A WORD
IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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CONTENTS

Obedience
Page 1

Obeying The Glad Tidings
Liam M Hibbert
Page 13

Shepherding
Steve T Eagle
Page 16

Provision for
The Man of God
James Bedford
Page 24

"Ask for The Ancient Paths"
Eric C Burr
Page 28

OBEDIENCE

Romans 5: 19
Philippians 2: 5-9
Hebrews 5: 7, 8
2 Corinthians 10: 5

RB These scriptures refer to obedience. I was impressed by that matter this morning. It was primarily what was said at the table about our privilege to obey the Lord's request that we remember Him. It impressed me that it was His obedience that underlay the whole occasion, the sacrifice of Himself. I thought about this reference, "the obedience of the one"; it could only relate to the Lord Jesus. There has never been obedience like that. The Lord was obedient in a way that we could never be obedient. When we think of our obedience, we think of it in relation to what we are naturally, as disobedient. The Lord Jesus learned obedience, but not because there was something contrary to that. "He learned obedience", as we read in Hebrews, "from the things that he suffered". That entails the place that He took in manhood. As we have in Philippians 2, He "emptied himself, taking a bondman's form", He learned obedience in these circumstances. As on an equality with God, obedience was not required. It was not there in any way. He was equal with God, but in becoming Man, He took "his place in the likeness of men", but He took a bondman's form. That really entails that He came in to serve and to obey. That obedience was "even unto death, and that the death of the cross". All our blessings depended on the obedience of this One. Another thought that came in subsequently was the scope of the will of God. We sang -

> God's will in its vastness Thou lovedst (Hymn 39).

That involved the Lord Jesus being obedient to that will. As we read in Psalm 40,

> Behold, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me
> To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight.

It involved the Lord Jesus coming in as a Man and embracing that will, and fulfilling it in every detail. That final reference in 2 Corinthians demonstrates one way in which we should be exercised to be formed by Christ's obedience and lead every thought captive, in obedience to the Christ. It would be our happy privilege to do so.

DMW Would you say therefore, in these scriptures, as we think

through what obedience is, that it is an indication of practical righteousness?

RB I think so; it is "by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous". It is really because of that that we are no longer constituted sinners. The disobedience of Adam led to that, the fact that we are sinners. By the obedience of the One we are viewed as righteous by God, if we have been affected by that obedience, and by the One who obeyed, and by the work that He did. Is that what you have in mind?

DMW I was thinking that we are accounted righteous, constituted that way. If constituted, then we follow in that same pathway practically, and thus fulfil righteousness.

RB Yes, and without that consciousness we could not really enter into the service of God, or fill it out without some sense that what the Lord Jesus has done has cleared us judiciously before God, and made us righteous before Him. That does not do away with the need to judge ourselves, and come in the right state to the Supper. We do so in the consciousness that we have been made righteous by His obedience. There is a reference later in Hebrews 10, "by which will we have been sanctified", v 10. I wonder if that had a similar bearing on us. The will of God really sets us apart for God, and for His things: "by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". That is in relation to the quotation in Hebrews from Psalm 40, "Lo, I come to do thy will. He takes away the first that he may establish the second", v 9. The Lord Jesus taking up that will and fulfilling it has led to a sanctified company being secured and we have the privilege to be part of that company and to respond accordingly.

DMW May I add just one more word as to Him learning obedience? It was always His place in deity to command. In fact, He was the Creator, but it was through His sufferings that He learned what it was. You view the difference from ourselves: we have to learn to obey because we have a contrary element in us. Is that right?

RB Yes, that is right. That view of obedience could never apply to the perfect Man, and yet, "he learned obedience from the things which he suffered", as the scripture says. He was "heard because of his piety" through "strong crying and tears". He is really a pattern for us in that sense. In deity, obedience had no place because He is coequal with the Father. It is a consideration that such a One as that should take "his

place in the likeness of men" and take a condition to which obedience is attached. It was never more gloriously set out than when He says to the Father, "if thou wilt remove this cup from me:- but then, not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. It was not that there was another will in operation there, but He was perfectly in accordance with that will in every detail.

LMH I wonder if you would open up a little more the difference between obedience as we would know and refer to it, in reference to ourselves from a natural point of view, and what we are discussing in terms of Christ's obedience. You referred to it in your opening remarks and what you said was helpful. I wonder if you might say a little more.

RB Naturally, we do not obey. We approach obedience through thinking 'I am not going to do this or that', and then 'I am going to obey'. Speaking carefully that never entered into the Lord's mind. The will of His God and Father was the spring of His being. He was perfectly in consonance with that will. He never had a contrary thought. It was not just seen in His acts, although His acts were always perfectly according to the will of God. He never had a thought that deviated from the will of God and He never had to check a thought. How often I have a thought that I need to check. That is not according to what God would have. We read in the last scripture about "leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ". The Lord Jesus never had to check Himself, speaking carefully. Perfect manhood was set out there.

LMH We are to take pleasure in obedience, and have to overcome a contrary desire and make a conscious decision to obey. Speaking carefully, God did not take pleasure in obedience like that in Christ, because it was not anything like that; it was because of His pure desires. We as imitators of Christ would strive to be driven by a similar motivation, not the motive not to do what we instinctively want to do, but to want to do instinctively what we are meant to do, which is quite a thing to come to.

RB Christ instinctively did what was right. There was no other will in operation. There was nothing else that would have caused a different outcome. He was perfect. Even just feeding on Him in that way would help us. In Philippians 2 it say, "let this mind be in you". That was the mind to go down. The Lord Jesus was sinless. Still, that mind was found in Him which caused so much pleasure to God.

SWS There is such a thing as obligatory obedience, which is right in

itself. We can see intellectually that something is right or something is wrong; this is more than that. That is the wonderful thing that we have been brought into. For example, it refers to how God's "commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5: 3), to us. We can still comply or obey in an obligatory sense, and those commandments might still be somewhat grievous to us in the flesh. We want an obedience that is pure. I was noticing later on in Romans it makes the comment, "thanks be to God, that ye were bondmen of sin, but have obeyed from the heart", Rom 6: 17. Is that not wonderful, you "have obeyed from the heart"? It becomes what you want to do; it is what comes forth from the heart in relation to a responsive desire to please the One we love. That is really what it comes to; what a wonderful motive. If we had that motive indeed, His commandments would not be grievous to us. I was thinking of where it says in Ephesians, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord", chap 6: 1. That is another aspect of obedience, the spirit in which obedience is taken up. It is not merely obeying to obey as a commandment, but it is "in the Lord". There is something of a divine character to it. Maybe you could open up that example of obedience, and the exhortation in relation to your exercise about "in the Lord". What would that bring before us?

