are given the reason for His love. When we come to the end of John 3, we are told that, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", v 35. We are not exactly given the reason there. The Father did not need a reason to love Christ. He loved Him complacently, but we might enquire as to why the Father loves the Son. What does He find in the Son that He loves? We might get some help in relation to that, keeping in our minds the fact that the Lord Jesus had the whole scope of the counsel and purpose of God in His heart when He came in.

We read in chapter 22 because there the one that the father loves was given up, which suggests the extent of the Father's love, the extent of the love of the Lord Jesus, so that everything might be secured for God. So, at the end of where we read we have, "the stars of heaven,

and ... the sand that is on the sea-shore", bringing in the great result that is secured out of the death of Christ. In Genesis 22 the offerings are all burnt-offerings; there are no sin-offerings in Genesis; so it is the death of Christ in relation to the purpose of God. We might get some help in relation to that too.

JTB That is very helpful and profitable. The Lord was loved "before the foundation of the world", John 17: 24. It is very affecting that that love never diminished. He both glorified His Father on the earth and finished the work that He was sent to do, John 17: 4. That must have been an expression of His love, and really an indication of the Father's love for Christ. The work would involve the whole purpose of God, would it?

BWL Exactly; so God's thoughts were that He would have men like Christ in His presence. The Lord Jesus came into manhood to secure that so that the first thing with God is the matter of sonship. The Father found His delight in that. Sonship, as we have been taught, is particularly for God. Christ came into that relationship and the Father had what He had never had before. Help us in relation to "thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world". That goes back from before time.

JTB We often say we cannot comprehend what was there in a past eternity but we know that love was there, and the fact that there was love between these divine Persons is something very deep to contemplate. There was full expression of that love in Christ as coming into manhood.

BWL It was what the Father was waiting for. It is spoken of here, "because he was son of his old age". I think we can relate that to God's purpose. The Father was looking for that; God was looking for that and He found it perfectly in Christ.

DCB Mr Darby speaks in one of his spiritual songs of 'Sonship, in conscious nature', *The Man of Sorrows*. It just came to mind as we were thinking of this. Here is One walking before the Father in the consciousness and the delight of being a Son, and that drawing out the affection of the Father.

BWL Yes, so I need help in relation to this but there are two words that are used in relation to love. There is what is the settled disposition. We get both in relation to Christ.

DCB I was wondering about that too. Your referred to John 3: 35,

"The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand". The next reference is John 5: 20, "For the Father loves the Son and shews him all things which he himself does". You see there is the settled disposition, but there is something in Christ that draws out an intensity of feeling on the part of the Father.

BWL Yes, exactly, His coming into manhood and taking up that relationship of sonship which did not exist before the Lord came into that condition. He then "is in the bosom of the Father", John 1: 18. The disciples asked, "where abidest thou? He says to them, Come and see", John 1: 38, 39. What they found was that He was living in that relationship that you have referred to. He was living in the conscious enjoyment of the Father's love.

TWL Is there something in the fact the coat of many colours was made before he was sent?

BWL Well, I am sure we will get help in relation to it, but give us your impression as to that. It is what the Father found, speaking typically, in Christ, is it not?

TWL Well, we often speak of how the Father loved Him because He was the One who did all His will, but it is fine to see that the Father appreciated the manhood of Christ in His secret thirty years. The coat of many colours seems to relate more to who He was and what He was rather than what He had done. What a wonderful Man, speaking carefully, for the Father just to appreciate in secret!

BWL I think that is very good. We sometimes speak of the Lord's moral glories, and we touched on that recently in Glasgow, first of all dependence seen in the babe, then subjection. These were features that had never been seen in such a way before. They were seen in perfection in the Lord Jesus. Think of the Father's delight! I wondered if we see what is conferred here in the vest of many colours. It is what the Father gave.

TWL We are not given the reason for the colours. We get to look on the colours as seen in Christ, but Jacob had reason for making it that way. The Father had reason for loving Christ just because of what He found in Him in manhood, without Him having to do anything.

BWL Exactly. So, as going out from the vale of Hebron; it is really the Man of God's counsels.

GBG It did not need the death of Christ for this relationship to be set out perfectly.

BWL No, the death of Christ was needed for us to come into things. The mount of transfiguration would really support what you say.

GBG Your second scripture brings it out more fully. The type has changed; we get the “ram caught in the thicket”. You need the death of Christ to allow us, through grace, to be brought into this relationship, but not between the Father and the Son. It links on with what our brother was saying. It is just who He was and what He was.

BWL That is good, and I trust that is what we get hold of in our time this afternoon, that we see how delightful Christ was for the Father. That is to engage our hearts and affect our hearts.

GBG In John 10, you get the Father's love drawn out because He laid down His life and took it again (v 17), but the emphasis there is mainly on His taking it again.

BWL Yes, and when we come to Genesis 22, we will see that, because Abraham had resurrection in mind, did he not? “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again”. He had resurrection in mind, did he not?

DHM It says in Esther, “Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour!”, Esth 6: 11. This is the One that was in mind. “Delight” is a wonderful word in that sense. There is a fulness and a substantiality as to the pleasure the Father found in Him.

BWL We see that again at the mount of transfiguration when Peter begins to speak, and immediately the Father interrupts him: “*This* is my beloved Son”, Matt 17: 5. That was the One whom the Father was honouring.

DCB But before that there was the Father's word at His baptism. That was a response to what only the Father knew. There had not been any activity in service apart from the time in the temple in Luke 2, if you could call it service, but the excellence of the Son had been before the Father's eye for these thirty years, and that was acclaimed. At the mount of transfiguration there is an element of correction for Peter, but there is no correction there at His baptism. It is a simple statement of His excellence to the Father.

BWL So in these hidden years the Father found His delight in that Man. Every stage of the Lord's life up to that point heaven found delight in. It had never been found before.

AMB In that time we know that He was occupied in the things of His Father: “my Father's business”, Luke 2: 49. What would you say about

that?

BWL You have been thinking about that.

AMB It is the only scriptural record we have of the Lord's activities before He came into public service at the time of His baptism. There was something there that the Father found His delight in. There was a uniqueness about that blessed One at every stage of His growth.

BWL It is wonderful to think of that. The Lord's answer may have surprised Joseph and Mary, but the Father was not surprised; He was engaged in the Father's business. The Lord knew the heart of the Father. The Lord knew what was in the Father's mind, and the Father did not hide anything from the Lord.

AMB Really it is a remarkable matter that we are told so little of the first thirty years of the Lord's life. Do you think it is something we will find out about when we are with Him? Do you have any impression as to that?

BWL I am not sure. It speaks in Revelation as to "the hidden manna", Rev 2: 17. There is nothing lost of the Lord's life as far as God is concerned. We are given the four accounts in the gospels, and there is a fulness as to them.

