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## FOUR COMMITTED PERSONS — 3 DAVID

### Psalm 132

David, in Psalm 132, is looking back on his life. It had become a conviction in David's heart to seek out a place for God, habitations for the mighty one of Jacob. "How he swore unto Jehovah, vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob: I will not come into the tent of my house, I will not go up to the couch of my bed: I will not give sleep to mine eyelids, slumber to mine eyes." What conviction and committal! David takes it upon himself, with real heartfelt conviction, to seek out a resting place for the ark of God. He is considering for God.

Is it the prime committal in your life to provide a true place for Christ? I think David's dependence on God shows in the Psalms; where a person is dependent on God it shows in the lack of self-seeking; it shows in self-denial. That is what we find in David here, denying himself certain things so that there might be a place for the ark, which speaks to us of Christ.

This is true committal and it flows from a deep conviction of heart. I do not apologise for repeating this matter as to conviction of heart. I feel it is necessary. It is essential at the present moment that we should have a personal conviction of heart related to the testimony and to the place that Christ is to have in our lives. That is David's concern: "We heard of it at Ephratah, we found it in the fields of the wood". David was not satisfied until the ark was in its true place.

Could there be full satisfaction with any of us until Christ has His true place? Where is His true place? It is in the midst of the great congregation where He will for ever sing praises to His God. Let us have the same conviction as was found in David, that in difficult days we will be marked by self denial and committal, committal to the interests of God in order that Christ should have His true place with us.

The psalm continues "Let us go into his habitations, let us worship at his footstool". David's primary concern was that God's portion should be secured. That is very testing. What is the prime concern in my life? If I have been in God's presence and found this conviction of heart the prime concern in

my life will be that God's portion should be secured. "Let us go into his habitations, let us worship at his footstool". Alas, David failed as we all do, but this is the conviction of heart that David carried right through. It was secured with Solomon building a house for God, a place where the praises of God were continued.

*Alex Mowat*

*Extracted from an address at Defford, June 1996.*

## THREE WORDS AT A MARRIAGE

### A Place for the Lord Jesus

Luke 24:50-51

I would like to speak about providing a place for the Lord Jesus. This service today, as well as fulfilling the legal requirements of marriage, is to provide an opportunity to tell how wonderful the Lord Jesus is, and how worthy He is of a place in our hearts and lives.

Luke's gospel shows us that the Lord Jesus did not have a place afforded to Him when He was here on earth; it tells us that there was no room for them in the inn so that when He was born He was laid in a manger. It was the same throughout His life; He said Himself that the foxes had holes and the birds of the heaven roosting places but the Son of man had nowhere to lay His head (Luke 9:58). He was the King of glory, God manifest in flesh, but there was no place for Him here on earth. Luke tells us that He was given a cross, and He was given a grave, and I just pause there for a moment. It was no accident that Jesus was crucified. You will find that He told His disciples time and time again that when He went to Jerusalem He would be crucified. He was there on that cross as our Saviour, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, dying and shedding His precious blood, not only that He might acquire a place in our hearts but that He might also prepare us a place in heaven above. He is a wonderful Saviour!

At the close of this gospel, Luke tells us that Jesus led His disciples out as far as Bethany. Bethany was a very special place to Jesus and I want to mention three things that made it special. Firstly, Jesus was received there. It says that Martha received Him into her house. That is what God desires that we might all do today—receive His Son as our Saviour, our Lord, and our Friend.

Secondly, we read of one, in Bethany, who sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to His word. As commending that to our brethren who have been married here today, we can also surely say that the way for us all to build a truly happy life is to build it on the word of Jesus. Luke tells us that the man who built his house on the rock was the one who heard the word of Jesus and did it.

Then, not only did they receive Jesus in Bethany and give place to His precious word but they knew His love. We read that Jesus loved them personally. Most of us know our brother and sister well and we can say that we love them but, greater still, we know that our Saviour loves them. He loves J—— and He loves D—— in a personal way, even as He loves all of us who have trusted in Him. Now, the household in Bethany learnt His love in an even deeper way. It is one thing to know that the Lord loves us in a general way but this family went through a very deep sorrow and in it they learnt that the love of Jesus was true and strong in every circumstance.

He is not just a Saviour when everything is going well but He is a Saviour when there are troubles, pressures, and trials. What we find in Him is a love that will not let us go, a love that is deep and true, and which will suffice in every circumstance. So the Lord Jesus when about to leave this earth did not lead His own to Jerusalem, but to Bethany. It was not the village that was so attractive to Jesus but the fact that He was always welcome there, and I commend that to us all, and specially to J—— and D——, that they may make a place in their home for Him. That is the way that the blessing of the Lord Jesus comes.

