

NOTES OF MINISTRY

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from the Darby Translation**

READING ON EXODUS 35

Exodus 35

C.S. We can see that this book is reaching a glorious conclusion now. The word from God was, “I have borne you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself”, Exod.19:4. In chapter 25, He says, “And they shall make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (v.8). Now we are coming to this precious moment when the whole tabernacle system is going to be built. It was referred to last week, that the glory that shone in the face of Moses had an effect on the people; we can see that here. They are now moved in heart: “And they came, every one whose heart moved him, and every one whose spirit prompted him; they brought Jehovah’s heave-offering for the work of the tent of meeting”. So much had taken place between chapter 25 and this chapter, and we have been speaking over it much. There had been a terrible departure, but my impression is that the people here have been truly recovered and their hearts have been changed. It must mean a great deal to God. I am sure we will draw on the New Testament again to help us see what it means for us.

The verse in 2 Corinthians 3, “But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image” (v.18), bears on this. The apostle continues there – he has to deal with other matters – but by the time you get to chapter 8, he writes about persons having been enriched (v.9), and the great thought of giving is in the apostle’s mind. In the next chapter of Exodus, chapter 36, you find that the people brought too much – what that must have meant for God: “for the work they had was sufficient for all the work to do it, and it

was too much" (v.7). That is a lovely thought of abundance in giving.

W.M.P. Say more about your thought as to 2 Corinthians 8:9. It says, "that *ye* by *his* poverty might be enriched". Is your thought that the people had gained wealth through their experience with God, and through Moses? Do you think that moral worth had been developed in the people? It is not only a question of their possessions, but of what they were able to bring as devoted persons.

C.S. Yes, and is that not how our hearts have been changed? It says, "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes he, being rich, became poor, in order that *ye* by *his* poverty might be enriched". We have been enriched through the poverty of Another, and that is most affecting. The apostle begins chapter 8 by speaking of the free-hearted liberality of the brethren (v.2).

N.C.McK. Reconciliation comes into 2 Corinthians 5 (see vv.18-20). Does that bear on the matter? Reconciliation is for God, and involves what persons are for God. Reconciliation brings about a scene of complacency where persons are reconciled to God on account of new creation (v.17), which is God's own work in them.

C.S. It is good to bring in the thought of complacency. A reconciled person is on near terms with God, and such a person is going to be clear of the world. Perhaps that is what the apostle Paul had in mind in writing 2 Corinthians 6 – believers are to be a separate people, and that is emphasised in our chapter; the children of Israel were to be morally separate from the world, and so are believers.

W.M.P. Do you think that having a sense of what God could rest in (see v.2) would bear on the people's appreciation of who they were responding to?

C.S. You are referring to the sabbath, which comes in a number of times in Exodus, first in relation to the manna in chapter 16, then in chapter 31 where it says, "for in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed" (v.17). That reference to "refreshed" is in addition to what we read in Genesis as to God resting (Gen.2:2,3). It must have been exceedingly wonderful to the heart of God that these persons were really recovered. There had been a terrible departure, but because of the way that Moses – speaking of Christ – had become enlarged in their affections, and his glory was shining, there is a great recovery. It all speaks of Christ, and now God can have His sabbath.

W.M.P. He can, yes. In prayer at the beginning of the meeting, you spoke about having some understanding and knowledge of the glory of the Lord Jesus. This would be one of His glories, that He is the One in whom the Father has infinite delight.

C.S. Yes, that is good. There is no rest for God outside of Christ and what He has accomplished.

T.R.C. You referred last week to 2 Corinthians 3:3: "the fleshy tables of the heart" that are written on. Is this the answer to it? Is the thought coming out in this chapter that what is for God is a heart matter? There are references to willing hearts and then to "every one whose heart moved him, and every one whose spirit prompted him". It is a theme through the chapter, and Christianity is a heart matter, is it not? I was thinking of the way that Paul appeals to the brethren in

Ephesus in Acts 20. He finishes that section with the words of the Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v.35).