RB As you were speaking, my mind went to a quotation that I have heard said often: God has placed authority where it is least irksome, JT vol 8: p229. And He has placed authority in the Lord Jesus. The title "Lord" implies authority. If we are forced to obey, we may do it grudgingly at best. We obey from the heart, as your scripture in Romans says, because our affections have been captured by the Lord Jesus. He set out obedience in its purest form in such a way as to capture our hearts and to hold them for Him. Obeying His request, love's obligation, to remember Him is our happy privilege. It is something we do willingly. To continue in Romans, we come to, "present your bodies a living sacrifice", Rom 12: 1. That is where obedience takes you. You have seen the sacrifice set out so perfectly in Christ. It is described as, "your intelligent service", "that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God", v 2. That was the will of God that the Lord Jesus embraced, held in His heart and magnified. There it is for us to take up and to find that it is good, and acceptable, and perfect. As we approach it through the Lord, and all that it means to us, then we begin to see a way.

DMW It being "in Christ", that makes the difference; 'in Adam' is

contrary. It is not only positional; it is subjective.

RB So it says, “this mind”, “which was also in Christ Jesus”. We see it there; we see the One who was in the place of highest glory, but came of His own volition into this scene and took up the will of God, knowing what it would entail. We think of the sacrifice that that involved. Often our thoughts go to the types. You go to Abraham and Isaac: “where is the sheep for a burnt-offering”, Gen 22: 7. “On the mount of Jehovah will be provided”, v 14. The type falls short because, while the father and the son went together in that sense, Isaac did not know what awaited him. The Lord Jesus. in perfect submission to the will of His God and Father, went knowing entirely what awaited Him. His footsteps never faltered: He set His face stedfastly and He carried through the whole thing to God's glory.

SWS It is one thing to see obedience as something that we take up because it is the right thing to do. That is right; we do not want to take away from that. Then we are to reach this level of obedience where our motives are completely pure and in relation to the One of whom we are desiring to obey. That is another level of things that we truly want to reach. That is a spiritual aspect of obedience. I was thinking about what a thing it is to come to the point where to obey becomes food to the soul. I was thinking about how the Lord could say, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me”, John 4: 34 (KJV). It was His meat, it was food to Him; I say that reverently. What a thing to come to where obedience becomes food to the soul; what a wonderful thing.

RB Our food is to feed on Him, doing that will, and to be formed in the character of the Man: “let this mind be in you”. He took a bondman's form. It involved emptying Himsellf. Then it involved Him “becoming obedient even unto death”. It does not mean that He became obedient to death. The Lord Jesus was never obedient to death. Death had no claim. He went into death and in going into death He defeated it. He “has annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings”, 2 Tim 1: 10. Death was the extent to which His obedience took Him. In perfect manhood He went that way and offered up His spirit, and bowed His head and went into death, John 19: 30.

LEO It is really helpful what is coming out. Is there a difference between obedience and subjection? Does subjection follow on from obedience? We spoke about subjection in the weeknight reading last week. I think we could see both perfectly in the Lord Jesus. Is there a difference, and does one lead to another? They seem like very similar

thoughts.

RB I think they are. I do not think you could be obedient without demonstrating subjection. You are subject to the will of another. It seems to me that subjection is a state, and obedience is an act that follows. It is a tangible thing. You could say speaking carefully that "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" was a mind to go down. We see subjection there.

LMH I think obedience without subjection would be quite meaningless. It would be begrudging, like obeying a manager you do not like at work. Both go together and are important.

DMW I was looking at that reference in Luke 2: "he went down with them and came to Nazareth" (Luke 2: 51); "he was in subjection to them". That was as a Boy in the household of His parents. As I understand the scripture in Hebrews, "he learned obedience from the things which he suffered" and, "with strong crying and tears", He was obedient unto death. It seems that subjection is a state which is found in Him perfectly.

RB That is helpful. Going back to what was asked as to the thought of what is only in the Lord. I think that implies that subjection is to be there. The way in which that manifests itself is in obedience.

DMW Would you say that He exhausted the judicial claims of God, in death? So that death becomes a power for us. We have to travel through death ourselves. We eat His flesh and drink His blood, for example, before we can feed on His humanity.

RB What you suggest comes out in John 6. "Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves", v 53. What we are really talking about is life according to God, which must come in as a result of death having its way to our wills and the application of death to our members and so on. A living sacrifice results.

DMW We have that word, "As the living Father has sent me and I live on account of the Father", John 6: 57. "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me" (John 4: 34) and "*he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me", John 6: 57. We have the pattern of life. We have the Deliverer Himself going through death so that the flesh which shackles us no longer does, because we live on account of His living. Therefore, obedience comes into that with a state that is subject.

RB In order to know anything about this obedience we need the Holy Spirit. As we know the Spirit was sent here on account of the Lord Jesus being glorified which must suppose death and dealing with everything that stood against God. God's claim has been upheld in every detail. The Spirit comes here and we can walk in the Spirit, and we do not obey flesh's lusts. That supposes that the teaching of death has had its way and the Spirit can be free.

DMW So the means by which we live naturally, without Christ, is the flesh. The means by which we live spiritually, and own what is creatorially right, is in the Spirit.

NOS I would like some help on what it says in Romans, after the part that we read, about grace and how that correlates with obedience.

RB It is so attractively set out in that verse. The epistle has been leading up to this; every other type of man has been put out of sight, or exposed earlier in the epistle. We have that the offence has abounded, but then you have at the end of the verse, "where sin abounded grace has over abounded", Rom 5: 20. It relates to what has been spoken about, "sin has reigned in the power of death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord", v 21. The way that grace has taken to secure us really acts as a lever in our souls, and attracts our affections after the Lord Jesus. There is another verse that talks about grace, "For 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", 2 Cor 8: 9. It is the grace of the Lord Jesus, for your sakes. Grace is operative; it is towards us. It attracts us to Him, as our object. It is really as that is the case that we seek to be obedient to Him.

DMW Does it help us to see the way that grace appeared? It appeared in the Lord Jesus, of course. As God dealing with man all through the dispensations, there had to be grace or else there would have been another flood, so to speak. Now grace has appeared in a Person. He was "full of grace and truth", John 1: 14. I think it goes with what we thought of regarding subjection and obedience; we can think of love and grace. Grace and truth were in Christ. The spirit of grace, and the spirit of truth is in the assembly. Love is behind it all. Grace is the activity of love.