The Lord's final act as He left Bethany was one of blessing; He lifted up His hands and blessed them. I believe that the Lord Jesus would lead us all to a point in our lives where we can say, 'Yes, we have a place for Jesus'. Then He will surely bless us, and may He bless our brother and sister specially today, for His Name's sake.

*Brian Parr*

## God near and God known

Genesis 28 : 10-13

: 15-16

: 20-22

Acts 2 : 42

In this scripture read in Genesis Jacob was leaving his father and mother's house; he was on a journey in which he did not know what lay before him. That is similar to what we have today; our brother and sister here are leaving their parents' houses and embarking on a course of which only God knows the end.

Jacob at this time in his history did not really know God as he came to know Him later, but he takes his journey and arrives at a place where God can meet him. Jacob lies down to rest and has a dream and God used that dream to speak to him. As we see later, he says, "Surely, this is the house of God". My desire for our brother and sister embarking on this new relationship together is that they may prove that God can be near to them. God is looking down, looking down today, on everyone of us in this room, and, may I say carefully, especially on our brother and sister.

In his dream Jacob saw a ladder set up on the earth reaching to heaven and angels ascending and descending upon it. God was at the top of that ladder and He was taking account of Jacob. God speaks to Jacob; He promises to be with him, that He is not going to leave him, that He is going to help him. Surely it is the desire of everyone of us here today that our brother and sister may experience just this very thing, that the Lord may keep them, help them, and be with them. Jacob learned that day something of God which he never forgot. I trust our dear brother and sister may this day prove something of God and not only our dear brother and sister but may everyone of us experience something this day which we may have never experienced before, the sense that God is looking upon us.

God knows us; He knows all about us. God knew all about Jacob and all that was going to take place. Jacob did not, but God promised that He would be with him. He promised Jacob many things; He would give him the land but He did not promise him blessings without sorrows, troubles and difficulties. No, God knew exactly what was going to take place, what would happen to Jacob and what

Jacob would do but God would stand by him to the end. He said, 'I stood by your father and your grandfather; I blessed them and I am going to bless you'.

What a moment of favour it is. The God who spoke to Jacob is the God who is looking upon each of us today and He will bless us, if we will only put our trust in Him. I hope that everybody here today is trusting in God as made known by our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Our brother and sister are about to set up a house, about to set up something which God can honour. I trust they will prove God's blessing as they set up their house, a house where God will be honoured, where they can prove His love, where God's people will be received and will enjoy their fellowship with our brother and sister and also a house where perhaps unbelievers coming in will sense that it is a home where God is known. My desire is that our brother and sister may continue "in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles". May they prove what it is to continue in that way. As doing so the Lord will bless them. It is the earnest desire of us all that the Lord's blessing should be known by them for the rest of their days, till the Lord should come. May it be so, for His precious Name's sake.

*Arthur Penberthy.*

## The Day of Love

### 1 John 4:7-10

What a day this is, dear friends and brethren! It is a day of love! May it be a happy day for J—— and D——. But may it be a happy day for everyone here—a day when the love of God reaches and touches every heart. God's love is like the sunshine; it shines, and the love of God keeps shining wherever you might be. If you turn your back on God His love keeps shining on you.

Love is often tested; no doubt many here will know something of the testings of their love for each other and, too, have proved how dependable the love of God is in the difficulties of life. D—— and J—— are setting up a house, but it is love that makes a home. It is love, too, that makes the christian company.

This day is about affection, joy, happiness, and blessing. God has all these things in His store and He loves to dispense them. When God made man at the beginning one of the ingredients He imparted to him was this feature of love. It re-

mains, and there is a proof of it today shown to us by these two young people setting off together in their journey of life in their love for one another. May it continue; may it grow and prosper; may there be a blessing in their home and in their locality.

May there be also a blessing in the heart of each of us today as the result of the outshining of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a happy day when Jesus washed my sins away, and these two young people married today, know about that happy day and now as coming together in marriage as loving both the Lord and one another, this is another happy day for them. May there be much blessing on their lives together. The journey of life has many turns, and some surprises, but what a thing it is to go on that journey together loving one another and rejoicing in our Lord Jesus Christ. May this be the portion of everyone here for the glory of God and for our blessing.

*Tom Butcher*

*Three words given at a marriage at Wolverhampton, October 1996*

## GOD'S WAYS WITH HIS OWN

**Jeremiah 29 : 11-14**

**Genesis 28 : 10-16**

**32 : 24-29**

**35 : 6-8**

**48 : 8-10**

It is on my heart tonight to say a word as to the ways of God with the believer. It is a subject that I think is of great interest to every true believer on the Lord Jesus today. Of course, we must always remember that God's ways are past our understanding; His ways are higher than our ways. Whenever we speak of a subject such as this we need to keep very close to scripture.