C.S. That is excellent. Christianity is a heart matter. We are not forced into Christianity, are we? It is a response to God's love. In relation to the second writing on the tables (see Exod.34:1,28), Mr. Darby said that patience and grace and mercy were added to it¹. And that is how our hearts are secured – by the way that God has moved towards us.

N.J.H. Moses' prayer in Psalm 90 gives some secret of what was in his heart, do you think? "Lord, *thou*", emphatic, "hast been our dwelling-place in all generations" (v.1). That was in Moses' heart; it was greater than what was made here in this chapter. God is our dwelling place; Scripture refers to "a habitation of God in the Spirit", Eph.2:22.

C.S. I think it is a remarkable victory for God, that in the midst of the world through which we pass, seen in Moses and the people going through the wilderness, there can be a habitation for Him. Stephen speaks about Moses "who was in the assembly in the wilderness", Acts 7:38. We cannot claim anything, but that is what God has now amongst believers, does He not? He has a dwelling place. Psalm 90 also exhorts us to number our days (v.12): we have to redeem the time.

W.M.P. Just help us about the heave-offering. What does that denote for us? It is connected with all of the different kinds of material that the people of Israel

¹ JND Synopsis Vol.1 p.94 – '... the government of patience and grace is added to it'

brought; in each case it is connected with the heave-offering.

C.S. Yes. The only thought I have is that it speaks of the energy of the heart. That is required in Christianity in relation to commitment, is it not?

W.M.P. Yes, that is very good. It suggests energy and power towards God. The heave-offering is going up.

C.S. You are thinking about our responses to God?

W.M.P. Yes. We often speak about service and serving one another, but what is in view here is how God is going to be served. That should be more before me.

N.J.H. Is the heave-offering not especially for God, whereas the wave-offering brings before us what is in the one who offers? The wave-offering is in the person.

C.S. I understood that the wave-offering suggests an appreciation of the Lord Jesus as the One who had been into death and broken its power, and we wave Him before God with that thought in our hearts. Please say more.

N.J.H. The wave-offering is for God to see; it is waved before Him for His pleasure. The heave-offering speaks of the one who offers being in total commitment.

C.J.McK. I was thinking of the phrases in verses 23 and 24: "And every man with whom was found ..." and then "And every one with whom was found ...". Does this link with what we get in Ephesians – "ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (chap.2:22)? I just wondered if these things

might raise exercise with us. You have spoken about a separate people. Verse 23 says, "And every man with whom was found blue" and it goes on to list all these various materials, goats' hair and so on, which would speak of separation. You mentioned a separate people. It should prompt exercise with us: is it found with me? Is that how it works out now? We can form part of what is for Him.

C.S. We speak about all the material here, but as you say it is really persons that are in mind. We come to a chapter like Romans 12: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service. And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (vv.1,2). Is that along the lines that you had in mind? The persons are in mind, are they not?

C.J.McK. Yes. We often speak of God's "inheritance in the saints", Eph.1:18. A dear brother said that it is the saints, and what is in them. I thought that was helpful to consider.

C.S. Yes, that scripture in Ephesians refers to "the glory of his inheritance in the saints"; it is the glory.

N.C.McK. The saints have spiritual substance to offer. There is substance that can be used to build up and establish the saints collectively. The substance we have is for all, so that all can be in it. That is in contrast to clericalism or any sort of formality. Until you get to Bezaleel and Aholiab there are no distinct personalities, are there? It is "every one".

C.S. Yes, and there is a place for every one. Men and women are referred to; and also "principal men":

every one can be a principal man. And then in Bezaleel and Aholiab there would be the thought of gift, which we acknowledge. It is not clericalism.

N.C.McK. You see the setting up of what the tabernacle system represents at the beginning of Acts. The brethren brought the materials and laid them at the feet of the apostles (see Acts 4:35). They were unrestrained in their giving. In chapter 6, we see the Spirit operating among the company. They chose "seven men, well reported of, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" (v.3). There was spiritual substance there in the assembly. That passage shows how they were to operate. They were free-hearted in their giving, and they grew spiritually and had spiritual substance to maintain. You see Stephen's spiritual substance in Acts 7.

