

NOTES OF MINISTRY

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**Quotations from the Holy Scriptures in this publication are usually taken
from the Darby Translation**

“HAVING NOTHING, AND POSSESSING ALL THINGS”

2 Corinthians 6:10

Those familiar with the writings of the apostle Paul will know that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he was led to use paradox. That is, he sometimes presents things as opposites, and in a way that is apparently contradictory, in order to emphasise them. For example, he says, “to know the love of the Christ” and he adds, “which surpasses knowledge”, Eph.3:19. He spoke of himself as “less than the least of all saints” (Eph.3:8), and never does he more effectively deploy paradox than in this chapter from which we have read. The first paragraph is full of paradoxes which to the natural mind of man are difficult to grasp, but the apostle is speaking directly of himself; and the paradoxes that he uses bring out the difference between *this* world in which we are, and *that* world as the Lord Jesus spoke of it, “that world, and the resurrection from among the dead”, Luke 20:35.

We are very conscious of conditions in this world and what it has to offer, and the state of chaos that persists in it through its rejection of Christ. We are thankful that a way is kept through for God’s people and His testimony; we are thankful to the blessed Spirit for that, the indwelling Spirit. Among His many services is to restrain the powers of wickedness that will so soon engulf the whole scene once the saints have gone (see 2 Thess.2:6,7). But there is another world, a world where Jesus’ glories shine. The believer’s position here is really a paradox in itself, because he or she is in this world, but not of it. The Lord did not ask in John 17 that His own should be taken out of this world, but that they should

be kept from the evil that permeated it (vv.9-16). We are in this world, but we have been taken up in view of another world. Indeed, in His prayer to the Father, the Lord could say of His own that “They are not of the world, as I am not of the world”. I just raise this question in passing: is it evident in your life, when you go to work, when you go to school, when you go shopping, when you speak to the neighbour, is it evident that you are not of the world as Christ is not of it, that your life is in another world?

I want to speak of what Paul presents as opposites, or paradoxes, first of all in relation to the Lord Himself, and then in relation to the apostle as he directly speaks of himself. You will notice in the next paragraph after the verse I have read that he writes to this local assembly saying, “our heart is expanded ... let *your* heart also expand itself” (vv.11,13). Mr Darby has inserted a note on “expanded”: it says, ‘I do not say ‘enlarged’ because it would lead one to suppose that his heart had been narrow. He had been driven in, as it were, by their evil’. Paul’s love for them was constrained by the bonds of righteousness. That has been said as to the Lord Himself when He addresses the churches in Revelation, where He is described as “girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle” (chap.1:13). His love for each of those assemblies remained the same, but the expression of it was constrained by the bonds of divine righteousness. Paul had had to write in a corrective way to the Corinthians in his first epistle, but now the issues that Paul had raised with them – particularly the fact that as a company they seemed to be unconcerned about the evil that was extant among them – had aroused the conscience of the company, and that in turn caused the apostle’s heart to be expanded towards them. It is a good thing to

have an expansive heart. God has a very expansive heart, and He would have His sons to have their hearts expanded too. Paul urges these dear brethren to let their heart “expand itself”. There would be nothing more touching for them, as they read this letter, to think of the condition in which the apostle was, for he was held in a Roman prison. It sometimes helps to think of the literality of the Scripture, not to be too quick to move on to the spiritual application, but to allow the literality of it to sink in. Think of this letter being read out in Corinth and the beloved apostle speaking of being grieved, being poor and having nothing. I am sure that when the letter was being read out in Corinth, consciences were pricked by it; Paul, that faithful servant of Christ, was in prison conditions.

I wanted to speak first of all of the Lord Himself, because the way Paul writes here would remind us of his Master. The Lord Jesus was known publicly as a Man of sorrows, so much so that when He said to His own, “Who do men say that I the Son of man am?”, they said “Jeremias or one of the prophets”, Matt.16:13,14. Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet, and we have the book of the Lamentations of Jeremiah in Scripture. It is a remarkable thing that publicly the Lord was seen to be like that prophet, and of course the spirit of Christ was in Jeremiah. What grief the Lord experienced: the grief of coming to His own “and his own received him not”, John 1:11; the grief of being rejected constantly; the grief of taking account of the effect of sin upon the human race, and the effect of death. He was moved to weep at the grave of Lazarus even though He had the power to raise him from the dead, which He exercised (John 11:17-44). Persons that were there said, “Behold how he loved him!” as

though His tears were simply the tears of bereavement. You will find again a helpful note of the translator (v.33) pointing out that the expression “deeply moved in spirit” conveys the depth of the Lord’s feeling in relation to the power of death over the human spirit. He wept over Jerusalem, the city in which God had placed His name. He wept over the rejection of His ministry in Capernaum and in other places. He said as to Chorazin and to Bethsaida, “if the works of power which have taken place in you, had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they had long ago repented”, Matt.11:21. How the Lord felt these things. Think of His grief that one of His own, His own familiar friend, should lift up his heel against Him (Ps.41:9); “But it was thou” (Ps.55:13), it says prophetically. What grief the Lord had! What grief was carried by the Man of sorrows through this scene, yet always rejoicing.