In a company such as we are here we have to recognise that God's ways with each of us have been very different. The way which God has brought you has been different to the way in which He has brought me. God has His own way with each of us because He knows what is best for us. Underlying all are two absolute certainties in relation to God's ways and I would like us at the outset to grasp these two principles because I believe that they are common to God's ways with everyone of us.

The first is that God's love always lies behind His ways with us. I want to show this as we look at Jacob's history. You may feel at times that the way in which you have been brought is not a way that you can easily associate with God's love. When things come in that distress and concern we may wonder about it but I can assure you that behind every step of the way which God takes you lies His love. I would like you to grasp that as we look at Jacob's history because it is a foundation for the soul to realise that God's ways are ways in love with the believer and, as we read in Jeremiah, God says, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you ... thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Whatever God's ways are His thoughts towards us are thoughts of peace and love. It is a wonderful thing to be established about that in your soul. Come what may, there is a God of love behind it all.

The other certainty that I would like you to grasp is this: in everything that God does in His ways with us there is a purpose. I think many of us will have experienced that our pathway here is often a pathway of wandering. We read of the children of Israel and their wandering for forty years and we will have a look, perhaps, in a few minutes at Jacob's wanderings for twenty years but then, when we look at our own history where does it fit? How many years is it that we have just wandered from one thing to another without recognising that God has a purpose in view in the way that He takes us. God has in view that each one of us might come into blessing. That is what I have on my heart tonight that each one of us might come to a better understanding of God's ways in blessing for us.

I turn now to Jacob's history. I have chosen to speak from Jacob's history because, in a particular way, he was one who valued the blessing but he was not in the enjoyment of God's blessing until very much later in his history. Are we in the enjoyment of God's blessing today in His ways with us? I raise that question as a challenge to our hearts and I raise it individually because the enjoyment of



God's blessing is not necessarily associated with the size of the meeting that you may attend or the frequency of your attendance but I would suggest that the enjoyment of blessing is very much dependent upon your own personal link with God Himself.

Jacob is a remarkable man because right at the outset of his life we find that he is the object of God's sovereign love and yet he very soon manifests himself as a deceiver. Has God made a mistake? No! God, in the fulness of His love, goes on with Jacob. Oh, what grace we see in God's ways with the believer, that He goes on with each of us.

When Jacob's propensities manifest themselves, does God then change course? Does He say to him, 'Jacob, I am afraid that things have not turned out the way we thought they would; you are a different sort of person from the way you started'? Take account of a scripture such as Hosea 11, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him". God was looking upon him there in the light of his new name but here we see Jacob as a man whose heart is typical of our hearts yet God went on with him. God may allow us to go our own way, sadly, that may be so, but His desire for the believer is to bring in blessing so that we might respond to Him as the One who has loved us and given His only Son for us.

The same God who saved you from your sins wants to be with you in your pathway here as a believer. God says to Jacob, "I will not leave thee until I have done what I have spoken to thee of". Can we trust Him? Each one of us would say we can. We trusted Him in relation to our sins, the redemption of our souls. Of course we can trust Him. When we take account of the conditions of things today in the testimony, in christendom, or in the world how anxious or even introspective we may become. That is not the language of God to Jacob. His word to him is, "I will not leave thee until I have done what I have spoken to thee of". I would love to encourage everyone here to rest in what God is doing and in what He is working out in the souls of individuals today. Rest in what He is working out in the companies of His own, in conditions that may well be fragmentary as indeed they are. But God is working out His own will and His own way in the souls of His own just as He was working it out in Jacob's heart. These words may have been uttered many, many years ago but I believe that they are so true for the present day. God's ways with the believer are ways of grace and they are ways of blessing.

## **Jacob's Ladder**

We find in the scripture read that a ladder was set up from earth to heaven. God was at the top and angels ascended and descended on it. I believe it represents for us God's ways in caring for the believer. Those believers today that are in circumstances of isolation can be assured that there is that ladder there, that He cares for them in love. His care continues for us even though we may continue on a road that is governed by our own will. I suggest this to you as the fulness of God's grace to the believer in His ways with us that, despite what we are and our failures, despite the fact that we wander off and forget Him, God's love remains the same and He is available to the believer.

## **Jacob the wrestler**

Now I turn to the next step of Jacob's history in Genesis 32 where he wrestles with God. Right at the start of this section, beginning at verse 24, it says that, "Jacob remained alone". I think that, in the past, we have placed so great a value upon gatherings together that we have perhaps assumed that the enjoyment of christian company makes up all that the christian path should be, but there is something much, much deeper than that—God wants to have to do with us individually. In the very smallness of conditions in which so many find themselves God is having to do with each soul. Everything else may be taken away, what remains? The precious love of Christ that no one can take away! It remains in all its glory and perfection. Is it real to your soul?