P.J.M. That is supported by verse 23 of our chapter, where it says, "And every man with whom was found blue, and purple, and scarlet, and byssus". If we think of these materials as representing principles, then believers as vessels have worked out principles in their lives. These Israelites had substance to contribute. Does that support what has been said?

C.S. That is good. I was thinking of Peter: the Lord says in Matthew 16, "I say unto thee that *thou* art Peter" (v.18). He had in mind what Peter was substantially, what could be built in. He adds, "and on this rock I will build my assembly". Then when you come to Acts, as has been referred to, Peter is able to say, "Look on us" (chap.3:5). There was something there of spiritual quality that could be taken account of. In Christianity the building is composed of people, of believers.

P.J.M. I was thinking of the heave-offering: it is not a light matter. The scripture speaks of affliction working for us an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor.4:17). There is substance among the people here that was going to be used to provide a dwelling place for God. God takes account of it, and Moses and the people also were able to take account of what was brought for God as having substance.

W.M.P. What has been raised regarding verse 23 is a challenge. We could ask, 'Are all these things found with me, found in my life?' It is to be so in order that there should be a yield for God. We give thanks for what is found among us, that we find persons with whom these qualities are found.

C.S. Tell us about the blue and the purple and the scarlet. One thing that is to mark us as believers is that we are not to be earthly, but to be heavenly. Other people should be able to take account of that. One of our prayers in the morning at the house is that there might be something in our daily lives that will render a testimony to what is heavenly.

W.M.P. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26). They did not call themselves that. It is what became apparent.

C.S. Yes, very good.

N.C.McK. The New Testament makes clear that believers have things, as having been given them. For example, "But to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ", Eph.4:7. And "But having different gifts", Rom.12:6. So a believer is not to be at a loss. Whatever we have, we can use it to offer to God and to promote what is right amongst the saints, do you think?

W.M.P. Yes, I have often been struck by that very matter in Romans 12. The apostle says, “as God has dealt to each a measure of faith” (v.3); and then, “But having different gifts, according to the grace which has been given to us” (v.6). That is inclusive; it is not saying it is only some. Then the apostle goes on to speak of how the gifts that have been given should be exercised, “with cheerfulness” (v.8), and so on. These gifts are to be used.

N.C.McK. Very good. The same thought comes into Ephesians 4. For example, in verse 7 Paul writes, “But to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ”. In the next verse, “and has given gifts to men”; and in verse 11, “and *he* has given some apostles”, and so on. Every one has something; these are distinctive matters. Christ “has ascended up above all the heavens” (v.10), and the Man in heaven is the centre of this whole administration. You can see the link with “which Jehovah, by the hand of Moses, had commanded to be done”. There is an administration of blessing and wealth that centres in a risen and ascended Man, and that is the point in Ephesians 4. There is a whole administration under His hand here, and it works out in edification and growth.

C.J.McK. Is the fact that Bezaleel and Aholiab are called by name a reference to that?

C.S. Yes, I think so. They had special gifts.

N.J.H. The tribes that these two men came from are interesting. Bezaleel was of Judah, and was the grandson of Hur, whose name means ‘purity’ (Exod.17:10, footnote), while Aholiab was of the tribe of Dan. That is the tribe from which the idea of clericalism sprang (see Judges 18:11-20; 30,31). It

might suggest persons who have been delivered from wrong ideas as well as those who have been maintained in what is right, brought together into the assembly.

N.C.McK. Is the suggestion that service of this kind is carried on by recovered persons?

N.J.H. It is interesting that the beginnings are set out. Hur was of the tribe of Judah, and would be well known from the conflict with Amalek (see Exod.17:10,12). And although it happened many years later, it was in the tribe of Dan that the clerical principle originated. A priest was appointed by the men of Dan. In our times, it suggests service without the Spirit.

C.J.McK. What do you mean, service without the Spirit?