NCMcK The Lord made the Father's name known, did He not? "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world", John 17: 6. That was in the Lord's life here. It was important to the Father that in a world that entirely misrepresented Him, where there was no true representation of the Father, that one Person would be able to do that, and that was His Son, that the Father's name should be made known and thus glorified here on the earth.

BWL That is good; so the Lord came into the relationship of sonship that it might be conveyed to others. We come into that: "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them" (John 17: 22); we often speak of as the glory of sonship. It was a glory that was conferred on the Lord by the Father, but the Lord came into that relationship first. He had to come into that relationship first before it could be conferred on us. It is very wonderful.

JSS Joseph's brethren "hated him yet the more", but is the divine intention that we should come round and bow down? Is that what God's intention is? I think you mentioned in prayer that the Man of the Father's choice becomes our choice too.

BWL Joseph's brethren here, I suppose, speak of the Jew, and they

Speak of us as away from Christ. They are presented negatively. But these dreams also suggest Christ's brethren were in His heart. Before He had secured them, they were in His heart. And there is an allusion too, I think, to the assembly in Joseph's sheaf, and then the second dream in relation to administration and rule, looking on to the world to come and the kingdom given up. It is looking on to the day of God. All these things were in the Lord's heart. We may think so much of ourselves and what we need, and we are thankful for the mercy and grace that has been shown towards us, but we need to get a view of Christ as the Man of God's purpose, all these wonderful, eternal relationships in His mind when He came in, and then securing all, all these things given into His hand. Joseph is the great administrator in Genesis. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35. That involves the administration and securing of everything for God.

TWL Is one of the reasons why the Father loved Him seen in what the angels expressed at the beginning of Luke, "on earth peace, good pleasure in men", chap 2:14? God had never been able to say that since the fall before Christ came onto the scene. It was anticipative of the character of persons that would fill eternity for God when Christ was there.

BWL Yes, "good pleasure in men" is really universal, but it was because Christ was there in manhood. The 'Man of the Father's choice' was there, only a babe, you might say, in insignificant surroundings and circumstances, but the One who was there gave God the basis for the angels to recognise that, "good pleasure in men".

NJH Is the truth of Christ's sonship peculiarly understood and known in the assembly?

BWL I am sure that is right. Go on, help us!

NJH She was really formed in the light of that relationship, as the Lord states in the revelation to Peter, "*Thou* art the Christ, the Son of the living God", Matt 16: 16. Sonship would emphasise that link on the basis of the assembly being formed.

BWL That is good; so sonship is for God. It is what we come into and enjoy, of course, but primarily it is for God, but then in the assembly there is what is for the heart of Christ. There is also what is for God: "the assembly in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3: 21) is for God.

NJH John 17: 23, 24 was quoted earlier, "that the world may know

that thou hast sent me, and that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me. Father, as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world". We find that in divine purpose.

BWL Yes, so that "those whom thou hast given me ... may be with me" is the assembly. That is good; so the assembly has this appreciation. Is it going too far to say the Father's appreciation for Christ - "that they may behold my glory" - is the glory of the One that has accomplished everything for the Father? It is certainly known in a way that no other family will have.

PAG Is this consistent with what John says in his first epistle, "we have seen, and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us", 1 John 1: 2? That is a distinctive manifestation of the present dispensation, is it not?

BWL So the apostles particularly enjoyed that. John could say, "we have contemplated his glory", John 1: 14. That was something peculiar in that way to the apostles, and yet, by the Spirit, we come into the appreciation of it.

PAG I think what you say about the Spirit is essential. John goes on to say, "that which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us", 1 John 1: 3. There is what was distinctive about what the apostles had, but then the thought is that what was distinctive for them should be established and maintained throughout the whole of the dispensation in the Spirit's power, "the eternal life, which was with the Father". It never ceased to be so.

BWL That is good; so we might say this dispensation is distinctive.

CAS John says, "and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father", John 1: 14. That is the glory of that relationship worked out, which really is this chapter: "Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons".

BWL That is good. Sometimes we speak of 'John's simple page', and maybe we struggle about that sometimes, but how simple it is, "as of an only-begotten with a father". That is not beyond the youngest here really, is it, in a certain sense? That was what they saw, the Lord Jesus in the enjoyment of His relationship with His Father and the Father in the enjoyment of His relationship with the Son. That is what they saw in experience, the reality of it.

JTB “He that has seen me has seen the Father”, John 14: 9. There would be some expression and exhibition of the love which existed.

BWL So I think it has been said that the Father was there in the Lord Jesus. It was not just that the Lord Jesus represented the Father, but the Father was there. In Genesis 22 I think it says at least twice, “and they went both of them together”. You could say that is what is meant.

JTB I was thinking of Psalm 16,

I will bless Jehovah, who giveth me counsel; even in the
nights my reins instruct me.

I have set Jehovah continually before me; because he is at
my right hand”, v 7, 8.

That psalm refers typically to the Lord Jesus and the relationship which He enjoyed supremely with the Father, the intensity of the affections that existed between them both. It is a very affecting expression, “even in the nights my reins instruct me”, the inner organs of the Lord Jesus really at one with the Father's own affections and desires for Him.

KRC He finishes John 17, “that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them”, v 26. I was thinking of what you have said as to the reality of these things. The Lord was seeking that it would be a reality for them and for us, do you think? .

BWL Yes, so that verse has been linked with John 20, “And I have made known to them thy name”, John 17: 26. That is what the Lord was doing all the time He was with them right up until that point when He came out in that glorious resurrection morning when He said to Mary, “I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”, John 20: 17. I think that has been linked with, “And I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known”. At that point that lay ahead. The first thing the Lord did in resurrection was to give these words to Mary, but then there is to be a result, “that the love with which thou hast loved me”. That is what we are speaking about, that the love with which the Father loved the Lord “may be in them and I in them”. That means the Father is in our affections and Christ is in our affections.

GBG That verse has been quoted in Psalm 16,

I have set Jehovah continually before me; because he is at my
right hand,

I shall not be moved.

The Lord Jesus is at the Father's right hand in this dispensation, but there the Father is at Christ's right hand. Does that suggest that the

Father was always there for the Lord Jesus as a Man here, always available to Him? In His pathway He was never alone.

BWL Yes, I think we have a hymn that speaks about the Holy Spirit being 'the power of His hand' (Hymn 300). The right hand would sometimes speak of power so that it is really the power of love. All that the Lord Jesus did was in love for His Father but that involved a power as well. Is that really what is being referred to?

GBG I think what you say about power is good, the power of love because He - that is God - was at Christ's right hand in His pathway here. Is that what you are thinking?

BWL Yes.

SCL There was a peculiar joy for the Father in terms of a Man who understood the Father's heart completely. That had never existed, and has never existed on the earth to the same extent as when the Lord was here, when there was a perfect understanding of the heart of God.