Here we find that the angel wrestles with Jacob and he says: "Let me go". Jacob replies, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me". Here was a man who had been promised the blessing but he was not in the enjoyment of it and he has to plead with God to bless him. How earnest he was to enjoy God's blessing. Perhaps we have looked for God's blessing in the wrong place! Perhaps we have assumed that large numbers or prosperity here are evidence of God's blessing. Those ideas are not supported from scripture. God's blessing comes to the individual by bringing into the soul the enjoyment of all that Christ is. Christ is the object of the Father's affections, joy of the Father's heart. He is to become the object of our affections. What a feast for the soul! God brings in what is of Himself to attract our hearts and to hold us and keep us for Himself. He is not

going to let us go because He wants to bless us and God has in mind that we should be brought into the enjoyment of it today.

The exercises that Jacob went through were not easy. What it must have meant for a man to wrestle alone with God! But he can say, "my life has been preserved". God is preserving life today and He is filling hearts with the enjoyment of Him who is the source of life, Christ Himself.

God wants to revive our affections and cause us to rejoice in His beloved Son, cause us to know that His ways with us, though they may be 'pleasing or painful, dark or bright', are in view of blessing for each of us. He would fill our hearts with Christ. What a contributor each one would then become as we come together to enjoy christian fellowship with others. If you have got something that is filling your heart, you do not just come together with other believers because a meeting has been arranged; you come because your heart is filled with Christ and you know something of God's ways in grace. Although Jacob wrestles with God and is directed to go back to Bethel, yet still he makes a detour. We find at the end of chapter 33 he sets up an altar and calls it El-Elohe-Israel, that is, God, the God of Israel. Jacob included himself here in the altar and he had no need to do so. We have no need to do so either. We need to come, as Jacob did, in chapter 35 to God of the house of God, that is, to the presence of the One who is holy.

### **Jacob at Bethel**

When Jacob came to Bethel previously he said, "God is in this place" and he was afraid. But now he comes without fear because God had reached him and he had come into the enjoyment of what God is and he is able to raise this altar. He is able to call it God of the house of God. I wonder if we can do that today or whether we are still associating ourselves with our altars. Do we recognise that what is in view is God Himself in all the glory and greatness of who He is? May we have an altar that is God of the house of God.

Bethel is also a place of weeping, for Rebecca's nurse dies. If we are prepared to be committed to God, as God of the house of God, it will involve deep exercise of soul to be consistent with His holiness and to be in accordance with His will. Are we prepared for it? Do we prefer to just go on from day to day, from meeting

to meeting, or are we prepared to have to do with God, the Holy One? Are we prepared for Him to search us as David could say, "Search me, O God,... and see if there be any wicked way in me" (Psalm 139:23-24). Are we prepared for His holy, righteous searching eyes to search out whatever is there? Then we would be suitable for His presence, available for His service.

What we find a little later on in this same chapter is that Rachel dies too. I think she would represent all that Jacob had loved, all that he had cherished, she for whom he had served for fourteen years. Rachel dies and I believe it is significant that the place where Rachel died and was buried was on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. It is the place in which Christ comes in. How precious, dear brethren, to find, when natural things pass away, that it is at that point where Christ in all His sweetness and preciousness comes in as a comfort to the heart.

Jacob erected a pillar where Rachel died. Oh that we might come to these things in our own soul experience in the recognition that God's ways with us are ways of blessing. They are not ways of evil; they are ways of love. What God has in view is that every one of us should come into the enjoyment of the blessing that is in His heart. We find here that Jacob triumphs. Rachel calls the son born to her just before she dies "Benoni", which means 'son of my affliction' but Jacob calls him "Benjamin" that is, 'son of my right hand'. Oh, that the experiences that we have might result in us coming to an appreciation of the Son of God's right hand! To appreciate something of the glory and greatness of the One who is exalted there. He is rejected by men but exalted in glory. May the eye of faith be opened with each one of us to take account of Him as the One who will be our object through eternity.

### **Jacob the blesser**

Finally, I would refer to chapter 48. The one who sought the blessing, who had had a very chequered history, the one who had been through many soul exercises before God, himself becomes a blesser. It may be that the circumstances in which God has placed us are not what we would have chosen but they are the circumstances in which God would ask us to come out as blessing others, blessing one another, blessing men, showing them the heart of God as we have known it ourselves.

It is interesting to compare the blessings of Isaac and the blessing of Jacob. Isaac's history when compared with Jacob's was a lot more acceptable and yet when it comes to the end and he blesses he is deceived by his son. When you take account of Jacob, a man with a very chequered history, when he blesses he gets it right. Joseph thought that he knew the way things should be. He takes his father's hand as though to move it but Jacob says, "I know, my son, I know". I believe that speaks to us of the experience of a man who, through his history, had learnt God. I look around upon older ones here today and I appeal to your hearts with all affection. Can you come out to be like Christ, to show forth the love of that blessed One because you have learnt Him in the experience of life here, because you have learnt to subject yourself to the One who from His heart ever wanted to bless you?