The Lord spoke of His joy; He desired to impart it to His own, as He desires to impart it to us: “my joy” (John 15:11), He says. He rejoiced in the Father’s affection in the consciousness that His walk and ways were so pleasing to the Father; He rejoiced in that little company around Him: they may have been slow learners, as we are, and they may have been perverse at times, yet He says, “But ye are they who have persevered with me in my temptations”, Luke 22:28. How He appreciated them. His appreciation of them comes out in the way that He spoke of them to the Father in John 17: what they were, and what they had done as receiving His word; and He commits them to the Father. He loved them as given to Him of the Father (v.9); the Lord had His joy in that. He refers prophetically in Psalm 16 to His joy, “I have set Jehovah continually before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart rejoiceth, and my glory exulteth; my flesh moreover shall dwell in hope" (vv.8,9). The Lord had His joy and He wanted to share that with His own; but He had His grief too: grief and joy went on together in the life of Jesus. Think of the "strong crying and tears" (Heb.5:7) in the garden of Gethsemane. Think of that cry, "Father, save me from this hour", John 12:27. It is immediately followed by "But on account of this have I come to this hour. Father, glorify thy name" (v.28). The Lord would have us to be deepened in our sense not only of what He suffered on the cross, but of His pathway that was marked by suffering; and also to appreciate more the joy that marked it. He says prophetically, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage", Ps.16:6. It was His joy to do the Father's will, it was not arduous to Him. He said, "I have food to eat which ye do not know", John 4:32. Think of the joy in the Lord's heart as that woman at Sychar's well grew in her appreciation of Himself under His ministry. She says, "I see that thou art a prophet" (v.19), and "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well" (v.12). First of all, she says, "How dost thou, being a Jew", (v.9); she was trying to understand what kind of man He was, and in the space of a short conversation she grew in her appreciation of Him such that she recognised that He was the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. What joy the Lord would have had in that.

It says in the verse where we read, "as poor, but enriching many". Naturally speaking, that is a paradox. It affects my heart to think of the poverty into which Jesus came. The scripture says, "for your sakes he, being rich, became poor", 2 Cor.8:9. Most people come into the world and try to enrich themselves, but He became poor. Why did He

become poor? That scripture says, “in order that ye by *his* poverty might be enriched”. How enriched we have been through the poverty of Christ. Do you ever think about that? He was born according to flesh into a poor family. We know that, because His parents brought the smallest offering into the temple for Him, “A pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons”, Luke 2:24. He also said, “Bring me a denarius”, Mark 12:15; He did not have one. He borrowed somebody else’s boat in order to preach to the crowd, Luke 5:3. And ultimately when He was crucified His clothes were taken from Him. Man sought to humiliate Him in every way possible; how poor Jesus became. But through His poverty, we have been enriched: “that for your sakes he, being rich, became poor”. And then it says where we read, “as having nothing, and possessing all things”. It says prophetically of the Lord that “his judgment has been taken away”, Acts 8:33. He laid down His life and men thought that was the end. But we know that through those sufferings, through that poverty, all that God has ever sought has been secured; many sons are being brought to glory (Heb.2:10). Think of what God has secured as a result of the sufferings and death of Christ.

In this passage, the apostle speaks directly of himself; he says, “as grieved”. In one of his epistles he writes, “I ... now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ”, Phil.3:18. The apostle wept as he wrote of the inroads of the enemy into the testimony. He says, “all who are in Asia ... have turned away from me” (2 Tim.1:15), and speaks of persons who “loved the present age”, 2 Tim.4:10. He says, “all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ”, Phil.2:21. Paul spent long years in prison, parted from his beloved brethren, “my

brethren, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown", Phil.4:1. What grief the apostle knew. He speaks of his grief over his nation, "great grief and uninterrupted pain", Rom.9:2. As an Israelite himself, he could see the darkness which held the nation in bondage, and it grieved him. We may be grieved by things in our lives, troubles that occur, things that have to be overcome, but do we think about the state of the testimony? A well-known brother often used the expression 'a broken-hearted churchman'. As a young person I wondered what he meant by that, but as you look on the public testimony and think what it was intended to be, and what it has become, it is a source of grief.