N.J.H. The principle of clergy established by men means that in practice the Holy Spirit is not relied on, and in fact that principle is against the Spirit. Aholiab was of the tribe of Dan, and although that failure in the tribe came in many years later, we can apply the thought that Aholiab represents someone who has had to overcome the clerical principle. Bezaleel of Judah and Aholiab of Dan are ones that are brought together; in the assembly a variety of persons are reconciled.

N.C.McK. You are referring to Judges 18:11-20, where men of the tribe of Dan take a priest that was not of the priestly family and set him as their own priest, on independent lines. These men of Dan had their own priest, who had his own system of worship apart from Israel. It was to suit themselves and their own circumstances.

N.J.H. Yes, the priest set up an idol which was completely against what was of God. But Aholiab had been filled with wisdom of heart by God; his wisdom would contradict anything that was imitative, and anything that was against God.

A.R.H. In regard to the wave-offering, in verse 22 it says, “every man that waved a wave-offering of gold to Jehovah”. Does that come into the service of God? When we come to worship the Father, what is it that we are waving before Him?

C.S. Is it not all the graces of Christ, and the impressions that we have of Him?

A.R.H. Especially when we begin to worship the Father, we would carry before Him our appreciation of what the Lord is as having accomplished everything for the Father, which would be very precious to Him.

N.C.McK. Were you thinking that as we develop in the knowledge of the Father, we become like Christ?

A.R.H. I think when we come to the Father in view of worshipping Him, it is good to have in our hearts the appreciation of what Christ has accomplished for God. We can wave Christ before Him in the excellence of His life, and all that He accomplished. We come into the Father’s presence through Christ and by one Spirit (Eph.2:18). That is what the Father really enjoys – worshippers who appreciate Christ. Our appreciation should open up as we enter the Father’s presence through Christ and by the Spirit.

N.J.H. I was thinking of the simplicity of our thanksgivings in worship, and that they end ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus’. You are recognising that everything is for God, that we are offering to God what

pleases Him, and it is through that Person, Christ. It is a customary way of ending our expressions of worship, but it is also with affection that we say the Lord's name at the end of what we offer to God.

C.S. We spoke about the heart of the believer. I was thinking about what the Lord says as to the Father in John 14: "Jesus answered and said to him, If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (v.23). This is God's word. The whole matter is established in affection.

N.C.McK. Does that scripture also confirm what was said earlier in regard to days of recovery? No matter how small things may be publicly, if there is a state of soul of affection towards Christ, and a desire to honour Him, then divine Persons will come to that person and support them.

A.R.H. This chapter is bringing everyone together in contributing to the tabernacle, is it not? The voluntary offerings and the heave-offerings, all are brought willingly; and that draws all the people together with one exercise.

N.C.McK. It says of some persons that things were found with them; they had the material. You get the women who were wise-hearted and spun what had been brought; the people were working out things that had been divinely given. Both things go on together: what we have as given to us by divine Persons; and the personal, inward exercises that work out that tremendous divine wealth. Divine wealth comes in the form of impressions, given by divine Persons, which form spiritual substance in the believer.

C.S. It has been said that if the preparation and the spinning had not been done correctly, the curtains

would not hold. It should be encouraging for the sisters that their impressions of Christ can be contributed; they can be given in that sense spiritually. That is spinning; it is working matters out.

P.J.M. Does diligence come into that? Psalm 90 has been referred to; it says, "So teach us to number our days, that we may acquire a wise heart" (v.12). Our chapter refers to every woman that was wise-hearted. Someone might say, 'Well, today I am a bit tired so I will give the meeting a miss'. But being wise-hearted would mean that I am going to contribute something for God. These exercises are not going to be wasted; and that would require diligence and an overcoming spirit. It seems encouraging: "And every woman that was wise-hearted spun with her hands, and brought what she had spun". That is the result in view, that such a woman would bring the result of her exercise.

C.S. Yes, that is very helpful.

N.J.H. I was thinking of the spun goats' hair in verse 26. Goats' hair would suggest separation. But it is said that goats' hair is very difficult material to work with. It is hard on the hands to spin.