RB That is good. Last Lord's day, we were thinking about being subject to every human institution (1 Pet 2: 13); reference was made to

Titus 2, about adorning the teaching. There we have “bondmen to be subject to their own masters”, “shewing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the teaching which is of our Saviour God in all things. For the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men has appeared, teaching us that, having denied impiety and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and justly, and piously in the present course of things, awaiting the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”, Titus 2: 10-13. It is interesting that the grace of God in that verse comes straight after the thought of being in subjection, and adorning the teaching. Really the operation of the grace of God is what makes that possible.

DMW My mind also went back to the reading last Lord's day, as was drawn attention to, “for the Lord's sake”. There is something in that in the way of grace if we subject ourselves, or we are subject to every human institution. There are also divine institutions, which brings in marriage and family. A human institution might be contrary but the will of God would prevail, as you brought out. I must obey God rather than man if there is a point of conflict. Even in employment, as a human institution, the master may not be very kind, but then there may be those who are kind. We own what is creatorial just like the Lord did. Christianity renders us desiring to make what is natural according to the original thoughts of God, therefore marriage and the family also come in.

SWS One thing that comes to mind in relation to the enquiry as to God's grace is how it has overabounded. It is a wonderful thing to really lay hold of that, to understand that there is no more powerful force in the universe than God's love and His corresponding grace. It is by His grace that we have been brought into the knowledge, and the experience, of His love. I have always thought of God's grace in view of securing ultimately what is to be for His own heart, according to His purpose. That is why His grace is so wonderful. It is not merely on the line of meeting our need: how precious that is. It is bringing us into correspondence with what His own mind has purposed in His heart for Himself. There can be nothing greater than that.

RB That is very good. We have that in Ephesians: “having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will”, chap 1: 5. His will comes in there, “the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace”, v 6. My impression of that is that it is what has been secured

because grace has overabounded for the praise of the glory of His grace. You see glory in grace. It must be more than meeting a need if the glory of His grace is connected with it.

LMH We have discussed the obedience of Christ in manhood, the obedience of Christ in His walk here, and the obedience of Christ in going into death. How would we understand Christ's obedience now, in His relationship with the Father? How would we understand that?

RB The fact is that the Lord Jesus remains a Man eternally. Clearly, He is and ever remains God. Nothing can interfere with that. If you think of the Hebrew bondman, "he shall be his bondman forever", Exod 21: 6. The Lord Jesus is not in a bondman's form now, but He is a Man now. Therefore, He can sympathise with us. We referred to a scripture last night when we were with you, about God being all in all when the Son gives up the kingdom to Him: "when all things shall have been brought into subjection to him, then the Son also himself shall be placed in subjection to him who put all things in subjection to him, that God may be all in all", 1 Cor 15: 28. At that point, the Son is seen in a place of subjection.

SWS This is a continuous matter that is seen in Christ perfectly in the day to come, when He will be placed in subjection to God.

CIO I was looking at Matthew 4, in relation to what was said earlier as to when the Lord was tempted out in the wilderness by the devil. I was thinking of the scripture, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God's mouth", v 4. In the third temptation, the Lord says, "Get thee away, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt do homage to the Lord thy God, and him alone shalt thou serve", v 10. It seems that these rebukes were given without hesitation. There was not any other thought except the rejection of what Satan had presented to the Lord. I was thinking of Peter saying, "give an account of the hope that is in you", 1 Peter 3: 15. With the Lord's obedience there was not a second thought: it was complete and total obedience to God's will.

RB That is helpful. It helps us how we are to be when we are tempted, although the Lord Jesus was not tempted in the way that we are, because there was nothing in Him that answered to Satan's temptation. Nevertheless, He answers from scripture and He answers as a dependent Man. The fact that He quotes from Deuteronomy is all in keeping with the kind of Man that was here.

SWS Does what we have in John 17 have some bearing on what we are speaking about? I was thinking about how in verse 4, He says, "I have glorified *thee* on the earth, I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it; and now glorify *me*, *thou* Father, along with thyself, with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was", v 4, 5. Does that have some bearing on what we are speaking about as to the character of His obedience even at present?

RB I would appreciate if you would open that up. Clearly, "I have glorified *thee* on the earth", and "I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it", was in manhood here. Then "the glory which I had along with thee before the world was" relates to distinctive glory which we cannot enter into. Say further what is in your mind.

SWS That is exactly what I was thinking. He refers to His having come. He has glorified the Father; He has completed the work that He sent Him to do. Then He refers back to the glory that He had with Him before the world was. I was thinking about what you said as to the unity that was found with divine Persons. This was something that was taken up in unity, even the Lord's coming, His great down-stooping into manhood. This was something that was the manifestation and demonstration of the unity that was found amongst divine Persons from all eternity.

RB You see that set out on the mount of transfiguration where the voice was heard and the cloud overshadowed them. Jesus alone was found there. It has been said that He could have gone right back into glory at that point but that would not have involved the full thought in "I have glorified *thee* on the earth, I have completed the work that thou gavest me that I should do it". The Father's glory was in view from that point forward. Really the days of His receiving up into glory were nigh.

DMW The glory could have claimed Him at that point. He does not take that glory, except in manhood. He takes it again, and He had it before, but He takes it now in manhood, because He retains His manhood.

LMH Does Hebrews 7 relate to what we are discussing where we have the thought of the Lord as a priest, "*Thou* art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedec" (v 17), and then at the end of the chapter, "the word of the swearing of the oath which is after the law, a Son perfected for ever", v 28? Does that relate to what we were discussing as to the Lord being a priest, subjecting Himself to God, but

always having in mind what is for Him? Is that what those verses convey, and does that relate? I would like help.

RB I think that is helpful in relation to the question that was raised. His qualification for priesthood was His sonship, which involved the fact that He came into manhood. He is able to sympathise with us. Everything for God is currently sustained and upheld by Him in His position. He always lives to intercede for us. As you say, “a Son perfected for ever”. Everything that is for God eternally depends on His being in that position, sustaining all for His pleasure. Is that what you had in mind?

DMW Because we are creatures, we will need Him in this function, eternally. Also, we will need a mediator. There is service there. Obedience might relate more to what was instinctively seen in Him before the cross. He is retaining these positions, a priest for ever, and a mediator. I wanted to ask in relation to this enquiry; He does not rise up for the rapture until the Father gives Him the word, is that right? He will not move until the Father gives Him the word.

RB Certainly that is right. It is the Father that knows the time and the hour. The Son awaits that, which is another glorious matter, an affecting one. What do you say about before the cross, relating to this?