Now, does that mean that we give up, because it is all too much? No, the apostle says, "as grieved, but always rejoicing". He says in that epistle to Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice" (chap.4:4); he needed to say it again. Some of us are a bit depressive, we are not characteristically marked by joy. The Spirit of God knows that, and so through the apostle the Spirit says to us, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice". Dear brother, dear sister, do you have a joy in your heart that no sorrow can remove? The apostle did. He was surrounded by griefs. He speaks of "the burden of all the assemblies", 2 Cor.11:28. I think it is well to be reminded of these things; it is not negative to speak of them, because we learn in Scripture at what cost the testimony has reached this western part of the world, through faithfulness of men like Paul who spent long periods in prison and in hardship. We owe so much to them. The apostle was able in those long periods of captivity to write his epistles, and we have been enriched through them.

In that respect, he was poor, but he counted all things on account of Christ loss (Phil.3:7) – things that would have benefitted him in this world and would have stood to his credit. It was not just that he lost them because he became a Christian, but he *counted* them to be loss. He saw that there was no gain for his soul in those things in which once he would have boasted. In his poverty we have been enriched; what enrichment there is for us through Paul's epistles. Take for example the great setting out of the gospel: where do you find the setting out systematically of the great terms on which God can be with men, how it is possible to have peace with God, how the fear of death and the fear of judgment can be removed forever from the heart? In Paul's ministry: what enrichment! Not only the truth of the gospel, but the great truth of the mystery, the truth as to the assembly and its heavenly place in the counsels of God, hidden in God. These things were not revealed before, but revealed by Christ through this beloved apostle – the great truth of what the assembly is to the heart of Christ, as His chief interest here on the earth.

We have been reading the book of Esther at home, and I have been freshly impressed, and I expect others have been too, with the fact that though God is not mentioned in that book, all the scenes are moved, even the heart of the King is moved, on behalf of the people of God. They were in great danger, under great threat, but you find that God is able to move the scenes that He is behind. The dangers look formidable, they may overawe us, but it is a small matter with God to move the scenes that He is behind, and to change them when they have served His purpose. It is a wonderful study to see how, in

Scripture, God operates all things universally on behalf of His people and His testimony.

Paul says, “as having nothing, and possessing all things”. He asked for things to be brought to him; he asked for his cloak and the parchments, (2 Tim.4:13), but everything was taken away from him ultimately. The Scriptures do not reveal it, but we know from secular history that he was martyred for his faith. Yet he speaks about “possessing all things”. He had nothing here, no position, no name, none of the domestic comforts that we take for granted. He did not have a loving wife; he did not have a hot dinner waiting for him in the evening; he did not have a nice car to get about in, or holidays abroad, none of these things that seem to be essential to modern-day life; yet he speaks about “possessing all things”.

In Acts 26, we learn that Paul stood before King Agrippa and all those dignitaries; they were all lined up, and he had his opportunity to speak to them. He says, “I would to God ... that ... all who have heard me this day, should become such as I also am, except these bonds” (v.29). He would not have changed places with any of them; he possessed “all things”. And the fact that he had “all things” in possession, not just as a doctrine but he had them in possession, is apparent in his writings as he brings out glorious spiritual realities, “Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man’s heart, which God has prepared for them that love him”, 1 Cor.2:9. God has made these things known to us by His Spirit. In comparison with such things, the world had nothing to offer Paul. What was around in the world was as nothing to Paul, because he lived in the light of another world.

Dear brethren, the challenge comes down to us. We see these things in Christ, and we see them in the example given to us in the apostle. Dare I say also that some of us have seen them in our own lifetime. It could be said that we have been enriched by those that are poor. We have a dear sister in a care home in Maidstone who has been a resident there for nearly ten years, and as you visit her you are struck by abject weakness; but I can say simply that I have never yet visited her without coming away feeling enriched. She speaks of the glory; she speaks of what Christ is to her in those circumstances. You can see, when in the presence of a saint like that, why the change of condition to a body of glory is necessary, because the work of God in that sister is far greater than the earthly vessel can accommodate. Paul says, “we have this treasure” – the treasure of the knowledge of God – “we have this treasure in earthen vessels”, 2 Cor.4:7. You say, ‘How incongruous that a treasure so valuable should be placed in a vessel that is so inadequate’. Scripture says that “if indeed our outward man is consumed, yet the inward is renewed day by day”, 2 Cor.4:16. In spite of abject weakness there is a vibrancy of joy seen in those outward circumstances that puts me to shame. When I leave that sister in such outwardly limited conditions, I have a sense that I have been enriched. These are things we experience; they are not teaching simply, they are reality. We take account of the work of God in a dear saint who must – according to any natural assessment – be nearing the end of her life here, and she is in triumph.