BWL So only the Son could make the Father known. You cannot make someone known that you do not know or you might misrepresent them, but the relationship and knowledge of divine Persons is perfect. "No one knows the Son but the Father, nor does any one know the Father, but the Son", Matt 11: 27. The knowledge divine Persons have of one another is perfect. But the Lord has made the Father known; He has revealed God. The revelation of God was in His heart when He came in, and there is a fulness in the revelation, is there not? All that can be known of God by a creature has been made known. The Lord has done that, and there is to be a response.

PAG John 5 draws out particularly the position of the Father at Christ's right hand. He says, "For even as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son also to have life in himself, and has given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is Son of man", v 26, 27. Further on He says, "for the works which the Father has given me that I should complete them, the works themselves which I do, bear witness concerning me that the Father has sent me" (v 36), so that the scope of all that He did as Man came from the Father. He did it in the power of the Spirit: "But if by the finger of God I cast out demons" (Luke 11: 20) and so forth, but the scope of all that He did came from the Father, do you think?

BWL Yes, that is very good. Also, we could consider there are certain things that the Father does not do: "for neither does the Father judge

any one, but has given all judgment to the Son", John 5: 22. That is wonderful; so think of the things given to the Lord to carry out. Although the Father judges no one, the Lord, as knowing the Father perfectly, would understand exactly what would be involved in that.

ADM Would you say the purpose of the two dreams was really to bring us into proper relationships? In relation to the brethren, they were to come round, and in relation to his parents they were to bow down. Would these two dreams have that in mind?

BWL Yes, they needed to recognise the greatness of Joseph, that is of Christ. In the dreams there is no thought of the moral history that is all to be gone through in chapter 37 and into chapters 40-45 in Genesis. Things need to be worked out, but there is no thought of that in the dreams. We are given the result, and that is what God is looking for, so that we recognise the greatness of Christ, "my sheaf rose up, and remained standing". That really speaks to us of Christ in resurrection, what He did "according to power of indissoluble life" (Heb 7:16); but also I think "we were binding sheaves in the fields" is an allusion to what Christ is gathering at the present time in relation to the assembly. There are these suggestions that we get, securing His brethren, securing His assembly.

NJH Would "my sheaf rose up" suggest resurrection is in mind? It says, "and remained standing". His brethren, His assembly, was the result of that.

BWL So the Lord saw the nucleus of the assembly in His own when He was here. We see what it says in relation to Peter. Peter says, "we have believed and known", John 6: 69. He was linking others on with himself; the nucleus of the assembly was there. It awaited the Lord's death and resurrection and the Spirit coming in but He could see the germ of things, could He not, concretely in those that were with Him?

TWL Is that seen in what the Lord says in John 10? He says, "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me ... I have received this commandment of my Father", v 17, 18. It was in mind that He would be out of death and on this account the Father loved Him, because He would die to take up His life again on resurrection ground for the Father. Would that be right?

BWL Yes, I think so. We might think of "the grain of wheat falling into the ground", John 12: 24. Again that was His own act. The Lord does not speak of that grain as sown; it fell into the ground and died. That

was His own act. The “much fruit” is the result.

APG The first thing Jacob says as to Joseph in Genesis 49 is:

Joseph is a fruitful bough;
A fruitful bough by a well, v 22.

We often think of John 4 in that connection, the Lord securing worshippers for the Father.

BWL The woman in John 4 has been linked with the end of chapter 3 that was referred to. There is an administration going on that the Lord has undertaken, and the woman is secured. She is part of what has been given into the Lord's hand. The woman is secured, and then she goes back into the city and she becomes part of the administration that is going on and secures the men of the city: “It is no longer on account of thy saying that we believe” (v 42); so we see the way the Lord is operating in securing persons.

We should maybe go on to chapter 22. We have again the matter of love, “Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah”. “Abraham ... saw the place from afar”. It is all suggestive, I think, of the death of Christ in relation to the purpose of God. It is not exactly the sin question and all these things that were necessary for us to come into blessing. Hebrews says the Lord “offered himself spotless to God”, chap 9: 14. I think that is really this chapter; it is the burnt-offering. The Lord “offered himself spotless to God”, and what did God do? He made “his soul an offering for sin”, Isa 53: 10. That was necessary on account of us. But here it is really the delight that God has in the offering of Christ.

JTB Does the cleaving suggest the intensity of the effect on the Father's emotions in the giving up of Christ in that way?

BWL Yes, I think the wood involves the humanity of Christ. It involves that One who was in Himself a divine Person, as God - we could not think of death in that connection, it would be impossible; but He came into a condition in manhood that the wood would refer to.

JTB Yes, indeed, the wood suggesting the humanity of Christ, but the cleaving seems to suggest what it cost the Father in that sense to surrender One so beloved?

BWL I think that is something we maybe need to contemplate more. We cannot think it was an easy matter for the Father. He knew the whole matter of resurrection and Christ was going to lay down His life and take it again. That is all very blessed, but for that life to be given up!

JTB Later it says he “piled the wood”, every faggot, as it were, having its own effect on the Father's feelings, do you think?

DCB Is there something of that simple word, “yea”: “He who, yea, has not spared his own Son”, Rom 8: 32?

BWL That involves divine feeling, does it not?

DCB If we think literally of Abraham cleaving the wood, and then putting the wood on his son, and then piling the wood, what his feelings would have been. That is a reflection of the depths and the purity of the Father's feelings in relation to what the Lord Jesus would have to go through, and did go through.

BWL Yes, and what it brought out was perfection in Christ. All these things are brought out in an increasing way, what was in Christ that the Father found delight in.

JTB Would Gethsemane enter into this too?

BWL Yes, “who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God”. I think we have been taught that relates to what took place at Gethsemane. That was the character of the burnt-offering. God was so pleased with what He found in the burnt-offering that He took the opportunity to make Christ the sin-offering; that is the cross. That is not exactly the side we get in Genesis 22, the side of the cross, what is penal. Mr Coates is helpful in relation to the fire here, Outline of Genesis p 169, 171. It is not exactly the unmitigated judgment of God which fire does represent in other settings, but here it is the searching character which brings out what we have just been saying, the searching character bringing out the perfection.

WMP It is an offering by fire, a sweet savour to Jehovah, the burnt-offering. I often wonder, when God had such delight in that life, and He did, the green spot on the earth, why would that be given up?

BWL Well, God's thoughts were to have men like Christ.

WMP So all that God found in that precious life is extended then in the power of the Spirit in men and women here. It is a very wonderful thought, but that is the triumph in it all for God.

BWL Yes, so I read the last few verses at the end of the chapter because as we are often reminded, Abraham comes down the mountain. Isaac is not said to come down the mountain. We are not told that Isaac comes down the mountain: it speaks of Christ glorified; He is out of death and He is glorified. That is the present position, but

we have the seed and that is you and me, believers, what has been secured; blessing comes in.

DS Is there a time when only the Father and the Son can go on together without anything in the public eye? “And they went both of them together”. Is there something of the intimacy of love in that relationship with the Father and the Son going on together?