DMW He was instinctively subject, with never a deviation from any thought the Father had. He lived by every word, as we heard earlier; there was never deviation. He shrunk from what had occurred in Gethsemane. He overpowered the enemy through obedience in the wilderness; but he returned to tempt Him there. The enemy found that this was not a man like other men that he had to deal with. He attempted to get Him out of the place of obedience unto death.

RB He took the cup from the Father's hand, which is what Satan was attempting to deflect Him from. We read of these things, and we should be affected by them. We cannot really fathom what this involved for the Lord Jesus, “he began to be sorrowful and deeply depressed” (Matt 26: 37); “his sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth”, Luke 22: 44. We read of intensity, the “strong crying and tears”, which was a real matter; always in perfect communion with His God and Father, never otherwise, save for the three hours when He was made sin. That was the matter that He recoiled from, as was entirely in keeping with the holiness of His Person.

DMW He was heard because of His piety. You mentioned the additional comment that was made, when discussing piety. It is not just bringing God into our circumstances, but His circumstances were perfectly ordered so that God would come into them, and so He prayed the third time, and then rose up in victory, to take the cup from the Father's hand. The devil had nothing to do with that.

Denton

15th March 2026

List of initials (local unless shown)**:**

R Brown, Linlithgow; L M Hibbert; C I Oliver; L E Oliver, S W Selman; D M Welch

OBEYING THE GLAD TIDINGS

Liam M Hibbert

Romans 5: 19
Acts 17: 30, 31
John 3: 35, 36

As I am sure is evident, I simply wanted to continue this topic of obedience that we enjoyed in our reading today. I thought that we were helped, and I was certainly encouraged by what we took up; and I wanted to present it in the gospel context for the consideration of each one here.

The verse in Romans which we spent much of our time with is a very fundamental verse in the presentation of the glad tidings: “For as indeed by the disobedience of the one man”. You think of God's intent in creating man, the standard by which He created man, according to His own image (Gen 1: 27); and yet man fell. Man fell from the standard of perfect righteousness that God must require because of His perfect nature. He cannot be characterised by anything other than this. Man failed to uphold this and immediately disobeyed God. Although they were surrounded by perfection and in need of nothing, wanting of nothing, Adam and Eve still failed. “By the disobedience of the one man”, Adam, sin was brought into the world and with sin death. With sin and death comes the solemn reality of being at a great insurmountable distance from our Creator, from our God; what a solemn thing. We think of the generations that followed and the provision of the law that God gave to man, to the Israelites, and yet with that, repeated failure to uphold it, to live by it. So we know that man has been proven as incapable, and undeserving of this wonderous perfect righteousness of God. Fortunately for us, the verse does not end there; it goes on, “so also by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous”. This is why we have the wonderful privilege of being able to announce the coming, the dying, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We know that in His perfection, in His perfect walk, He was perfectly qualified to go into death to be a sacrifice, uniquely capable of dealing with this insurmountable issue of sin. The result of His perfect obedience is this: “the many will be constituted righteous”. We have this wondrous privilege to be able to proclaim this.

The gospel does not present an automatic thing. It is available for each and every one in this place at this time, to lay hold of and to

make it your own. My impression in preaching this glad-tidings message is to reinforce the wondrous obedience of Christ, this perfect thought. It is so different to the obedience that we know as humans; this is perfect obedience. I also want to emphasise that we are required to obey this message. This is not a request and this is not an option, dear friends. The presentation of this message is one that requires an answer. It requires a response.

That is why I read in Acts 17: 30: "God therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, now" - which relates to our present day - "enjoins", or commands, "men that they shall all everywhere repent". It does not get much plainer than that. God "enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent". We have this plain command, this plain instruction and it requires an answer. There are two answers, I suppose: there is obedience or disobedience. We can obey this enjoining and repent, which must lead us to the Lord Jesus and His completed work; or we can reject the word, we can decide not to repent, and to continue down this pathway of sin, this pathway of death, this pathway that is so opposed to God. The verse goes on to present a solemn fact: "because he has set a day in which he is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness" - that same perfect standard that we have referred to already - "by the man whom he has appointed, giving the proof of it to all in having raised him from among the dead". We have this assurance, dear friends, that the habitable world will be judged. A day of judgment will come but now we have two courses: obedience or disobedience. Those who have been constituted righteous need not fear; they would welcome this day, they would look forward to it. Those who have not believed should have no greater fear than this. That is the solemn side to the gospel. The joyful side is that the gospel message still goes forth, that the day is still open for repentance, for acceptance of what the Lord Jesus has done, laying hold of Him as the perfect sacrifice, the One qualified to go into death and the One who was able to overthrow its power, and to be raised: what a thing!

I read in John just to highlight the wonderful result of these things of which we speak. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand". We know that Christ is the One whom the Father always had in mind. All things were set forth so that Christ would be revealed. We know this as a wondrous fact and we know that this indeed occurred: Christ did come into manhood, and these wondrous

things are true. We discussed them in our reading, and we think of them often. “He that believes on the Son” is this step of obedience that is required: “He that believes on the Son has life eternal”. That is the wonderful assurance that we have, the opposite of death. It does not simply mean living forever, although it involves that; it is a totally new character of things that is open to us now as a result of Christ and His work, through belief in Him, laying hold of the gospel. There is again another solemn side: “he that is not subject to the Son” - or you could read that as he that *chooses* not to obey - “shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him”. What a solemn scene to find yourself in, this place of death, with the assurance of the judgment, the wrath of God.

Dear friends, my intent was simple, in going over this topic of obedience. It is obedience which leads to these wonderful things, characterised by life eternal as we read here. On the other hand, not to obey, or not to heed this message, is to continue down this path of irreconcilable difference and distance from God, and therefore to face the consequences and the just punishment for who we are by nature. Yet we have this wonderful opportunity in front of us and I would urge each and every one to consider these things, to take them seriously, to think about them in relation to your own soul, to where you are in your own Christian walk, and to commit yourself to believe on the Son, to obey.

We have so many divine resources. The Holy Spirit is of primary importance here, helping us not only in working within the soul at this very moment, but being available to rely upon, to ask and to look to for help and guidance, and all these wonderful things. This obedience that we have spoken of is not what we might know naturally but, as Christ exemplified in His walk, is known in us through the power and reliance upon the Holy Spirit. It is a nature of obedience not found in our natural condition, but is to be known by us as redeemed Christians who have the wonderful power of the Holy Spirit. I would end this occasion by encouraging each and every one here about that. I would urge you to listen and to heed and to obey this wonderous message, for His Name's sake.