The appeal here that Jacob gives is so touching; he says, "Bring them, I pray thee, to me". I believe that God would have each one of us to come near tonight. If we have been at a distance from Him, God would say, 'Come nearer, I want to bless you'. Is there anyone who would refuse the appeal of His love to come near and prove the sweetness of His presence tonight? If this sounds like a gospel message I do not apologise for that. It is the same God and He wants each one of us to draw near tonight that we may prove that His ways with us are ways of love, ways of blessing.

We find in that scripture I read in Jeremiah, if I can just refer to it again as I close, "Ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me"—do not forget that—"and I will hearken unto you". That is God's promise and then He says, "and ye shall seek me and find me". Why? Because "ye shall search for me with all your heart". I would that our affections for Christ might be stirred tonight, that we might search for Him with all our heart and find Him as a God who loves to bless, and that we might be restful in the knowledge that what He has begun He will complete according to His work and ways with us, all based upon the precious work of Christ and what He has in His heart of love for every one of us is that we might be blessed.

May we come increasingly into the joy of it for His name's sake.

*Keith Wickens*

*An address at Sevenoaks, March 1996*

## ASLEEP THROUGH JESUS

1 Thessalonians 4:14

Lord is it death, to sleep in Thee  
And in Thine arms be hushed to rest,  
From earth's illusions vain, to flee  
To Thine own presence and be blessed?

Can it be death, in that bright home  
Of light and life to dwell with Thee,  
No more this wilderness to roam,  
From toil and care for ever free?

To see Thy face, once marred and sad,  
All radiant now with glory bright;  
Our hearts shall be surpassing glad  
In that vast universe of light.

Thou hast Thyself the victory won:  
In weakness Thou death's power hast slain:  
The resurrection morn's begun,  
Thy loss has brought eternal gain.

In faith we now can sow our dead,  
And Thou a harvest vast will reap:  
Till then, unceasing o'er their bed  
Thine eye a vigil sure will keep.

So, Lord, we wait the harvest day,  
When Thou, supreme amongst Thine own,  
Thy saints in glory will display,  
Fruit of the victory Thou hast won.

*Herbert Gill (1867-1938)*

*Poem written on the death of his father in 1910.*

## HIS RICH GRACE

Trusting in the glorious Saviour,  
I have rest;  
Peace which passeth understanding:  
Oh! how blest!  
Soon to see the glory beaming  
In His face;  
With Him share eternal blessing:  
Oh! what grace!

Now to trace His blessed footsteps  
Till that day;  
Till He comes, and all His loved ones  
Calls away.  
May we find our every joy then  
In His will,  
Though we're tried, and Jesus tarry,  
Waiting still.

In the power of the Spirit  
Walking here;  
In His heavenly love abiding  
Dwelling there.  
Day by day His glory seeking,  
His who died;  
Sharing now His heart's affection,  
Satisfied.

Learning now in sweet communion,  
How to live;  
Sweeter joys than earth affordeth  
He doth give.  
Known when He's our only object  
There above;  
And our hearts find all their treasure  
In His love.

Soon our Lord Himself is coming  
In the air,  
And His joy on high for ever  
We shall share.  
With Him, like Him, in yon realms of  
Cloudless light  
All His saints His face beholding:  
Wondrous sight!

*E.H.Chater*

## THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

**L**ord, it belongs not to my care  
Whether I die or live;  
To love and serve Thee is my share,  
And this Thy grace must give.

Christ leads us through no darker rooms  
Than He went through before;  
And he that to God's kingdom comes  
Must enter by this door.

My knowledge of that life is small;  
The eye of faith is dim;  
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,  
And I shall be with Him.

*Richard Baxter*



## FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

The item which follows is based on an article for a Wrexham newspaper by Mike Smith. A well known local spiritualist medium had died and the paper had printed an article about spiritualism. Mike because of his experience of deliverance thought he ought to tell it as it is.

Since I received the article I have been brought into contact with three spiritualists. Until I read Mike Smith's article I did not have any idea of the appalling danger they were in. Satan is attempting to deceive many in this day by so-called psychic healing. Only very recently a clairvoyant, claiming to have two spirit guides, came to my home town to give a performance. We are not to be ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). (Ed.)

Mike's article begins: "What I am about to share is not going to be nice. For three years of my life I attended a spiritualist church. I went initially out of curiosity, hoping to receive a message from my mother. She had passed away some years earlier and it affected me very badly." He did receive a message, though not, as he realised later, from his mother. Over the coming months there were many more messages including a message that "God" wanted to use him to heal the sick. He was given several named and identifiable spirit guides for this work.