BWL I think we see it particularly right through John's gospel. John does not give us Gethsemane, but we see at Gethsemane the disciples were not able. Jesus took them apart; He took three of them a bit further apart; and they fell asleep, Matt 26: 40. They were not able. The Father and the Son were going on together, would you say?

DS It is very attractive because you have been helping us to see the Father's distinct love of the Son, and this is really the climax of it when there was One who was going to go the full way and express everything that was in the heart of the Father in order that we should come into the blessing. This is the great climax of the love of the Father seen in the Son.

BWL Yes, when the Lord said, “My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me” (Matt 26: 39), that was the Lord expressing, as a dependent perfect Man, the fact that the whole matter of death and being made sin was going to be for Him, the horror of it. We cannot comprehend that, but the Lord felt that infinitely, but think of the Father's delight that He was entirely subject to His will, “but not as I will, but as *thou wilt*”. Think of the infinite delight the Father found in that!

CJMCK Isaiah says, “For he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling”, chap 53: 2. That was before the Father's eye. The “tender sapling”, is it the perfect, divine sensibilities in a Man? The Father had tremendous delight in that. Would that life given up underlie it?

BWL “And as a root out of dry ground”: He drew nothing from this scene or what was around. He was heavenly, “the Son of man who is in heaven”, John 3: 13. He is entirely heavenly. That would be like one of these colours in the “vest”: the blue is heavenly. The Father found His delight in that. There was no heavenly man here on earth until Christ was here, but now we have “the stars of heaven”; “and such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones”, 1 Cor 15: 48. Think of what has been secured!

MBG I was just thinking of what was asked in relation to the life of Christ as given up in death; and what you said as to securing men like

Christ is helpful. I was wondering too if there was also the side of the Father having men to share His delight in Christ with. That is really what we are doing today. Does that really give us a different view of the death of Christ? It is not only to meet my need and my experience here is not only moral exercise, but I can share in the Father's joy that He has in Christ in some measure. That is another reason we have been given the Father's Spirit, to enjoy what the Father enjoys in relation to Christ.

BWL Yes, I think that. That is really John 17 again, "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them". That involves the Father's appreciation of Christ; we are brought into that. I think what you say is good, that the Father's love for Christ is so great He wants us to have an appreciation of that too, an appreciation of the Man of His purpose, His well-beloved Son.

MBG So when the Lord speaks as to that in John 17, it is put as one of the reasons He has made the Father's name known; so He came to make the Father known, and one of the reasons is so that we can share in the Father's appreciation of Christ. It is a very blessed thing for us.

BWL It is indeed, and it is for God; it is for the Father. Sonship is for God. That is what He wanted. That belongs to God's purpose that that relationship should be so.

KRC Just in that context, there was always a day coming when the Father knew that His communion with His Son would be broken, so that there could be this coming into an appreciation. It is interesting how it says of Abraham that it was he that "lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar". The Father always knew of that day when enjoyment of that relationship of love would be broken, but it would be "in view of the joy lying before him" (Heb 12: 2), what would be secured through the Lord's death that would be secured for us all to come into.

BWL Well, the Lord going into death gave the Father the opportunity to show His appreciation for Him in raising Him from the dead. Think of the Father's delight to do that! That involves the Father's love and affection for His Son. He "has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father", Rom 6: 4. That must involve the Father's love for His Son, the Father's delight in doing that. It is wonderful to think of. He has ascended up in glory: He "has been received up in glory", (1 Tim 3: 16): it was a glorious reception; it is not just received up to glory - that would be true and right - but "received up in glory". Heaven is stirred by a Man out of death, the Father's affections entirely free to glorify His Son in raising Him from the dead and giving Him the first place at His

right hand.

AMB That resulted in things being established for God, did it not? I was thinking of what it says in Hebrews 10, quoting from Psalm 40, “Lo, I come to do thy will. He takes away the first that he may establish the second”, v 9. There is what is for God on completely new ground in the One who did all His will.

BWL That is good, and the second established involves what is eternal.

NCMcK The love of God being wholly, fully, made known must involve death.

BWL To take such a way!

NCMcK You have spoken about the side of the death of Christ apart from the sin question. The assembly being secured as part of that, the whole purpose of God secured, required that death so that the assembly might be brought in.

BWL That is good, because in Genesis 2 before sin came in the woman was built out of the man, during the deep sleep. It is not the side of what is penal in the deep sleep, is it? but it still involves the death of Christ for the assembly.

DCB And there is the savour of the burnt-offering which really remains, and that savour required that the Lord Jesus went into death. I was thinking the ram here was needed to complete the type.

BWL The strength of the committal of the Lord Jesus, I suppose, is represented by the “ram caught in the thicket by its horns”.

NJH I was thinking of what has been said just now. We have the love of God expressed in the covenant in the cup at the Supper. Is that foundational, proceeding in the divine service?

BWL I am sure it is because if we are not affected by the love of God, what result will there be? It is really to quicken our affections that the love of God has taken such a way to make itself known. It is to affect our hearts.

SCL In both the passages you have brought before us there is this phrase, “Here am I”. Isaac did not really know what was going to happen here, but the Lord had full understanding and was willing, not just for our sakes, but so that the desires and purposes of God would be answered. There was a willing Man that would fulfil the desires of God. That is quite a special thing to contemplate.

BWL That is good to draw attention to: “Here am I”. I think the Lord's appreciation of what was going to be secured for God, the greatness of God's thoughts and purpose, is wonderful. The Lord in His understanding and appreciation of that, speaking carefully, thought it worth committing Himself to. God was going to be glorified in everything that He did. I just trust we may be helped in our view as to these things.

NCMcK Does God being glorified involve that God was manifested in the Lord Jesus as what He really is? Man had a skewed or misrepresented view of what God was, but Christ made known the Father, and God, as to what they actually are in all their love and all their glory: so it restored the truth as to God. He restored that and maintained it.

BWL That is good. “God is love” (1 John 4: 16); that is wonderful. Satan said, “Is it even so, that God has said” (Gen 3: 1), as if God was holding something back from man, but what is God's answer to that? He came out in love, the giving of His own Son. There could not be anything else greater.

JTB “Jehovah-jireh” just suggests that there is always opportunity for us to be satisfied in the contemplation of these things. “As it is said at the present day”; it never loses its value.

BWL That is good. When the scripture says, “at the present day” or ‘to this day’, it means it is current. I trust we have touched something as to the mount of Jehovah this afternoon.