Denton

15th March 2026

SHEPHERDING

Steve T Eagle

Psalm 23: 1
Luke 15: 4-6
1 Samuel 17: 20
John 21: 15-17
1 Peter 5: 1-4, 8

It is evident from the scriptures I have read that I wish to say a word as to shepherding. I wish to share a burden that I have had for a long time. When I felt confirmed to speak of shepherding, I had to take a look at myself: under examination I might pass the theory - sometimes in exams or tests the theory comes first - I might scrape through on that, the brethren can judge; but when it comes to the practice, I only feel one thing, that I have failed. I do not say that for any other reason except that, when we consider the matter of shepherding, we must recognise that the flock to which we have been called to shepherd is God's flock. I do not want to dwell on anything negative, but Ezekiel 34 is a challenging chapter, and it speaks of God's intervention when the children of Israel, and the shepherds who were appointed by God under His direction, completely failed. It is a long chapter and it cuts when I read it because I feel that perhaps I could put my name in it. But there is one verse that shines in it for me. You read through it all, and there is, “Woe to the shepherds of Israel” (v 2), the prophet having to address the word to the shepherds directly. He is very direct, and it is a tough message to convey; but eventually he says, “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David: he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd”, v 23. Beloved, it speaks of Christ. What you find in the Old Testament, and I know this is well known among many here, is that everything leads to Christ. We have been occupied with that in these couple of days together. Being careful what I say and reverent, it is not a subject, and then Christ part of it: it is all about Christ. Christianity is Christ. That section of scripture, whilst it appears very negative, brings in the one Shepherd.

That is where we start from, Psalm 23, a wonderful psalm - maybe everyone here knows it off by heart; I trust if there is nothing else you go away with today. If you follow Christ as the Saviour you can go away with these five words, “The Lord is my shepherd”, v 1 KJV. You may have heard the preaching many times; and coming under the sound of it, you can find Him as a Saviour, and then you can come to

know Him as your Shepherd. Go away, if nothing else, with those words. You can read the rest of the Psalm - a wonderful Psalm to lay hold of, well known in the world, even amongst men; but do you know it for yourself? The Lord is your Shepherd; no one in between. What a wonderful Saviour we have to deal with. I know that we should never be far from the gospel, never far from the Shepherd.

That is why I wanted to read in Luke 15. I know it is a gospel section, and it is spoken of in relation to the gospel: "What man of you having a hundred sheep, and having lost one". Ninety-nine percent in this world is good; but no, not in divine things. There are poems about this parable: this man here could not leave the one out in the wilderness. I was pondering this from a natural standpoint and thinking how frustrated I would be if I was that man having to find that one sheep, how annoyed or irritated the flesh would rise up in me to go after one when the ninety-nine were safe. It was probably doing its own will - maybe I would leave him alone, maybe give him a hard time. But it says here not only that he goes after it, and then finds it, but having found it, he lays it upon his own shoulders. Is not divine love wonderful? The natural mind would have a completely opposite effect in having to do with this lost sheep. We might bring the rod and the staff that come into Psalm 23 in a negative way, irritated, and bringing out discipline against it, grumbling all the way back. Would I have lifted it on my shoulders? Ah, divine love is wonderful! The hymn expresses what you realise -

Found by Thee before I sought,
Unto Thee in mercy brought (Hymn 396).

Think of the power that lies behind that! What lies behind that is divine love, to go out to find him, go after that one sheep. That could be me; that probably was me. When I come to my own conversion, it was me, the Lord went that far; how far the Lord has gone for me! Think about that, never be far from that; however far along the Christian pathway you may be - even if you are marked by piety and spirituality in your own life, never be far in your life from the moment the Saviour found you. "Having found it, he lays it upon his own shoulders, rejoicing"; think of the joy in heaven over one person being brought back, "and being come to the house, calls together the friends and the neighbours, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep". It is not put in a pen in discipline, but brought into the area of love. Luke 15 is wonderful when you read it for yourself and make it personal to yourself. Do not ever look at other people only and think

that they could do with this: look at yourself. I should look at myself and say, thank God that I have been brought back, not only into an area of safety, which is one part, but an area of rejoicing. What we have enjoyed for two days is an area of rejoicing. Where does it start? It starts with Christ supremely; it starts with the glory of that blessed One.

I want to refer to Samuel. Young people, you might be sitting there thinking that shepherding is the responsibility of the elders; we will come on to that. 1 Samuel 17 is a good chapter to read; you find the lion and the bear, you can read about the Philistine, Goliath; but it says, “David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep” - then it says, “with a keeper”. He did not just leave the sheep; shepherding is a responsible matter. The shepherd takes on responsibility. You can say about the Saviour, that the Lord Jesus is an 'all the way home Saviour', He is an all the way home Shepherd. Jacob says, “the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day”, Gen 48: 15. So David rises up; he has a mission, he has been given a job, a distinctive mission to do. But how old was he? I did some searching, but realised that scripture has the answer - if you go to Numbers, it speaks of, “every male from twenty years old and upward, all that went forth to military service”, Num 1: 20. I am going to use that, because David was not in military service. There are many here who are twenty and under: shepherding starts young. If you have found Christ as your Saviour, you can start shepherding. But what that means is that you have a care and love - maybe in your friendship group and amongst persons that you have grown up with: God will use that; God wants to use that. He would love you to be in the atmosphere and environment of what shepherding is from a very young age. It is not complicated; it comes from the heart. Shepherding simply comes from a love for Christ; if you have come to the Saviour, if you have come to know Him and put your trust in Him, you can begin shepherding. You might say, what can I do? - leave it to the elders? - no. We will come to elders, but shepherding starts young. For me, it is very simple: you have a care for one another. Maybe there is someone that you know that is down, struggling a bit with something in life: you can talk to them, you can be there for them. It means that you can walk with them, make sure they are going to a place of safety; you can make sure that you listen to them, help them, talk about the Lord Jesus. Listening is a wonderful thing; I do not do it enough. There is one thing I do know, the Lord listens to me. Do I listen to Him? I say this simply to the young, shepherding starts young.