Mike continued, "Can you imagine how I felt, here I was, nobody special, healing people of various illnesses. I believed with all my heart that it was the power of God coursing through my body which people could feel, making them well, that I was a channel for God. It was a wonderful time. I was also given the gift of knowledge. This meant that I could sit in a circle with up to twenty people in it, pray, then point out to various people in that circle what was wrong with them, and then go and give healing."

"I also knew at the time, through messages given to me, that I was going on to bigger and better things. It never dawned on me, that at all those meetings I went to and all those other mediums and healers that I met, I never once saw the Holy Bible being used. Yet they all prayed to God—or so I thought. I really believe that the majority of spiritualists and mediums and healers do not realise that Satan is in control of their lives."

"One night when on our way to a spiritualist meeting, my wife and I met a friend, a committed christian. She asked where we were going. I told her. To say she was shocked was an understatement. 'But it is evil' she said. 'What rub-

bish', I retorted and off we went. About a week later we received a bundle of papers through the door on the occult, satanism, black magic, devil worship, and spiritualism. What a shock. Our friend had sent them with 'love not condemnation'."

The Holy Spirit was obviously striving with Mike because he read and re-read the papers several times and they frightened him. On the following Sunday he went to his friend's christian fellowship. Mike records about that visit that, "There was something about this company which I had never seen or felt in a church before. These people were christians full of happiness, peace and, most of all, love. Love for each other, yes, but especially love for Jesus Christ. I was shown a friendship that I had never felt before. That evening I was told that I had spent the last few years of my life being guided by Satan, not God. Who was I to believe?"

"The following week I went again to the christian fellowship and I felt the presence of God. It was so different from anything I had felt before. It was a thousand times greater than anything spiritualism had given me. I was told that day that if I gave my life to Jesus and repented of my sin I could be set free from the hold Satan had on my life. I agreed that some of the company should come and pray with me."

As they prayed Mike had a terrible physical experience similar to that recorded in the Bible in Luke 9:42. This experience showed him just how fully he was under the dominion of evil.

Mike's story continues: "That night both I and my wife gave our lives to Jesus Christ. That was four years ago. I am now a fully committed christian. I have spent the last four years reading the Bible. I still do not know all there is to know, but one thing I do know: Spiritualism is evil whether those involved in it know it or not."

"There are seven scriptures from the Bible which condemn spiritualism listed below so you can check them for yourself:

Leviticus 19: 31, 20:6, 20:27,  
Deuteronomy 18: 9-14,  
1 Chronicles 10: 13-14,  
Isaiah 8: 18-22, and  
Luke 16: 26.

“It is not possible to contact the spirits of the dead. The only spirits given to mediums and psychic healers are deceiving spirits—evil spirits—who will eventually do great harm to those who use them. Yes, people are healed, but only physically, often not permanently, and not at all from the bondage of sin. It is only God’s divine healing brought to us through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which is for ever. Satan is the great deceiver. He imitates God in as many ways as possible and it is this ability that he has that draws people into satanic bondage of one sort or another.”

“Now I have the power and authority of Jesus Christ living in me and this is the only power which can put Satan to flight.”

## A WORD OF WARNING — 1 THE DANGER OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

Philippians 2:3-5

The Lord Jesus spoke in Luke 18 of some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and made nothing of all the rest of men. Now that spirit is distasteful to God but it is the kind of spirit that the enemy would foster in our hearts. What underlies it is self-exaltation. If I make nothing of somebody else it is in order that I may make something of myself. It is surprising how early in our lives this matter comes to light—making much of myself at the expense of someone else, and it is destructive of assembly features and assembly function.

Luke says that Jesus spoke a parable to “some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and made nothing of all the rest of men”. Self-righteousness flows from the fact that I have not accepted that what I am naturally has been fully exposed and judged in the death of Christ. What allows it to lurk in our hearts and minds, and come to the surface so often, is that we really have not the right appreciation of the death of Christ, and elements are allowed to remain in our hearts that the enemy can use and can work upon. The Spirit of God would cultivate features that correspond to Christ, but the enemy would cultivate features that build up the flesh, and particularly pride, which was the leading cause, according to Scripture, of his own downfall.

These are practical everyday matters. They even come out in rivalry as to our local gatherings; persons take pride in certain features that may be found in their localities, and it will mean making "nothing of all the rest of men"; it will mean despising something somewhere else upon which Christ places value. A kind of self-righteousness shows itself even in regard to the blessedness of light into which we have been brought. Knowledge of divine Persons should make us the most humble-minded people on earth, without any pretension whatsoever. It should bring us in our thoughts right down to the level of the lowliness of mind which the apostle is presenting in Philippians.