Many of the dear brethren are in circumstances that are far from easy, from a natural point of view. Some are in small and isolated meetings, and such conditions are not easy. As

regards our lives down here, we are exhorted to be overcomers. The power to overcome is in the consciousness that whatever the outward circumstances may be, whatever the grief of them, we possess all things: “no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Ps.84:11); and “He who, yea, has not spared his own Son ... how shall he not also with him grant us all things?”, Rom.8:32. These things belong to you, dear brother and sister. They are your property. What you have down here you hold as a steward; it may be taken from you, or you from it, but “*our* commonwealth has its existence in the heavens” (Phil.3:20) and it belongs to you. It is your property, and the Spirit of God is given to us in order that its wealth and fulness might fill our souls even now while we wait for our translation into it.

I offer these thoughts for our encouragement. They are a bit fragmentary, but I was struck with how the apostle expresses himself, using stark contrasts to bring home to us that the life of the believer, and what he possesses, exist beyond death. Everything else here is going to pass away.

May God bless the word.

Address at Sidcup

30 May 2026

Roland Brown

THINGS WE ARE TO KEEP

1 John 4:21; 5:1-3,18-21

We read in Jude yesterday, about “keep yourselves in the love of God” (v.21). There are many things in Scripture that we are to keep. Paul exhorts Timothy to “Keep, by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted”, 2 Tim.1:14. There are other references too: “Keep thyself pure” (1 Tim.5:22) and “keep oneself unspotted from the world”, James 1:27. Scripture also exhorts us as to “using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit” (Eph.4:3) and in Proverbs we are told to “Keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded; for out of it are the issues of life” (chap.4:23). There are other references to things that we are to keep. Then there are things that divine Persons keep, or have kept. The Lord Jesus keeps us: He could say, “those thou hast given me I have guarded, and not one of them has perished”, John 17:12. Thus the Lord Jesus keeps His own. As to the Father, the Lord could say: “Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me”, John 17:11.

These references in John’s first epistle came to mind because they link with what we had yesterday. We read, “And this commandment have we from him, That he that loves God love also his brother”. In verse 3 of chapter 5, John speaks of the Lord’s commandments and says that they “are not grievous”. The Lord Jesus says, “If ye love me, keep my commandments”, John 14:15. And He speaks about having love amongst ourselves and loving one another (see John 13:34; 35). Anything that the Lord Jesus repeats must be of intense importance. John implies in what he writes that the evidence of our love

for God and for the Lord Jesus is that we love one another.

We read, “Hereby know we that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments”. It is in the plural here; it is “commandments”. That would perhaps include everything that comes to us from the Lord Jesus and from His apostles. John is implying that if we keep the Lord’s commandments, it is evidence to ourselves that we love the children of God. The phrase, “the children of God” emphasises the family idea. When you think of a family from the natural point of view, affection would be a particular feature and John, as we know, emphasises the family side of things. We are to find our place in the family of God, and that is where love is to be known and enjoyed. And John is saying that to experience that, we are to keep His commandments.

Keeping things is not passive; we will not fall into it, nor will it happen by itself. ‘Keeping’ involves definite exercise. If we think of physical possessions, we do not refer to keeping them unless they are valuable to us. The things that are most precious to us naturally we would pay most attention to, and normally people go to extra lengths to ensure the safety of such things by keeping them.

That is perhaps a poor illustration, but the point is that we are to keep divine things, and that does involve definite exercise. Consider the way that Paul describes keeping “the unity of the Spirit”. He says, “using diligence”, and diligence would involve definite, careful exercise (Eph.4:3). Paul exhorts Timothy, “Occupy thyself with these things; be wholly in them, that thy progress may be manifest to all. Give heed to thyself”, 1 Tim.4:15: “Give heed to

thyself" is like keeping yourself. Paul adds, "and to the teaching; continue in them; for, doing this, thou shalt save both thyself and those that hear thee". This matter of keeping ourselves is not only for our own blessing but also for others. And it requires definite exercise which involves being dependent and praying and relying on the Holy Spirit. We are unable to keep ourselves or to keep divine things without the help of the Holy Spirit.