There were keepers: when David goes off, he is not

irresponsible. I say that carefully, he has a charge directly from God to go out, he has a mission in relation to Goliath, but he leaves the sheep with “a keeper”. There were other people; shepherding is not just for one or two: it is upon us all to be marked by it in our lives. The Lord Jesus would shepherd us into all the wealth of the heart of God. Shepherding is not just about getting through in this scene: it is not just about protection, it is about protection, it is about elements of protection. If you look at the old sheep pens in biblical times, there would be one entrance, hemmed about, and the shepherd, particularly at night, would be right at the doorway so that no one could get in. There was no enemy, no wolves, no attack possible apart from going through the shepherd himself. How far would I go for my brother? That is a test for me: the Lord has gone so far for me, how far would I go for my brethren? The Lord has laid down His life, given His all, established a basis for blessing of which we have spoken today: “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ” Eph 1: 3. Could God give any more? He has given of His best and He wants us not only to be in the knowledge of it, but the enjoyment of it. It comes back to rejoicing. Beloved young person, shepherding starts young: ask the Lord to help you. I have been young and I am ever thankful for the shepherding care that I have received during my life. One thing I will say, I am going to say this carefully, I do not want you to misunderstand me, shepherding means that we have to be shepherded; that means sometimes we need correction. I do, and I am thankful, I am always thankful - and I hope that I remain thankful - for the correction and the shepherding that I have received in my life from other persons who love the Lord Jesus; because they have had nothing but good in mind for me, nothing but blessing in mind for me, they had nothing in mind but that I might come into the wealth of the heart of God. I say this again carefully; it is not that they could lord over me as a shepherd, but they had my best interest at heart and to bring me into what is the very best of God's purposes in relation to each one of us. I am always thankful, and I remain thankful, for every one that has done that for me.

I would like to refer to Peter. We often say that we dwell on Peter's failures, Peter made mistakes, he denied the Lord; but before that, he had carried a sword. There was a point when they came to take the Lord and he drew his sword and cut of the ear of Malchus the high priest's bondman, John 18: 10. He was wanting to defend the Lord Jesus, but I say this: we should never think that we can go ahead of the Lord Jesus. I leave that with us. The Lord Himself was in complete

control and is in complete control of everything. He does not send the shepherds out today with swords; He has defeated the foe, He is the Victor, the One in whom everything has been completed in relation to the victory has been done. We are not called upon to crusade in that way; we are not wearing swords literally. Now you may well ask if Peter is suitable to be a shepherd. Look at Peter, and his history and all that he went through: is he suitable? His failures, list them all - like our failures, you list them all and they go on. Peter was a fisherman and became a disciple, he wanted to go back to fishing but the Lord said, no, I need you to be a shepherd. Peter was to find out that this was not to do with the way that man would do it. If your heart is full of Christ, if your heart is full of the Lord Jesus, you have the features for shepherding. It says that the Lord challenged him: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?”. The Lord knew that Peter loved Him, the Lord knew that that man's heart was full of Christ, of Himself, He knew that but He tested Him. The Lord will test us, just to bring out qualities in relation to our love. His love for us is unfailing, it cannot fail but then there is my love for Him: we have the peaks and troughs, the highs and the lows, and Peter knew that when he says, “Lord; thou knowest that I am attached to thee”. The Lord says, “Feed my lambs … Shepherd my sheep … Feed my sheep”.

I was struck by a reference in Mark when he writes of the Lord Jesus, “he was moved with compassion for them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd”, chap 6: 34. It may refer in type, in principle, to the nation of Israel and the Jewish nation, but He looked at them and it says, “they were as sheep not having a shepherd”; and then it says, “And he began to teach them many things”. I thought about that, and it is very simple for me: we need the truth, we need teaching and we need to be held in what is true and right and in the truth. The Lord Jesus says of Himself, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”, John 14: 6. We need to be under the influence of the truth. The responsibility of shepherding is that we maintain the truth according to scripture, according to what you might say has been handed down to us. It is not our version of it, it is not our interpretation of it; reference to the Holy Spirit is vital, that every aspect of the truth to be known and understood rightly can only be through divine power, through the power of the Spirit. Once when I was young - but that is no excuse - we were going to meeting, and my mother said to me, 'What are you going to write today about the meeting?' I said, 'I am going to add something to the Bible'. I have never seen my mother as angry as that moment; she was a placid

woman, but she was very cross at that point, and she said, 'You can never add to the Word of God'. Everything is here: the Bible is everything we need; it is here. What we need is teaching and understanding and guidance as to it. Teachers are a valuable asset and we need teachers, but the Lord Himself would be a great Teacher for us. When it comes to shepherding let us never get in the way of the Lord and His teaching; let us never do what Peter did before he became a shepherd - step in front of the Lord to do anything that would detract from Him.

I want to say something simply about Peter in 1 Peter 5, “The elders which are among you” - eldership is not about being old, it is about responsibility, the responsible element, which many of us should be numbered amongst - “The elders which are among you I exhort … shepherd the flock of God which is among you”. When you read the note, the last part says, "Be shepherders' (note *g*)'. I looked up a job description for a shepherd, and of course today's world is very different from what they had here. In today's world, particularly in Britain, most fields have fences around them, they are protected, whereas in the context of the Old Testament, the Middle East, the flock would have been wandering in pastures, often rocky, looking for places to go; there would not have been the boundaries of the field. It put a lot of responsibility on the shepherd; it is not a careless thing; it is not part-time. What I have realised is that it is a matter of committal.

The first principle that is established in shepherding is love for the flock. It is not a nine to five occupation; a shepherd needs to have many features. Occasionally they have to tend to one of the flock; maybe there is an injury, they need to be aware of that, they need to know each person of the flock. John 10 helps us as to that, “I am the good shepherd; and **I** know those that are mine”, v 14. The Lord knows every single one of us. And then it says, “and am known of those that are mine”; that is, each one of us personally having a living link with the Shepherd. There are circumstances in many people's lives when we need to be able to draw near. It is not a matter of compliance and conforming, it is a matter of love permeating every feature of shepherding and drawing near; maybe encouraging, maybe just listening, maybe just sitting with someone. How patient the Shepherd has been with me, and He is still there and He is going to be there all the way home.

Shepherding is hard work but it is worth it, because it is not for

your glory or mine: it is for our Lord Jesus Christ. We love one another, why? Because He has loved us; He brought us into this area; He has placed us here. I feel the edge of the word because of my own failure, but I know this, it involves "exercising oversight, not by necessity" - I am not to do it grudgingly, "but willingly; not for base gain, but readily". It is not for me, and if you are doing this work, it is not for you; it is for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. "But readily": am I willing, ready? These are features that I have struggled with, but there is nothing more wonderful than when someone has drawn near to you and lifted you up; and there is a place in your heart for rejoicing.

If you get an opportunity tomorrow to be at the Lord's supper, be there. I know there are circumstances in different persons' lives, but if you can, be there, because He will bless you by giving you something, and because He has asked us to remember Him. I have been a reluctant younger person; I always found the breaking of bread challenging; that was conscience; that is the Lord's work. In just saying these few things, I seek to be "exercising oversight, not by necessity, but willingly; not for base gain, but readily": be there because it is love's appeal. We have a local brother the brethren know and love who does not understand when there are gaps in the service; he has hymns for every part of the service, suitable in every way under the Spirit's direction. Yesterday he kept coming back to me quoting -

Love's remembrance, Lord, Thou seekest (Hymn 30)

You get to an occasion like the Supper, and you get an effect not only of what the Shepherd has brought you through during the week, but you can be returning something in simplicity to Him.