Philippians is the practical working out of the glory and the height of the truth as it is presented in Ephesians, and what this calls for is lowliness of mind. So let us be on our guard lest in any sense we make nothing of other believers. God's work is sovereign and is to be recognised in persons according to their measure of light. Many such, whom I know personally, are standing true to the light they have and the Lord is pleased with them as faithful in the places where they are. Do not let us allow self-righteousness and high thoughts to make nothing of these persons. Do they mean nothing to God? Does the brother for whom Christ died mean nothing to me? It is an exceedingly testing matter. I am speaking to my own heart and I am speaking to the brethren, for we may take up a kind of self-righteous attitude in order to belittle someone else.

Flowing out of this comes the matter of tale-bearing—busybodies in other people's matters. Out of it, too, comes the habit of saying things that are indefinite; persons are led into believing certain things that are actually never said. Things left unsaid but hinted at are often far more damaging than things that are said outright. All this, I believe, flows from self-righteousness, pride and high-mindedness. We may not mean it; we may not even have taken time to analyse it. We may have been proceeding on these lines without knowing we are doing it. At such a juncture the Lord Jesus spoke a parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and made nothing of the rest of men, and He brought out in that parable that the man who went down to his house justified was the man whose mind was lowly in relation to his own position before God.

The way to get adjustment on these matters is to get in secret into the presence of God and then we shall realise what we really are. We cannot presume to be *anything more than we are in the presence of God*. There is no question there of

keeping up face, for all things are naked and laid bare to His eyes, with whom we have to do. The lowliness of mind that becomes such a position is what will go away justified, that is, have the consciousness of divine approval.

The Lord Jesus adds, "everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and everyone that humbles himself shall be exalted". To a spiritual company such as the Philippians the apostle says, "let nothing be in the spirit of strife or vain glory, but, in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves," showing the dangers we are prone to. It is not a word only to persons who are prominent; it is a word to everyone. Let us start as young as we possibly can to be developed in that kind of outlook—regarding others as more excellent than ourselves. What a safeguard against self-righteousness!

As we see God's work in one another, how excellent it is! According to Romans 12 we are not to have high thoughts above what we should think; we have to learn to think so as to be wise, to think soberly, because God has dealt to each a measure of faith. Each of us is to have a sober estimate of what we have from God, but Philippians teaches us that we are not to be calling attention to this but to be bringing forward the excellence of every other person but ourselves. He says, "regarding not each his own qualities, but each those of others also. For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". It is the lowly mind that was found in Christ Jesus that is emphasised. Let that mind be found amongst us, a mind to go down, a mind corresponding to what was seen in Jesus.

In Acts 10 Peter saw the sheet out of heaven; it was filled with wild beasts and creeping things, despicable things, and a voice says, "Rise, Peter, slay and eat". Peter answers, "in no wise, Lord". Have we a right outlook on the church, that vessel that is heavenly in origin and heavenly in destiny? If we had, we would not call things that God had cleansed common or unclean. Self-righteousness would thus describe them and would harbour feelings that the devil can use. So let us, from this moment on, seek power by the Spirit to judge its roots in our hearts so that we may be found in our localities making full room for the mind that was in Christ Jesus, thereby shining in testimony and responding to God.

*A. P. C. Lawrence*

*Extracted from an address at Coatbridge, 1958.*

## EXTRACTS FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDWARD DENNETT

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1). This conclusion flows, not from what we are to Him, but from what He is to us.

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The calm of a soul which reposes in the will of God is unspeakable.

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Your character may not be vindicated down here. Jesus died under a cloud. He was never cleared in this world of the false accusations that had been made against Him.

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A soul who is in the secret of the divine mind must be content to be unappreciated and to walk alone.

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I am certain that we must leave results until the judgment seat of Christ. In the mean time our one desire must be to gain His approbation and be content with that. Nothing else is worth seeking for.

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It is a mistake to suppose that we can be endowed, so to speak, with spiritual power. God never gives a fund of strength to any of His servants on which they can draw from time to time until the whole is used. The power is always in Himself and not in them, and only supplied moment by moment to those who are walking with and in dependence upon Him.

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You must be in present dependence in preaching. There is no power unless we are receiving while we speak. What you need is a living connection with the heart of God, and then what flows out of the heart of God into your heart will come with power to those you speak to.

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To hold ourselves at the Lord's disposal secures for us opened doors when He has work for us to do.

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The qualification for service is a deeper acquaintance with the heart of Christ.

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The Holy Spirit is always ready to work when we exalt Christ, "He shall glorify me".

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I suppose that we shall never know the full results of our service until we appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And it may be then that what we esteemed the least at the time, will there be shown to have been the richest in results.

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We are not to rejoice so much in the deliverances when they come as in the One who delivers us.

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A heart possessed of Christ is fortified against the most seductive allurements of the world.

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The state of our souls may be discerned by the effect produced upon us by the name of Jesus.