Edinburgh

21st September 2024

List of Initials:-

AM Brown, Linlithgow; D C Brown, Edinburgh; J T Brown, Edinburgh;
K R Cumming, Edinburgh; AP Grant, Dundee; G B Grant, Dundee;
M B Grant, Grangemouth; P A Gray, Linlithgow; N J Henry, Glasgow;
S C Lock, Edinburgh; T W Lock, Edinburgh; B W Lovie, Aberdeen;
D H Marshall, Edinburgh; C J McKay, Glasgow; N C McKay, Glasgow;
A D Melville, Grangemouth; C A Seeley, Glasgow; J S Spiers,
Grangemouth; D Spinks, Bo'ness

GOD'S JUSTICE

Neil C McKay

Romans 2: 1,2

John 18: 18-24, 33-40

Luke 23: 33,34, 44-46

1 Peter 2: 21-25, 3:18 to “bring us to God”

I had in mind to speak of judgment and justice, though we must see that the gospel is about Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus, and whatever is said tonight will be of no avail to you unless you are brought to Him. The gospel involves a Man, and the great issue in the gospel is that man is estranged from God - not on good terms with God. Should that situation with men and women continue, then eventually man will have to meet with the judgment of God. God will have to say to man about his sins, because man is God's creature. God is Himself perfect and looks seriously upon the disobedience of His creature, and that is the issue.

Justice is a recognised principle in the world; I do not think the world could exist without some measure of judgment and justice. There is a well-known figure of justice on top of many courts, a figure of a woman - 'Justitia'. She holds out in one hand a set of scales, representing justice and equity. These represent the balance of good and evil, of right and wrong, and of fair and right judgment. In the other hand, she holds an upright sword: that represents judgment, the execution of justice. At one time if a man killed someone they would have to answer for that with their life. It was called the death penalty, and still exists in some countries. It was ordered of God that men should answer for the sins which they commit, and government exists for that reason. Nowadays persons are sent to prison, they are restricted in their movements to limit their evil, limit their sinfulness. That is what the judicial system does, and it is ordered of God.

So God has ordered justice and judgment in the world. The apostle Paul is writing to these saints in Rome, setting out the terms of the gospel. What he says to them is applicable to everyone: “thou art inexcusable, O man, every one who judgest”, for when you judge another person you condemn yourself, Rom 2: 1. You may say, 'Well, that person is wrong: he stole!', or 'He is wrong: he lied'. But what you are showing is that you know that it is wrong to steal, and you know that it is wrong to lie. Every time, if you have ever lied or you have ever taken anything that is not yours, you know that it is wrong. God says,

'Even you know that what you do is wrong'. Men may avoid it and say, 'Well, I am relatively good; if you took the scales of justice and put good on one side and evil on the other I might just about balance out on the side of good'. I might just do that. That is not how God looks on things, because Paul goes on to say, "the judgment of God is according to truth", v 2. That is, God has a plumb line and His righteousness is absolutely straight and undeviating. God judges everything according to the truth, not on a balance of good and evil. He says He is looking for righteousness and truth, and nothing else.

The problem with that is that nobody, *nobody*, measures up to that. Nobody measures up absolutely to what God requires. It is a concern then, how do we meet God when none of us actually have ever met what God is looking for? Now, the great thing to see is that justice has been fully met in the work of Christ. It is the only way in which it *could* ever be met. God foresaw that there was no man on earth who could ever meet the matter of their sinfulness before God and that the resolution of that matter would require God Himself to come in flesh. God would come here as Man in order to meet the matter, and that is what He did.

It is most amazing grace that God has come here in manhood. It meant that God in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ had come from Godhead glory and taken up the condition of manhood. It says He "lays aside his garments" John 13: 4 - He laid aside the dignity which belonged to Him in Godhead glory - and became a man in order to serve man and take every matter up for God. He lived here as a Man in all the circumstances that man was in. In fact the circumstances that the Lord Jesus lived in were not at all like ours as far as living conditions go. He worked as a carpenter for many years in a small village in Galilee, and in everything He did and in everything He said He was wholly perfect and righteous. He was in accord with all that God looked for in man.

And more than that, He pleased God. The reason He did so was because there was no sin in Him. We read that in 1 Peter, "who did no sin", chap 2: 22. He was another kind of man altogether because He was a divine Person come in manhood. Not only did He do what was right; He *loved* to do what was right; He rejoiced in it. He was never out of communion with His Father, and He always rejoiced in doing what was right.

So He lived His life here and taught people as we read today.

He went into the temple and taught and healed persons and did good. But that goodness, His healing and His love towards men aroused the anger of men; it aroused man's conscience. Men recognised that this Man was perfect and that they were not. You might think that a Man coming here in perfection of goodness and compassion would be the best Person in the world to them, but the Lord showed them up so badly that they wanted to kill Him. He represented God in all His goodness towards men; they saw here a perfect Man. *Where then do I stand before God?* If that is what God wants, where do I stand? It just showed men up for what they were. It eventuated in this passage where the high priest and the leading Jews brought Christ before Caiaphas the high priest - the Jewish tribunal - and then to the political power of Rome, the government. Can you imagine a Man being so good that they took Him to court? To try Him - to kill Him. And why did the Jews take Him to the Roman court? Because they had no authority to put Him to death. Pilate says, "Take him, ye, and judge him" (John 18: 31), and they said, 'No, we cannot, we have no authority; we cannot put Him to death'. The Jewish court had not that authority.

This account in John's gospel bears out a section of scripture in the prophet Micah: "they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek" (chap 5: 1), and, "out of thee shall he come forth unto me who is to be Ruler in Israel", v 2. They smote the judge of Israel, the One who will yet judge Israel and all the world. He was standing before the Jewish High Priest and they smote Him on the cheek. Why? Because He spoke the truth. He says, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil". This was a court; it should have the highest standard of judgment and justice. 'I speak the truth, and you smite me on the cheek?': what a terrible indictment of the standards of man away from God. The most religiously favoured people on the earth were against God. God allowed the Lord Jesus to be placed before the judgment system of the religious world, and the judgment system of the political world, and allowed them to pass judgment on the Lord Jesus - as if to say, 'Here is my perfect Man. Tell me your estimation of Him'. And what did they say? 'Put him to death'. That is what they did. The best that man had could only put Christ to death because He exposed what they were. What a terrible indictment as to the state of man away from God.

Now, I am no different to that in the flesh, in what I was as a sinner. There is nothing in me that would have stood up for the Lord Jesus; in the flesh I deserved the judgment of God. We need to

recognise that the Lord Jesus met the whole matter of the judgment of God. In chapter 18, Pilate says, "I find no fault whatever in him". Pilate had that judgment that he could not find fault in Christ; nonetheless he ordered Him to be put to death. What justice is that? A faultless Man put to death. At that point, friend, the Jewish system and the man in responsibility were judged of God. They thought they were judging Christ, but God was judging them. 'There is Truth, there is the Truth of God in front of you; and what did you do with Him? You put Him to death'. The ways of God are most remarkable.

So where we read in Luke, "Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". Do you know what that meant? The Lord Jesus said in effect, 'Forgive them and I will take the judgment myself; make it as a sin of inadvertence'. How magnificent that the Lord should do that! Justice was served, friend, in God's eyes, but He did not execute judgment on those who deserved it; Christ took the judgment on Himself in order to save man. There was no other way to save persons other than to take on Himself the full force of the judgment of God.