I went past a field the other day and there were sheep lying down, and there were lambs skipping; it seemed to me to be a picture of contentment. There were sheep sitting quietly, and the lambs were skipping about, a beautiful sight. Young people, we need your youthful energy. It comes out on occasions, it can come out even in simple expressions, but we need your youthful energy; it is a vital part of your being placed amongst the people of God.

Then Peter says, "Be vigilant, watch. Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour". That will never stop until the Lord comes for us, but we have the great Shepherd, and if we demonstrate among one another features of shepherding, as my appeal is to everyone, we can enter into a place of safety,

protection, guidance; we can “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise”, Psalm 100: 4. We can be held in that.

The reason I wanted to speak distinctively of shepherding is that it is for us all to partake in and all to be part of. It is not arduous, although in one way it is hard work, it does require committal, it requires dependence. We must call upon the Shepherd for every aspect of it; we must rely on Him for every feature that we need to demonstrate, and then He is coming for us and we will be with Him forever.

May these features mark us, may our hearts be lifted in relation to our Lord Jesus more and more. I was struck with the verse read in relation to the pious man (Psalm 4: 1); if we bring God into every aspect of our life and we allow the Holy Spirit to operate I believe the features of shepherding will shine and the Lord's people will be preserved.

May it be so, for His Name's sake.

Address at three-day meetings in Sunbury

5th April 2026

PROVISION FOR THE MAN OF GOD

James Bedford

2 Kings 4: 8-11
Matthew 11: 25-29; 9: 9-13
Romans 8: 12-15
John 8: 12

What God has provided for us in the glad tidings is sufficient for what we need. There is nothing lacking in God's glad tidings; He provides everything. This is for His glory and for our blessing. I want to speak about that in relation to the items of furniture in this room that the Shunammite made for Elisha, the man of God. She had a right discernment of what was needed. We might have thought that this was quite a sparsely furnished bedroom: there was a bed and a table and a seat and a lampstand, and that was, it seems, all that there was in the room that the Shunammite made for the man of God, but it was sufficient for what he needed. And what God provides in the glad tidings is sufficient for all of us.

The four different items that I have read about might correspond to what we find in the other four scriptures that we have read. The first thing is the bed, and in Matthew 11, we find rest for our souls. The only way we can find rest for our souls is to come to the Lord Jesus: “ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”. The greatest burden that we can have is that of our sins and our sinful state. How weary it is, struggling with our sins and our sinful history. The Lord Jesus is able to give us rest, because, if we come to Him, we can find that He has met all of our sinful history. The Lord Jesus is the One to whom we can come and find rest for our souls. If we come to Him and have to do with Him about our sins, we can find that He has met them all in His work on the cross. The Lord Jesus went there, not for Himself, but for many others that come to Him and prove the value of His work, what He has done as the perfect sacrifice for sin, so that we can know what it is, as coming to Him in faith, to have rest for our souls. When one man said, “if thou couldst do anything”, the Lord Jesus said, “the 'if thou couldst' is if thou couldst believe: all things are possible to him that believes”, Mark 9: 22, 23. Thus we can know the joy of salvation in the Lord Jesus if we come to Him and believe. We come to Him in confidence that He can forgive our sins, and we find that He is able to resolve the sinful history that weighs so heavily. He is able to give us

rest because we realise that He has taken it upon Himself and met it all in the way that He went. We find thus rest for our souls, “for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”. That is the Lord Jesus, the One who is revealing the Father: “nor does any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son may be pleased to reveal him”. So we can find rest in the Lord Jesus and He will bring us to the Father.

Then the next thing is a table. In the scripture that we read in Matthew 9, we find many that are lying at table with Jesus and His disciples. There are the righteous men of the day, perhaps those regarded as upright men, but then there are the tax-gatherers and the sinners. It does not matter who we are, or however wrong we have been, there is scope to come to the Lord Jesus. He is the One that is having mercy. The thought is not that there should be a continual sacrifice, but that the Lord has met all in His one sacrifice; so that He is able to have mercy. He has not come to call righteous men but sinners, so that there is the scope at the table of the Lord Jesus for each one of us to come and eat with Him. The table involves food and eating, and there is a provision at the table of the Lord Jesus. Mephibosheth was one that proved what it was to eat at David's table; he had a sense of his own feebleness, but there was scope to eat at the table of David continually, 2 Sam 9: 11. Blessing and mercy was there with David for Mephibosheth, and the Lord Jesus is similarly desirous that we should come into blessing, that we eat of His table. There is food there for our souls, food that we can enjoy with the Lord Jesus in His presence.

So that is the table, and then there is the seat. The seat is an interesting thought in scripture because there are not very many references. They lay at table in the time when the Lord Jesus was here; they did not put a chair up to the table; they would have lain at the table. So the idea of a seat does not relate to the table at all, but one idea we can see in it is that it involves dignity. God would bring us into a place of dignity. The idea of a seat comes in negatively, of course, in the gospels: we have the scribes and the Pharisees who set themselves down in Moses' seat (Matt 23: 2); they had taken that place of greatness that belonged to another, but the Lord Jesus would have us to come into a place of dignity and bring us in to sit down before Him.

I read in Romans in view of that: the thought of sonship is brought in. The Lord Jesus has had to go to the lowest place that we should be brought into blessing. It is not that we should have high thoughts about ourselves, but God has given us a place; as John says

in the Revelation, He has “made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (Rev 1: 6), the dignified place that we are brought into through the glad tidings. It needed that the Lord Jesus should die and go to the lowest place, and that His blood should be shed so that God should be satisfied. God is fully satisfied with that shed blood; He is able to bring us into blessing. It is God's desire that we should be brought in to enjoy His love and His place as Father, and we have that in this scripture, brought in by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is available to each one of us so that we may know the reality of the Father's love. It says, “for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God”. The thought in the glad tidings is that we should be led by the Spirit of God. God wants us to have the Spirit and to walk in His power so that we should know the glory of sonship. We have a place of great privilege before Him; how great the place is: “For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption whereby, we cry, Abba, Father”. So God would desire that we are able to say, “Abba, Father”, which means 'Father-Father': it is an expression of love, and the glad tidings go out that we might know that place of favour with the Father. We could not have a greater privilege than to know God as Father and be able to enjoy sonship with the Lord Jesus. Everything that He enjoys of sonship we are brought into, to know God as Father. That is like a seat, a place of privilege.