In the passage from verse 18 onwards, we have, "We know that every one begotten of God does not sin". It is the work of God in a person that does not sin. It is not possible for that work to sin because it is entirely of God. The work of God in a person, what God has put there and which is sometimes referred to as "new creation" (2 Cor.5:17), is really the true character of a believer, and that does not sin. A believer's true character is what is of the work of God in him or her, and it does not sin. That is a tremendous encouragement to us. When a believer sins, when you or I sin, it is not really the believer's true self. It is the flesh in us that sins. I say that in passing. "But he that has been begotten of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him". That brings in the side of our responsibility: while the work of God in us does not sin, we also have a responsibility to keep ourselves "and the wicked one does not touch him".

James says, "resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (chap.4:7). It is a similar thought: again, it must involve definite exercise – dependence and self-judgement – if this is going to be practically true of us. Then John says, "We know that we are of God". Again, that is a great encouragement for the believer. John says, "And the whole world lies in the wicked

one”; we are very conscious of that. “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life”. This is what is available to the believer. As we keep His commandments, and keep ourselves, this is the privilege that is open to us.

In John 17, the Lord Jesus in speaking to the Father says, “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee; as thou hast given him authority over all flesh, that as to all that thou hast given to him, he should give them life eternal. And this is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (vv.1-3). The Lord Jesus uses language similar to what we have in John’s epistle. He speaks of giving to His own eternal life and He adds “that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent”. How much is contained in that. That is what is open to us; and to be in the good of it requires this definite exercise of keeping ourselves.

John adds, “Children, keep yourselves from idols”. That is a test to me. John writes in a very affectionate way in this epistle; he refers to children and that again brings in the family idea. When he says, “keep yourselves from idols”, he is referring really to anything that takes our affections away from the Lord Jesus. I know for myself what a test that is. There are things that on the surface may appear harmless, but take up my time and my affections. I think that the scripture already referred to in Proverbs, “Keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded”, would relate to this, because the heart is the seat of the affections. The words “soul” and

“heart” in Scripture are closely linked and seem to be close in meaning. The soul would speak of depth of feeling, so our affections and our feelings are very much related to this matter of keeping ourselves. When my affections are drawn away from the Lord Jesus, that is when my time is taken up with things that are idols – things that are of no moral value, that may draw me away from the Lord Jesus. John is exhorting us to keep ourselves from such things, things that we have to keep ourselves away from, but there are other things of which we have spoken that we are to be kept in, so that we enjoy divine Persons and things.

May the Lord bless these few simple thoughts, for His name's sake.

Word in a meeting for ministry, Malvern

13 April 2026

Mark Grant

READINESS FOR THE LORD'S COMING

1 Corinthians 15:51,52; Acts 21:16; Luke 14:27;
Deuteronomy 1:36; Joshua 14:7,8;
Genesis 5:21-24

I want to speak about discipleship, and following Jehovah, and walking with God. I read the first scripture to stir up our affections, because we are in the days of the receiving up of the assembly. What a moment that will be: the “dead in Christ” (1 Thess.4:16), the saints of other families being included in that number (see 1 Cor.15:22,23) and “we, the living who remain, shall be caught up

together ... to meet the Lord in the air", 1 Thess.4:17. The "we, the living who remain" are saints of the assembly who are actually consciously awaiting the Lord's return. Many years ago, I remember a brother saying in an address, 'What will you be doing if the Lord comes now? Where will you be?' That struck me at a young age, and has had an influence on me throughout my life. We are in the days of the receiving up of the assembly, and we need to be prepared for it.

We are also in days when it is God's intention that we should grow spiritually. When the Lord comes, there will be no more spiritual growth. We look forward to the Lord's coming; our hearts and the heart of every believer should be looking forward to the Lord's coming. But is every believer ready for the Lord's coming? It says where we read, "We shall all be changed". That is a tremendous thing, that every believer who is alive at that moment when the Lord comes, is going to be changed. We will receive bodies of glory (Phil.3:21), and the work of God will be complete in every believer. The present moment is the time when the work of God can increase in our souls. The other question is, how will the Lord find us when He comes for us? That is why I have read these scriptures, because I feel that we need to be nearer than ever to the Lord in these last days. Whatever has gone before in our lives, is past; we cannot reclaim it. But we have the rest of our lives, our time, and I desire that we should commit ourselves fully to the Lord Jesus.