C.S. I was thinking of goats' hair in connection with separation too; but what does it suggest to you that the material is hard to work with? Does it link with what was said as to diligence?

N.J.H. Yes. If you were faint-hearted, you would give up quickly, but the people were strong-hearted, and they would maintain the spinning of the goats' hair.

N.C.McK. In verse 20, "And all the assembly of the children of Israel departed from before Moses" means that the matter is worked out in responsibility. Fellowship includes the matter of where the saints are

when they are not together. Separation is a test, and includes working out of matters in their detail, maintaining the bond and the link among us as brethren when we are not together. That is the exercising part.

P.J.M. Does it link with Timothy? Paul says, “Strive diligently to present thyself approved to God”, 2 Tim.2:15. It also says, “If therefore one shall have purified himself ... he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master” (v.21). Is that not what these persons were doing? They were working on goats’ hair and spinning it; they were applying it morally.

W.M.P. Sisters do not speak in our meetings. They participate in the singing of hymns, praising in that regard, but not speaking. How do they bring this substance into the company?

N.J.H. Sisters have a valuable part in the household as being free from the worldly spirit and its effect. The subjective side – what is formed in the believer – is very important.

C.S. Scripture speaks about “the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price”, 1 Peter 3:4.

N.J.H. That is a good word – “incorruptible”.

W.M.P. Yes. Right moral conditions in a meeting would be facilitated by the sisters being on this line, especially in the household.

A.R.H. It works out in a meeting. Sometimes a sister has been thinking of a hymn, and then a brother gives it out. No doubt she was following the whole thought.

W.M.P. Yes, that is very fine.

N.J.H. Paul and those with him came to the house of Lydia in Acts 16. After they were released from prison in Philippi, they returned to her house, and the brethren were there. She was representing the subjective answer to Paul's ministry.

N.C.McK. It has been said that when a brother takes part in the service of God, he ought to be expressing what is in the affections of the whole company. The company is affected inwardly, and someone gives expression to that: the whole company is in the matter. The 'amens' show that.

W.M.P. They do. What you say is very confirming of the experiences that we have in the service of God. My enquiry really was what comes out of the goats' hair, perhaps speaking of those who endure difficult circumstances. We should value that element in our local meetings.

C.S. I have valued that for a long time, that we have sisters here whose lives are a testimony, and who contribute to the meetings in that way.

C.J.McK. Using diligence was mentioned earlier. It brought to mind the woman of worth at the end of Proverbs. She is really marked by that: "She doeth him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands" (chap.31:12,13). She is in constant activity: "And she riseth while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and the day's work to her maidens" (v.15). She is protecting and providing.

P.J.M. That is very helpful. Does the thought of watchfulness come into the goats' hair as well? We need to be sensitive to anything that is not suitable;

that sensitivity will always be needed. The sisters are sensitive as to what is proceeding. That is very helpful in the company; they support what is proceeding collectively.

J.N. Do you think it brings out the value of households at the present time? Each one is needed; take Prisca and Aquila, for example.

N.J.H. Exactly.

N.C.McK. John's second epistle is devoted to the matter of households. The sisters should maintain the household and maintain their place in responsibility in the house. As a matter of fact, the largest part of the upbringing of believers' children is under the hand of sisters. That is a very important responsibility. The Scripture also says, "And ye fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord", Eph.6:4. Both parents are involved in that.

C.S. It was mentioned last week that Timothy had a mother and a grandmother who helped him in that way. And John in his second epistle reminds the elect lady of her responsibility to protect the household: "If any one come to you and bring not this doctrine, do not receive him into the house", 2 John:10. It is a large responsibility for the sisters, is it not?

N.C.McK. To keep things out of the house, do you mean?