And so it says, "And it was about the sixth hour, and there came darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour". It was the time of God's judgment. The sword, the judgment sword, fell on Christ. Christ took it on Himself; He took it on for me: such was the grace of God. Two things happened there: one is that Christ bore the full judgment of God against sin and sins - against all my sins; the other thing that happened was that God showed His love in a way that could not be questioned - He loved man so much that He would give His only Son as a sacrifice for us all.

Do you think there is a man that is intelligent enough to work out that immense matter and to understand and appreciate what it meant to God? Only God could design and effect such a salvation! When man's utter hatred was revealed, justice was served on the one hand and God's love and mercy and righteousness was shown on the other. I think it is the most wonderful thing how God has managed to save a sinner such as me, who could do nothing for himself, and do it to the satisfaction to His own nature.

So Peter in his epistle writes to the saints of the dispersion, Jews who had been scattered abroad, but had come to believe on the Lord Jesus. "For to this have ye been called; for Christ also" - Christ was an example to them - "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth".

When reviled, that is when He was sorely insulted, He did not revile again - He did not give abuse back to them. When suffering He did not threaten the persons. He could have called on legions of angels, but did not threaten any "but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously". He placed the whole matter with God, and in those three hours of darkness on the cross God dealt with it as only He could. He laid the full burden of sin, His wrath against sin, on the Lord Jesus: "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree".

What unmitigated judgment the Lord Jesus bore in His body. It was sufficient not only to satisfy God but to glorify God in the very scene in which God had been traduced, in which God had been slighted. The scene in which man was doing his own will in ignorance of God - in that place the Lord Jesus bore God's judgment and wrath against sin that "we may live to righteousness: by whose stripes ye have been healed". "Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God".

So what is God doing now? He is bringing persons, through Christ, to Himself. Why? Because those who are saved through faith in His blood are clear of sin and sins! The matter of justice has been met. Everything has been righteously settled and man, where he once stood on this earth as a judged person, now can be brought to God. Christ can bring them into the very presence of God because of sin being completely dealt with by the One who bore our sins in His body on the tree. He went into death and He rose again and God glorified Him, set Him down at His right hand.

You may say that you are thankful for the scales of justice in this earth, but, friend, be sure, be sure of your place before God. Be sure that the whole matter of your sin and sins has been met, as there is a wonderful blessing in being brought back to God. God made man to be in His presence, and so much does God want that that He will forgive your sins through faith in the work of Christ - that is, by putting your faith in what Christ has done, and not trying to work the matter out yourself, but simply believing on the Lord Jesus, repenting of your sins before God and believing on the Lord Jesus. "Repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ", Acts 20: 21. Faith simply means believing. You believe that the Lord Jesus died for your sins:

The Just One for the unjust died. (Hymn 407)

Then, after Christ was raised from among the dead, God gave

of His own Spirit to man. It is such a wonderful thing you can hardly take in what it means, that the very Spirit of God, His own Spirit, is given to indwell man: “of his Spirit”, Acts 2: 17. It is not some other Spirit to help man be good; it is His own Spirit in order that man should feel things like He does, and be sympathetic with God in all that He does.

That would help us to work out this matter of being righteous, that we may live to righteousness, because that would be impossible without the Holy Spirit of God. God gives everything to a believer and He gives him the Holy Spirit in order to appreciate and to enjoy all that He has given him. I would that you would appreciate that, dear young soul. Think on these things. And in addition to this, He has brought you into a Christian household. I often wonder what would have happened to me had I been born into the household next door. Where would I have been? But God has brought *me* into the place where I would be blessed. I have ever been thankful for that.

Well, I trust you appreciate these things and think on what the Lord Jesus has done for you, for His Name's sake.

Port Seton

13th October 2024

THE CEDAR-WOOD, AND THE SCARLET, AND THE HYSSOP

Paul A Gray

Leviticus 14: 1-23

Numbers 19: 1-10

It says in 1 Corinthians 2: 13-15, “which also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, communicating spiritual things by spiritual means. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him; and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned; but the spiritual discerns all things, and *he* is discerned of no one”.

Spiritual things are conveyed by spiritual means. Perhaps your initial reaction to the scriptures read is that they are somewhat obscure. If we just read them as historical records of rules that were given to Israel in the past, then they would indeed be obscure, but they have a meaning for us. The simplest way I can explain that is to say that these scriptures that we have read in Leviticus and Numbers relate to the Lord Jesus, and I hope to bring that out.

What led me to them was the references in Leviticus and Numbers to the cedar-wood and the scarlet and the hyssop. In Leviticus they are taken, and they are dipped in the blood. And in Numbers, they are cast into the burning. So, what do they mean and why are they treated differently in each case?

I first seek to set out briefly what the scripture in Leviticus suggests. It tells us in Mark 1: 40-41 that a leper came to Jesus “beseeching him, and falling on his knees to him, and saying to him, “If thou wilt thou canst cleanse me. But Jesus, moved with compassion, having stretched out his hand, touched him, and says to him, I will, be thou cleansed. And as he spoke straightway the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed”. This section in Leviticus 14 is the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. And there was a man who was a leper who came to Jesus, and it says Jesus touched him, and it says that he was cleansed.

Now you can come to Jesus to be cleansed from your sins. That is the first thing that is important to understand. The leper in Mark's gospel had been part of Israel, and then he had become a leper and had become an outcast because of his condition. The man that is contemplated in Leviticus 14 is in the same situation. He is currently outside the camp, but he was an Israelite.

We can apply this chapter to the gospel, but it also applies to the recovery of a believer. It can apply to us in our own soul history without others necessarily knowing about it because, as believers, there are times when we too need to be recovered. And the path to recovery is through the finished work of Jesus and our acceptance of it. But it says, "This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing". There is not another way back, and there is no way for you to come into salvation except by believing in the Lord Jesus and in His finished work and in His precious shed blood. There is not an alternative. This is the way, and Jesus is also the way back if we have failed.

It says of the leper in Mark 1 that the Lord touched him, and it says in the note *b* that He touched him freely. Nobody wished to come into contact with lepers in these days because they were regarded as highly contagious. It was thought that they would affect anyone who touched them. And yet here was Someone, the Lord Jesus, who was willing not just to touch the leper but to touch him freely. How would that man feel? He was an outcast. Indeed, if anyone approached him he would have to tell them he was unclean and they would keep their distance. And here is a Man who does not keep His distance, but who comes near and touches him. Jesus touches him freely and is not affected by the leprosy because He Himself was sinless.

We may think of situations when perhaps there are believers, brethren, who might have gone away. Is our attitude towards them that they are simply to be shunned and ignored? We must be separate from what is sinful; there is no question about that. But is there something that can be extended to them by the way of the healing touch of the Lord Jesus? It is brought to this man by the priest outside the camp. It is brought to him where he is, where he needs it. Now, he cannot come back into the camp until matters are settled, but the priest is able to come to him where he is and to bring him what he needs.