I read in Acts about Mnason, "an old disciple". He is mentioned here and is never mentioned again in Scripture. I do not think that he was necessarily an old man, but he had been a disciple for a long time.

There are many brethren here who have been long in the testimony, and they have been following the Lord, and you can see it in their actions and how they think. I would encourage the young ones to take on the path of discipleship in their early years. It is interesting that, at the time to which this passage refers, Paul was going up to Jerusalem and there had been prophecy that he was going to suffer (see Acts 21:4,10-14). It was a difficult time in the testimony for Paul, and he was going to lodge with this disciple. Remember how in chapter 16, Lydia is recorded as saying, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there" (v.15). Lydia evidently valued Paul and his ministry, and Mnason also is a man who valued Paul and his teaching. What was unfolding here had in mind the opening up of blessing for the Gentiles. Paul was going to be bound, he was going to be in chains after this; but this disciple, one who followed the Lord, is prepared to make way for Paul in his house. It is one of the features that marks discipleship, that you follow the Lord.

In Luke 14, the Lord says, "whoever does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple". The path of discipleship is not easy; it requires great commitment. This is not the Lord's cross here. This is your cross, and my cross. What the Lord says here about a man carrying his cross suggests that such a person is prepared to suffer and die. John says in his epistle, "and we ought for the brethren to lay down our lives", 1 John 3:16. It is a feature of the disciple, that he is thinking of the Lord, and is thinking of those who are dear to the Lord. It is a path of suffering; but oh, the recompense! You might ask, what are we to learn from these things? I think that you get the answer in Matthew 11. The

Lord Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me" (v.29). That is a very blessed thing; that is the way we arrive at the Lord's mind. As you are walking through this scene, yoked with the Lord Jesus, you are learning from Him all the time. That is, you are beginning to walk as He walked, and as you take His yoke upon you, the Lord is there beside you. "Take my yoke upon you ... for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light": how He lightens every burden, how He carries the load. We can be with Him in the testimony, looking forward to His end being reached, and His objective is that the saints might be brought in to enjoy the full blessings that are in the divine mind.

The first thing to be noticed is that as we are walking in discipleship, we are close to the Lord Jesus, so we are ready for Him to come at any moment, in the twinkling of an eye. You cannot change your course then, when He comes: you think of the twinkling of an eye: it is instantaneous. Every believer, we among them, should want to be pleasing to the Lord when He comes. One of the features that pleases Him is that we are marked by discipleship, we are following the Lord to learn from Him, so that we take on the features of the Lord Jesus.

I wanted to speak about Caleb where we read in Deuteronomy. Not only did he follow the Lord; it is said of him that he "wholly followed Jehovah". Caleb is a remarkable man; he came right through the wilderness, and he went into the land. He was sent out by Moses to spy out the land (see Num.13) and he brought back, he and Joshua, the fruit of the land borne "between two on a pole" (v.23). Not only did he have the produce on his shoulder; he had the land in his heart. That is a further mark of those who are

waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus, which will be the completion of things, as far as the believer is concerned, down here – that we have His coming in our hearts. Caleb was ready to enter into the land at any moment, and we need to be ready. Very interesting features came out in Caleb. When it says that “he hath wholly followed Jehovah”, it is God that is speaking through Moses; the words are God’s, it is His viewpoint. It is not Caleb that is saying this, although he does say it where we read in Joshua when he is claiming his inheritance. None of them go into the land except Caleb, and of course Joshua too. God says, “he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath wholly followed Jehovah”.

How was he able to wholly follow Jehovah? We know that Caleb was there when the manna came at first, and he had eaten the manna all these years in the wilderness, and he ate it until the manna ceased (Josh.5:12). Think of the manna: it was a daily matter, and Christianity is a daily matter. The children of Israel had to gather it: it was the responsibility of the head of a house to gather the manna, and Caleb would have done that. For us, it is reading and following up things about Christ, and using that as food for our souls. One of the things that it says about the manna is that it was white (Exod.16:31). That suggests the purity of the walk of Jesus here, and they fed on that. The manna was small; it was “fine, granular, fine as hoar-frost, on the ground” (v.14). It is also described as being like bdellium (Num.11:7), “and the taste of it was as the taste of oil-cakes”, or fresh oil (v.8, see footnote). It is good to go through the gospels and find all the features of the manna that are seen in Christ, and we are to feed on that. It is often said that we become

like what we feed on. If we feed on what is good, we become good; and if we feed on what is evil, we are in danger of being affected by that. So let us not feed on all the trouble of the day, all the things that are happening in the world; let us feed on Christ, a Man of a different order from every other man.