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Whenever we speak to one another of Christ He will always be one of the company. (See Malachi 3:16). Do our hearts long for His presence? Then let us speak together of Him more.

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We can present Christ to the hearts of others in our lives as well as by our words. We may not be able to explain a single passage of scripture, but we can live Christ. You may teach a Sunday school or visit among the poor, and that is all right and good, but there is something far better—live Christ, present Christ.

## THE PRAISE OF MEN

(An extract from a letter)

It gives me great pleasure to see your translation of... I reserve the pleasure of reading it, or rather having it read to me, for moments in which the Lord says to us, as He did to the apostles, "Come ye yourselves apart... and rest a little". But I cannot refrain from telling you, my dear friend, that the pleasure that the appearance of your work gave me has been somewhat abated by the too favourable opinion which you have expressed in your preface respecting me.

Before I read a word of your translation, I made a present of a copy to a very dear and sincere friend of mine, who brought me word that you had spoken in praise of my piety in your preface. The passage produced the same effect on my friend that it did on me, when I afterward saw it. I hope, therefore, that you will not take in ill-part what I am about to say to you on the subject, and which is the fruit of a tolerably long experience.

Pride is the greatest of all evils that beset us, and of all our enemies, it is that which dies the slowest and hardest: even the children of the world are able to discern this. Madame de Stael said, on her death bed, 'Do you know what is the last to die in man? It is self-love'. God hates pride above all things, because it gives to man that place which belongs to Him who is above, exalted over all.

Pride intercepts communion with God, and draws down His chastisement, for God resists the proud. He will destroy the name of the proud, and we are told that there is a day appointed when, "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low".

I am sure then, that you will feel, my dear friend, that one cannot do another a greater injury than by praising him and feeding his pride. "A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his steps", and "a flattering mouth worketh ruin". Be assured, moreover, that we are too short-sighted to be able to judge of the degree of our brother's piety; we are not able to judge it aright without the balance of the sanctuary, and that is in the hand of Him who searches the heart.



Judge nothing therefore before the time, until the Lord come, and make manifest the counsels of the heart, and render to every man his praise. Till then let us not judge our brethren, whether for good or for evil, but with becoming moderation, and remember that the surest and best judgment is what we form of ourselves when we esteem others better than ourselves.

If I were to ask you how you know that I am one of the 'most advanced in the christian career, and an eminent servant of God', you would, no doubt, be at a loss to reply. You would perhaps cite my published works: but do you know, my dear friend and brother—you who can preach an edifying sermon as well as I can—that the eyes see further than the feet go? and that unhappily we are not always, nor in all things, what our sermons are; that we "have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassingness of the power may be of God and not from us"?

I will not tell you the opinion I have of myself, for in doing so I shall probably all the while be seeking my own glory; and while seeking my own glory, appear humble, which I am not. I had rather tell you what our Master thinks of me—He who searcheth the heart, and speaks the truth, who is, "The Amen, the faithful and true witness", and has often spoken in my inmost soul and I thank Him for it, but believe me, He has never told me that I am an 'eminent christian and advanced in the way of godliness'. On the contrary, He tells me very plainly that if I knew my own place, I should find it that of the chief of sinners, and least of all saints. His judgment surely, my dear friend, I should take rather than yours.

The most eminent christian is one of those of whom no one has ever heard speak, some poor labourer or servant, whose all is Christ, and who does all for His eye, and for His alone. The first shall be last. Let us be persuaded, my dear friend, to praise the Lord alone. He only is worthy of being praised, revered, and adored. His goodness is never sufficiently celebrated. The song of the blessed—Revelation 5—praises none but Him who redeemed them with His blood. It contains not one word of praise for any of their own number—not a word that classes them into eminent, or not eminent—all distinctions are lost in the common title, the redeemed, which is the happiness and glory of the whole body.

Let us strive to bring our hearts into unison with that song in which we all hope that our feeble voices will one day mingle. This will be our happiness even here below, to contribute to God's glory, which is wronged by the praise which christians too often bestow on each other. We cannot have two mouths—one for God's praise, and one for man's.

May we then do what the seraphim do above, who with two wings cover their faces, as a token of their confusion before the holy presence of the Lord; with two cover their feet, as if to hide their steps from themselves; and with the remaining two fly to execute their Lord's will, while they cry, "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory".

Excuse these few lines of christian exhortation, which I am sure will, sooner or later, become useful to you, by becoming part of your own experience. Remember me in your prayers, as I pray that the blessing of the Lord may rest upon you and your labours.

If you ever print another edition—as I hope you will—strike out, if you please, the two passages to which I have drawn your attention; and call me simply, 'A brother, and minister in the Lord'. This is honour enough and needs no addition.

*J. N. Darby*

**"But to this man will I look: to the afflicted and contrite in spirit, and who trembleth at my word." (Isaiah 66:2)**