And the sore of leprosy is found to be healed; so the Lord has been working and the priest takes account of that. Then the priest commands to take for him that is to be cleansed these two clean living birds and cedar-wood and scarlet and hyssop. This is what I mean in referring to spiritual things that are discerned by spiritual means. The cedar-wood and the scarlet and the hyssop may be thought to have two applications. The first is to the dignity and worth of Christ Himself: the dignity is spoken of in the cedar-wood. The scarlet is the distinctiveness of Jesus. They say in the scripture, "Never man spoke thus, as this man speaks", John 7: 46. Even the centurion had to

confess at the cross, "Truly this man was Son of God", Matt 27: 54. He had never seen anything like it. And the hyssop speaks of the lowliness of Jesus. He was "wearied with the way he had come", John 4: 6. He says, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the heaven have roosting-places, but the Son of man has not where he may lay his head", Luke 9: 58.

But all those things that have this application to Christ also speak of what has to be judged in ourselves. We should not be seeking a place of public dignity or personal distinctiveness. And then there is the hyssop; while it is right to be humble, the scripture speaks of those who do their "own will in humility and worship of angels", Col 2: 18. All of that goes in the death of Christ and hence, whereas the greatness of Christ and His personal distinctiveness are endorsed in His resurrection, so also anything that distinguishes man is cast into the burning, as we see in Numbers. And we have to accept that in order to be set free.

Then there are the two living birds. There is one that is killed over running water. In order for any of these things to apply to us Christ had to die. He had to die there on the cross, and it says, "who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God", Heb 9: 14. Typically, He was killed over running water, and yet what comes out of that is blood. And there is a bird that is set free, a living bird set free in the open field. You think of the Lord Jesus set free in the open field. "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", John 20: 17. That was the open field; there was no restriction on Him then. He has "ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things", Eph 4: 10. But Jesus is also referred to as "He that descended". He is the same also that ascended. He descended in love for you and for me, in order that we might be set free from what hinders us.

The priest sprinkles the blood on him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times. The work is perfect - in scripture, seven often speaks of perfection. We see in the tabernacle system in the great day of atonement that the blood is sprinkled once on the mercy-seat, Lev 16: 14. Once is enough for God. The work of Christ has never to be repeated, but the blood was sprinkled seven times before the mercy-seat in order that we might have reassurance as to its efficacy. Every time we come to the Supper we have the reassurance that there on the table before us are the loaf and the cup, a perfect reassurance of God's satisfaction in the finished work of a blessed Man, and our hearts are

drawn out in response to Him.

This man has to remove all that distinguishes him. He shaves his hair, his head, his beard, his eyebrows. He must also wash his garments; his associations too must be clear. And he shall bathe his flesh in water and he is clean. It may be said, that is the end of the matter then. Not so: he is to be brought into something greater. It is not simply that he should be restored to a state of being clean. There is what comes in on the eighth day. This speaks to us of the enjoyment of what is eternal, and it is the entrance of the tent of meeting. He is to come to the place of blessing and privilege where God would speak to His own.

I want to point out one or two further features. The he-lamb is to be slaughtered at the place where the sin-offering and burnt-offering are slaughtered, in a holy place. "For as the sin-offering, so the trespass-offering is the priests: it is most holy". It is at that standard. The trespass offering might relate to offences in the holy things of Jehovah. Perhaps someone has breached the principles of the testimony. There was an answer in the trespass offering. It also relates to our relations with one another. Perhaps a distance has come in between brother and brother, or brother and sister, or sister and sister. The trespass offering is the way back and it is at the same level, the same standard as the sin-offering and the burnt-offering: it is acceptable in the sight of God. Everything that has been removed in the death of Christ is applicable to the believer just as it is to the unbeliever. The standard of the burnt-offering is the standard of our acceptance, and anyone who is recovered comes back into the full acceptance of God, in all the fulness of what He has in mind for them.

Furthermore, the man to be cleansed is anointed with the oil. Generally this was reserved for the priests. This was not a prescription for the people of the land at this time - or the people of Israel as they went into the land. The application of the oil on the blood was for the priests. But as we were reminded earlier, in this dispensation believers are all regarded as priests. When a person is recovered they are recovered to the full height of sonship and priesthood. It applies to each one of us, and I have appreciated in my own experience what it is to be brought back to what is true, and what is known, and what is available. As anointed with the oil you come to an increased appreciation of the value of what is available in Christ. And you are brought into the fulness of what God has in mind.

So, if one is lost to us for the moment, the way back may *seem*

impossible but it is not impossible with God. All things are possible with God. That is why I touched on the section from verse 21: "But if he be poor, and his hand be not able to get it, then he shall take one lamb for a trespass-offering". Someone might be absent, no longer enjoying fellowship as a result of some course of action, and I might feel that their understanding of the gravity of what they have done is limited. But if they do recognise that what they have done is wrong, and do recognise that the answer lies in Christ, that should be sufficient.

When we first come to the Lord Jesus as Saviour, I do not think we realise exactly the depth and gravity of sin. We know it is wrong; we come to that. But as we go on in our experience we realise more fully what it was for Christ to be made sin. We can never exhaust His sacrifice. And I realise also more fully what it was for sins to be borne for me, borne by Him on the cross. You might wonder why the sin offering does not come first in Leviticus. It is the burnt offering first, and then the oblation, and then the peace offering, and then the sin offering. Why is this the order?

It may be because in our Christian history we start with an appreciation of the fact that God has accepted us in Jesus. I could not do anything myself, but He has done it all. Atonement is made by Another. That enters into the burnt offering. And then as you go on you begin to appreciate the Lord Jesus and what He has done, His walk and His ways. That is the oblation: a Man after God's heart who would do all His will, Acts 13: 22. And then you appreciate what the fellowship means; that is what the peace offering speaks of. I can say that these are my brethren, and I love them. "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren", 1 John 3: 14. And then I can look back and say that I am beginning to appreciate a little more of what all this cost. We cannot measure it, but we can appreciate it.

So we read of someone in verse 21, and he is poor. Perhaps he does not understand the extent of where he has gone wrong. I have experienced that, and I had to accept that I had been wrong, and that it was not possible to justify what I had done. I simply had to accept the Lord's mind for me. But someone might realise they had done something wrong but not be quite up to the full height of things. Well, it says here, "if he be poor", and then it says, "as his hand may be able to get".

The confession of the thief on the cross was not a long one; nor was it a full one in the sense that the Lord had not at that point died or shed His blood. But the thief recognised that he needed a Saviour.

Now if there is anyone who is not sure if they can be saved, you can, and you must. You might say that you are not sure of all the detail of the truth and all the things that are spoken of in the Scripture. That is all right; you can come into that. "Believe on the Lord Jesus" and you will be saved, Acts 16: 31. That is it.