The manna was small – “fine as hoar-frost, on the ground”. You will not find anything great and outwardly magnificent in the Lord Jesus; He was a very humble Man – what food for the soul. You see that in Caleb, I suggest. Where we read in Joshua, Caleb says “I brought him word again as it was in my heart”. Twelve spies had been sent out (Num.13:4-16), and ten of them brought back an evil report. Caleb had said, “we are well able” (v.30), but they said, “We are not able” (v.31). In Joshua 14, Caleb claimed “this mountain, of which Jehovah spoke in that day” (v.12), that is, Hebron. You get a suggestion of Hebron in Colossians: “Christ is everything, and in all” (chap.3:11). Are you feeding on that glorious Man? Yet in Colossians there were enemies, great enemies – you have “philosophy and vain deceit” (chap 2:8): they are two enemies. They are like the Anakim; Caleb speaks about them; they have to be dispossessed if the land, speaking of heavenly truth, is to be enjoyed and fed on. There is a third enemy in that verse: “according to the teaching of men”, that is, according to this world. Christendom has been overcome by these things. The believer who feeds on the manna is built up on the features seen in Christ. What a glorious Person Christ is: He is food for the soul.

It is good to read the gospels in the morning to see the greatness and the glory of Jesus walking through this scene. You notice that He never had a

hard word against the ordinary people. He set aside the religious leaders, He did not give them much place; but you never find a wrong word with the Lord Jesus. I think Caleb here illustrates that feature: he says, "And my brethren that had gone up with me made the heart of the people melt; but I wholly followed Jehovah my God". What a gracious statement about these others who were sent to spy out the land. I do not think I would have said that; I would probably have been more cutting, but that would not be taking on the features of Christ by feeding on Him. The first thing Caleb says is, "my brethren": always respect the brethren; they are the brethren of Christ. Regardless of the situation, you must always have regard for the brethren; they are special. They may have made a mistake, they may have turned aside; but always respect the brethren, which includes all believers, because if you feed on Christ, you see persons as Christ sees them. We are brought onto a different level; it is how God views things.

Caleb says, "And my brethren that had gone up with me made the heart of the people melt". What they actually did was, they did not speak the truth; they despised Caleb and Joshua for saying "we are well able to do it", Num.13:30. How dreadful it would be if you brought back a good report and somebody says, 'That is not true'. What does Caleb say? "And my brethren ... made the heart of the people melt". What a gracious way of saying it. It did not alter their responsibility, because none of them except Caleb and Joshua entered the land; their carcasses fell in the wilderness (Num.14:32). That was God's side; but our side is to be like Caleb who had respect for "my brethren". We must always respect those in whom the Spirit of God is. As we hold the brethren in high

regard, we are taking on the features of the Lord Jesus.

Caleb asked for this mountain, for Hebron, and that is like Colossian truth. It is not the full height of the truth; that is Ephesians, but you think of Colossian truth: it involves holding fast the head (see Col.2:19). We are to “seek the things that are above, where the Christ is” (chap.3:1). We can be so easily involved with other matters; but keep your focus on Christ where He is. That is what Caleb did.

I want to refer to Enoch. Where we read in Genesis, it says twice that “Enoch walked with God”. This is a very beautiful section. Enoch suggests the assembly being translated to glory. When you read about Enoch, you will find that. He was formed by walking with God. That was one of God’s original thoughts, which we touched in the reading meeting: God came down to the garden, and He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day. That was not for Him: the cool of the day or the heat of the day did not affect God, He was not man. But sin had come in, and we might say that that ruined the whole scene and brought in death. But the seventh from Adam, Enoch, is a completely different thought: he was translated out of a wicked world. That is what is going to happen to believers: we are all going to be translated. We, the living who remain, are going to be changed in an instant (see 1 Thess.4:15; 1 Cor.15:52), and that is what happened with Enoch. He was caught up: “and he was not, for God took him”. I think God valued these walks every day with Enoch. If we walk with God, we become characterised by it, we increase in our knowledge of God. We are living in the last days: the time, as I said, of the receiving up of the assembly, and we should

be increasing in our knowledge of God. I read this scripture about Enoch because he is spoken of elsewhere as having “the testimony that he had pleased God”, Heb.11:5. Is our walk such that it pleases God? It is a very testing matter, but it is a great preservative to be walking in such a way that we please God. In the morning, we pray, and we ask for preservation and we give thanks that it is a bountiful God who cares for us. But walking with God involves more than that; it involves speaking with God and communing with Him. Do we ever ask the Father for some special impression of His delight in His Son? We can ask Him to show us some additional feature of His pleasure in His well-beloved Son. Oh, what food for the soul that is; you might get something special, a special impression, and you can work with it, and then you can go back and ask for more.