C.S. I noticed a helpful reference in the ministry to the commendations at the end of Romans. We have been speaking of the features that marked the children of Israel in bringing material for the tabernacle as they were prompted in their hearts. The persons named in Romans 16 are given

commendations, and a reason is given for them. It is said of Phoebe, “our sister, who is minister of the assembly which is in Cenchrea; that ye may receive her in the Lord worthily of saints, and that ye may assist her in whatever matter she has need of you; for *she* also has been a helper of many, and of myself” (vv.1,2). And Prisca and Aquila formed a household that has already been referred to. We have known sisters in this city marked by this feature of providing a household for the Lord.

N.J.H. When Phoebe was in Cenchrea, which was the neighbouring meeting to Corinth, she would have had a sober judgement, with the apostle, as to matters there.

S.W. I was thinking of the end of verse 29 in our chapter. It says, “which Jehovah, by the hand of Moses, had commanded to be done”. While we know that this provision of material is all motivated by movement of heart, obedience comes into it as well. Could we have some help as to that?

C.S. At the end of chapter 39 it says, “And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it as Jehovah had commanded” (v.43). They had done it, and Moses blessed them. Moses was given instructions as to the pattern, and what was made had to be absolutely according to God’s mind (see Exod.25:40). So this matter of obedience comes in. It is illustrated in the fact that “all the assembly of the children of Israel departed from before Moses. And they came”. They were obedient and trustworthy.

N.C.McK. Does that link with Corinthians? “According to the grace of God which has been given to me, as a wise architect, I have laid the foundation, but another builds upon it. But let each sees how he

builds upon it”, 1 Cor.3:10. The building must be according to the pattern. The Corinthians were building to another pattern, but Paul had the original and in his view there was none other. Adhering to the pattern did not limit the liberty of the people to bring material, but whatever they brought must be according to the divine pattern; it cannot be of man.

C.S. We have seen in the earlier readings that all these materials speak of what is divine.

W.M.P. I was wondering what was in our brother’s mind as to obedience. Were you thinking that it springs from affection, and from devotedness to the Lord? What was your thought?

S.W. Yes, I was linking obedience with verse 21, where it speaks about “every one whose heart moved him, and every one whose spirit prompted him”. Obedience surely comes from love, from the heart, but spiritual intelligence goes along with it. The Spirit’s help is essential for us to understand what God’s commandment is.

W.M.P. That is very good: we do need the Spirit’s help. What has been referred to in the epistles shows us the way: the divine commandment is set out for us largely through Paul’s ministry, and in the epistles we get the practical application to ourselves in our Christian lives.

S.W. Just to be simple about things, there is not really room for our own creativity in the things of God, is there? God has provided us with means by which what returns to Him is suitable.

W.M.P. I think that is a really important remark. We are not looking for innovation, but – as you have said

– there is what has come down to us in the truth and the order of what is for God.

P.J.M. It says, “And the principal men brought the onyx stones, and the stones to be set, for the ephod”. Do you think that some consideration would enter into the selection of these stones? They would ask, ‘Is it suitable? Is it according to the pattern? Should we ask Moses?’ I do not think they would bring random onyx stones; these men would consider things. It is not what we think is suitable, but the question is, is it according to the pattern God has given?

T.R.C. Aquila and Priscilla were marked by these features. When Apollos arrived at Ephesus they “having heard him, took him to them and unfolded to him the way of God more exactly”, Acts 18:26. They had the pattern before them. In Exodus where we have read, it says that the women spun with their hands. It was, speaking simply, a hands-on matter. I just wondered if Aquila and Priscilla were marked by these features.

C.S. Yes, what is being said is very good. When the Lord said to the woman in John 4, “the Father seeks such as his worshippers. God is a spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth” (vv.23,24). He was indicating that worship should be according to the divine standard, which would be by the Spirit. The water which the Lord gives “shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life” (v.14).

C.J.McK. Priscilla and Aquila were of the same trade as Paul; they were tent makers by trade. In Romans 16 they are referred to as having the assembly at their house. Somebody has pointed out that Paul was a

spiritual tent maker, and Priscilla and Aquila were on the same lines.

T.R.C. I think it is fine to see that: it was not only a matter of light or teaching. They set an example, do you think? In Acts 20, Paul refers to “these hands” (v.34). Not only did Paul teach and set things out clearly, but when he was among them, he showed them things too. There is moral power in that.