But if someone has gone out of the way and might not be at the full height of things, a simple acceptance that they have been wrong and an acceptance that the answer lies in Christ ought to be sufficient. You might look for more; you might hope for more. But let us accept what God would accept because after all the lamb is Christ. It is not that we are set on a lower one, but the man who cannot find enough for the two he-lambs and the yearling new lamb, he still has got one lamb. He still has two turtle doves. He has what his hand is able to get.

There is a situation earlier in Leviticus where all that the person can present is a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour; such a person does not even have the means to offer two turtle doves, chap 5: 11. It is like the thief on the cross. He knew that Christ was perfect, and he knew that he was not. So I just encourage us brethren both as to ourselves and others; do not stop short by saying, 'Well, I do not have very much'. What you have, if it is Christ, will please God. And if you are seeking to recover one or another, and they have some impression of Christ, work with that. We desire everyone to be in the full good of what God has in mind; the things prepared by God for those that love Him, but let us be gentle with one another, brethren. That is all I would say.

We come to Numbers 19. We spoke previously about the world around. This section brings forward the water of separation, needed in such a scene. It begins with the red heifer which is distinctive. We have spoken of the distinctiveness of Christ, and we see here three distinctive features of the red heifer. The first is that it is "without blemish". It says of Christ, "who did no sin", 1 Pet 2: 22. The next feature is "wherein is no defect", and we know of Christ "in Him, sin is not", 1 John 3: 5. And the third feature is "upon which never came yoke"; of Christ it is said that He "knew not sin" (2 Cor 5: 21) - the yoke of sin never came upon Him. The only yoke that ever came upon Him was the Father's will. He was never under the yoke of sin for an instant. How unlike Him I am. Can I say that I have done no sin? No, I cannot say that. But I can say, "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree", 1 Pet 2: 24. Can I say that there is no sin in me? No, I cannot say that, but I can say that "God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh", Rom 8: 3. And

what God has in view is that I might not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit. And can I say that I have never been subject to my own will? Of course I cannot. But what I can say is that I have proved that being subject to the Lord's will is better than mine.

The Lord says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me", Matt 11: 29. And He says, "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light", v 30. A yoke is what held two oxen together side by side, so that they could walk together and pull the implement, the plough, the harrow, whatever it might be. Think of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that He would walk alongside you and show you how to do what you have to do. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me". A brother pointed out that the Lord does not say, 'learn about me'. He says, "learn from me". Now it is good to learn *about* Jesus, but it is better to learn *from* Him: "learn from me".

This red heifer in all its perfection is to be slain. Here, the cedar-wood and the scarlet and the hyssop are cast into the midst of the burning of the heifer. So in Christ, all that distinguishes man goes; and then the priest washes his garments. But then there is this water of separation: it is a purification for sin. The water of separation is what we need in order to keep us separate from a sinful world. Occupation with Christ keeps us separate from a sinful world. This answers to the teaching in Romans 6 where it speaks about the body of sin. That is the world of sin around, and we need to be free from that.

The serpent of brass which comes next in Numbers (chap 21: 9) answers to Romans 7. That chapter brings out the sin that is within, which is referred to as "this body of death", v 24. And the springing well which follows the brazen serpent (Num 21: 17) answers to Romans 8. That is the gift of the Spirit. "If, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom 8: 13), but that is not the end of the matter: "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God", v 14. And it is by the Spirit that we cry, "Abba Father", v 15. So separation from the world is available in Christ. Dealing with what is within, deliverance from it, is available in Christ, and response toward God is available in the power of the Spirit.

These are the things that Scripture teaches us. They are worth going in for. They are worth learning. If you look for Christ on every page of scripture, and seek Him, the Spirit will help you to find Him. If you go to 1 Chronicles 4 there is a long list of names, and one might ask why it is all recorded, and why it is worthwhile to read it. Well, you have Jabez who says, "Oh that thou wouldest richly bless me, and enlarge

my border", v 10. So there was a man who was exercised in relation to spiritual growth. You have a man in verse fourteen who was "the father of the valley of craftsmen". He was a man who was diligent in what would be constructive in relation to the things of God. There were daughters there. The sisters are included. There was the house of the byssus-workers in verse 21: that is to say, persons who were concerned with the garments of the priesthood. And there were potters that were making vessels, no doubt having in mind service, and there were the plantations and enclosures having in mind food. And it says, "there they dwelt with the king for his work", v 23.

The work of a potter may not be considered a great work. The potter does not make golden vessels. However, he is making what would be serviceable; he is a valuable brother. And he, along with the craftsmen and the others, dwelt with the king in his work. That is why it is important to read Scripture with the power of the Spirit, that spiritual things may be discerned by spiritual means. This may appear to be a long way from the cleansing of the leper and the red heifer. Well, the cleansing of the leper brings us back into what we enjoyed, and the red heifer keeps us separate from the world, but that is not the end of the matter. The point is that there is much more! There is infinite variety in Scripture; there is a blessedness about it that can fill your soul. I could not tell you how many times I have read John's gospel but I will read it again very soon. I will tell you why. I love it. I love the Man in it, and He loves me. And every time I read it I get something fresh, and every time I read it I get something living.

But scripture is full of other books that are worth reading too. If you have never read what are called the Minor Prophets - after Daniel's prophecy and onwards; to the natural eye they might appear obscure and complicated. But Christ is there! Think of Habakkuk. Think of all that was against him, all the difficulty, all the problems that he was facing. He says,

For though the fig-tree shall not blossom,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labour of the olive-tree shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no food;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls:
Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah,
I will joy in the God of my salvation, Hab 3: 17, 18.

He goes on to say,

Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength,
And he maketh my feet like hinds' feet,
And he will make me to walk upon my high places", v 19.

He was lifted up above the things that would naturally have held him down. There is wealth in every scripture. There is depth in every scripture. It is worth reading, beloved, and the younger you are when you read it the more easily you will retain it.

I know that there are many demands on time - they seem to increase with every passing year. But I also know and have proved that God is "a rewarder of them who seek him out", Heb 11: 6. Taking up the scriptures and giving a little time to them brings a value and a reward that cannot really be compared with anything else. Ministry is very valuable. It is good to read that too, but start with scripture. Start your day with Christ. Start your day with the Man in the glory. I cannot tell you how long you should spend or what you should read; He will tell you that. But I will tell you it is worthwhile.

You may know the hymn:

Jesus! Thou art enough
The mind and heart to fill;
Thy patient life - to calm the soul;
Thy love - its fear dispel.

Hymn 174

The writer cannot have been older than twenty-seven when he wrote that because it appears that he died when he was twenty-seven years old, and he had that in his heart and in his soul. God gave him it: 'Jesus! Thou art enough'.

If I left only one thing with you it would be this: 'Jesus! Thou art enough'.

For His Name's sake.

Maidstone

23rd November 2024