Enoch walked with God for a long period. It says of Enoch that he “lived sixty-five years, and begot Methushelah. And Enoch walked with God after he had begotten Methushelah three hundred years”. The normal life span is now reduced to a tenth of the age that we read of at the time of Enoch. A tenth of the three hundred years that Enoch walked with God, thirty years, is a protracted period. If we walked with God throughout our pathway as believers here, how spiritual we should be. I feel the edge of the word myself. We are very lax – I speak for myself – regarding these things. It needs full commitment, and we are in the days when full commitment is needed because the time is short and the days may be few. We take account of the conditions in the world outside, and we may say, ‘The Lord’s coming is not far off’, and rightly so. But what about conditions inside? I think that conditions inside are really the best indication of the Lord’s near return. John tells us

that we are to love the brethren (1 John 3:14). That is one of the features that should be coming more into expression, that we love the brethren. Not special friendships – that is a different thought altogether. This is not limited to those with whom we walk in fellowship, although the expression of it is perhaps easiest there. When you meet other believers, you are reminded that we are all brethren of Christ. They are brethren, and you sometimes feel that special link, there is a spark; they have the Spirit. Your heart goes out to them; you want to bring them in to enjoy what you are enjoying of the truth. We are to gauge things not by the world, and what is going on in it, but by our own links with divine Persons and our links with the brethren.

I go back to the scripture we read in 1 Corinthians 15, because these three things that I spoke about – discipleship, wholly following Jehovah, and walking with God – are essential for this close relationship with divine Persons. These relationships will come out in our walk, so that we might be ready for that moment when the Lord comes and all the dead in Christ will rise. How we look forward to that moment when the Lord Jesus will have all His loved ones with Him in glory. That is what we should be looking on to, and we should be preparing our walk so that when He comes, the change should not be so very great. That was an expression that I heard a lot of in my early days, that the change should not be so very great; it should just be a change of condition.

What I am speaking about does not belong to the first order, to man after nature or the flesh. It is the spiritual side that I am speaking about, and what is spiritual is going through. What is going right through into eternity is the work of God in believers.

Nothing of the first order of man has any place, so we need to pay attention to be disciples, that is, to follow the Lord and learn from Him, and also to be found wholly following Jehovah. Peter said, "Lord, and what of this man? Jesus says to him, If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me", John 21:21,22. That is Peter being corrected by the Lord on the line of Caleb, so that he would wholly follow the Lord. Peter came into the gain of it: you find that in his epistle, when he speaks of "being with him on the holy mountain", 2 Pet.1:18. He is full of the wealth of heaven, derived from walking with God, a very necessary matter. It involves personal communion with divine Persons, and it is essential in growing in the knowledge of God.

May we be ready for when the Lord comes, however long or however short it may be, but we know that the time is not far off; for His name's sake.

Address at Dundee

20 June 2026

Alex Mair

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Now we come to the elements, which go to compose the kingdom of God ... The first is *relief*, then *revelation*, *resurrection*, *realisation*, and lastly, *relationship*. There must be relief first. Relief and revelation are seen in the death of Christ. That which relieves me, reveals God ... There is the revelation in His own blessed face of what He secured in death as the Mediator of the new covenant. What He secured

in death He livingly presents. He has revealed Himself, and I am relieved of myself and my sins in the death of Christ ... the early converts at Thessalonica ... "They turned to God from idols ... To serve the living and true God". That is God's kingdom ... It was no sentimental thing with them. They were living in God's kingdom ... and looking for His Son from heaven ... You are on the same footing as Christ is, and you receive the Spirit that you may live of His life ... You are upon the resurrection platform. You have the power of the Spirit to enable you to enjoy the revelation. You are endowed with that marvellous capacity from Christ, your Head, having received the Spirit that you may live of His life, and bask in the sunshine of the revelation which He has made of God, and this becomes life to you ...

We now come to *realisation*. Love is in the Spirit. You have received the Spirit from Christ, and you love God. There is your happiness. I do not now desire gold. I know now my happiness, my heart is responding to His love. Let Him, dear Christian, love you into loving Him.

I pass on to the *relationship*. It is this: we are children with the Father, in God's kingdom. We are translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love. This is the climax, you are there, loved by the Father. You are loved as Christ is loved.

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