N.C.McK. Paul was like Bezaleel who was filled with “the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship”. That is demonstrated by what has just been said about him. He speaks about “my intelligence in the mystery of the Christ”, Eph.3:4. He also refers there to “the knowledge of what is the administration of the mystery” (v.9). Elsewhere it says that he “reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and laying down ...”, Acts 17:2,3. Paul was able to meet things, opening and revealing things to persons, also “laying down”, which is authoritative. There would be authority about the truth in the souls of those who heard Paul. That was essential; he was speaking to the Gentiles and he brought in things that were suitable to them. He was skilful.

C.S. Yes, he was. Remarkable ability was given to him by the Lord. He could say to those elders in Ephesus, “I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God”, Acts 20:27. He brought in at Ephesus glorious light as to the assembly. It was “all manner of workmanship”.

Reading in Glasgow
28 January 2026

KEY TO INITIALS:

T.R.C.	Trevor Campbell
N.J.H.	Norman Henry
A.R.H.	Alex Henry
C.J.McK.	Calum McKay
N.C.McK.	Neil McKay
P.J.M.	Peter Metcalfe
J.N.	James Newberry
W.M.P.	Walter Patterson
C.S.	Colin Seeley
S.W.	Scott Walker

(All Glasgow)

EXTRACT

The form even of the epistle [to the Ephesians] shows how much the apostle's mind was filled with the sense of the blessing that belongs to the assembly. ... he begins at once to speak of the blessings in which all the members of Christ participate. His heart was full of the immensity of grace; and nothing in the state of Ephesian Christians required any particular remarks adapted to that state. It is nearness of heart to God that produces simplicity, and that enables us in simplicity to enjoy the blessings of God as God Himself bestows them, as they flow from His heart, in all their own excellence – to enjoy them in connection with Him who imparts them, and not merely in a mode adapted to the state of those to whom they are imparted; or through a communication that only reveals a part of these blessings, because the soul would not be able to

receive more. Yes, when near to God, we are in simplicity, and the whole extent of His grace and of our blessings unfolds itself as it is found in Him.

It is important to remark two things here in passing: first, that moral nearness to God, and communion with Him, is the only means of any true enlargement in the knowledge of His ways and of the blessings which He imparts to His children, because it is the only position in which we can perceive them, or be morally capable of so doing; and, also, that all conduct which is not suitable to this nearness to God, all levity of thought, which His presence does not admit of, makes us lose these communications from Him and renders us incapable of receiving them. (Compare John 14:21-23.) Secondly, it is not that the Lord forsakes us on account of these faults or this carelessness; He intercedes for us, and we experience His grace, but it is no longer communion or intelligent progress in the riches of the revelation of Himself, of the fulness which is in Christ. It is grace adapted to our wants, an answer to our misery. Jesus stretches out His hand to us ...

When we walk with God, when we walk after the Spirit without grieving Him, He maintains us in communion, in the enjoyment of God, the positive source of joy – of an everlasting joy. This is a position in which He can occupy us – as being ourselves interested in all that interests Him – with all the development of His counsels, His glory, and His goodness, in the Person of Jesus the Christ, Jesus the Son of His love; and the heart is enlarged in the measure of the objects that occupy it.

JND Synopsis Vol.4 Ephesians pp.283-285

THE PROSPECT

Hearts are filled with holy wonder
As we think of what will be –
Righteousness will there be dwelling
In a bright eternity.
Restful in that new creation,
All in all our God will be.

There His love will find full answer
To His counsels and His ways;
Many sons now brought to glory
Worshipping through endless days.
Restful in that new creation,
God will dwell amidst their praise.

In th'assembly in Christ Jesus
Our blest God is glorified;
In the families gathered round Him,
Love, His nature, magnified.
Restful in that new creation,
God Himself is satisfied.

R W McClean

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Additional copies are available, free of charge, by emailing
notesofministry@virginmedia.com or paul@nofm.co.uk

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