David was one who felt that dignity: he does not exactly speak about the seat, but he went and sat before Jehovah and said, “what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?”, 2 Sam 7: 18. He felt the blessedness, the privilege, that he had been brought into through God's mercy, through God's grace; and that was his attitude, one of satisfaction with the sense of God's blessing. That was another example: we are brought into dignity as blessed by the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the One that has accomplished everything; He has taken away the old order of man in His death, He is risen again and is glorified, so that we can receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes from the Lord Jesus glorified. He testifies to the Lord Jesus as the glorious Man at the Father's right hand, and it is that testimony that the Holy Spirit gives, to us to tell us of that glory that the Lord Jesus has and to tell us of the Father's love. So that it is from the Lord Jesus glorified that the glad tidings go out.

And then finally there is the lampstand, and John gives us that view. The Lord Jesus Himself could say, “I am the light of the world; he

that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". The light will shine upon us. Initially we may feel how guilty we are when that light of God's brightness shines upon us, the true light, but then we can have to do with the Lord Jesus in relation to our sins, and having come to Him in repentance and faith, we can know what it is to walk in that light. It no longer is a light that searches us out and finds our guiltiness but it is light in which we can rejoice because it shows us how we should live our life. The Lord Jesus is the One that has shown the way and we have to follow Him. He has gone before; as Peter says, "leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps", 1 Pet 2: 21. The Lord Jesus has shown the way; He is the light of the world and we are able to follow Him to the place where He is.

He is coming again to receive us to Himself, and then we shall see Him in His glory and greatness and be able to enjoy His company eternally. God has in mind for us, that we should be able to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus. He is the Light of the world; He is the One that can give us the light that we need for every day, to know how to view things. We know the way to go because He is the One that gives us light; so that we should no longer need to walk in darkness but have the light of life. God has in mind that we should come into this life, the light of life, to blessing and to know the Lord Jesus and enjoy His company as He is glorified. He would like to walk with us; the Lord Jesus can be with us every day and we can pray that we might know His presence and nearness, to be able to enjoy His company until the time that He comes.

Those are my thoughts: the gospel is sufficient for us. What was provided for Elisha was sufficient; it was nothing especially great outwardly but it was sufficient and what blessedness there was, what fulness of provision there was, in those few simple things. What God provides in the glad tidings is like that - outwardly small and perhaps thought to be insignificant, but having a fulness for us, a greatness and a glory that goes beyond everything here. They take us to the sphere where the Lord Jesus is the Centre. May we come to the Lord Jesus afresh today, come in repentance and put our confidence in Him; rely upon Him, and find the rest for our souls and the blessing as we are here for Him until He comes.

Dorking

26th June 2026

"ASK FOR THE ANCIENT PATHS"

Eric C Burr

Genesis 48: 15,16 (to "lads")
Jeremiah 6: 16

I had in mind principally the verse in Jeremiah which says, "ask for the ancient paths". My impression is that Jacob knew that there were such paths: they were paths in which his fathers had walked. We see older brethren departing to be with Christ, one after another, and the word in Ecclesiastes bears upon us, that "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh", chap 1: 4. I think it is a matter for exercise whether the generations that come are going to walk in the paths in which their fathers walked.

It is perhaps a more serious exercise than we might from time to time be inclined to think, but there were ways in which our fathers walked and they are valuable ways. In Deborah's day highways were unused. I would not like to think that a day will come when the ancient paths are unused and the way in which our fathers walked was unused. I am sure that none of the brethren would wish to see another generation growing up that went by crooked paths. I do not suggest that they do, far from it. One thing that gives very great cause for thankfulness in these days - and I say it without wishing in any way to be patronising - is the way the hymn that we sang (No 345) echoes in the minds of a lot of the younger brethren. I say with no fear of contradiction that among our younger brethren there is a desire to be wholly committed until the Lord comes, but it is a committal from which our minds easily slip. It is likely that if our minds slip from that path of committal, however old or young we are, we may find recovery to the path more difficult than we would have wished it to have been. I am not going to go into details of things which might illustrate what I have in mind, or to appear to make new laws, but we know from our own lives that a diversion from that path of committal, even for an evening, introduces an area of crookedness in the path which we would afterwards wish had not been there.

Therefore, I think that it is a matter in which the Spirit would help us all, to be maintained in the way in which our fathers walked. There are many brothers and sisters here whose fathers I can remember, who walked in those paths with honour; and they honoured the path by their

walking in it. But the possibility is that the day in which we live and its particular character may tend to divert us from paths in which God would be desired to be as fully honoured as He can be and as He has been. I do not refer to particular things but it is a matter of exercise for us all, as we had in Romans on Lord's day: “walk in the steps of the faith ... of our father Abraham”, chap 4: 12. Jacob refers to that, he says “before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked”.

One thing that we know about old paths is that unless they are used all the time they become overgrown. Within a couple of years a path that has not been walked on would be so overgrown that successors might have difficulty in finding it. The responsibility, therefore, is to keep walking those paths so that they may be kept open. Sometimes it requires courage to walk in those paths. The brethren are familiar with *Pilgrim's Progress* and they will remember 'By-path Meadow'; it looked very attractive, it looked much easier than the road on which Pilgrim was going, but where did the man end up who took 'By-path Meadow'? He ended up in conditions from which he would very quickly have wished to be recovered. It was in fact the road to Doubting Castle and Giant Despair.

I allude to this because the nature of the day in which we are is seductive in relation to the bypass. Things come in with current technology which lead us away, things come in with the character of the world which lead us away, and what is required when these things come in is that somebody will boldly walk the old path. You may be surprised who will follow you in it if you are willing to walk it; you may find that more of the brethren young and old than you expected are willing to follow you in it. It therefore behoves us to keep these paths open, to walk in the ways that we can still remember. There are ways that we can still remember which are not always walked in today. There are things which are done today which were not always done, there were things which were once done with sobriety which are not done with much sobriety now. There was a consistency about the Lord's day which was in the old paths. These things are to be maintained. We are to encourage one another to maintain them. If we do not know where they are, let us ask for them.

It says in Jeremiah, “Thus saith Jehovah: Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the ancient paths, which is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls”. Is that not encouraging?

(Our beloved brethren who have spoken already have spoken about encouragement.) But they said, “We will not walk therein. Also I have set watchmen over you”, so there was going to be help in walking in these ancient paths.

We can think of various things which we do and we do without a thought, but are they in the ancient paths? Let us go back. If we do not know, “ask”. You could ask your father, one of the older brethren, Used the brethren to do this? And they could say, Yes, the brethren have always done it and they felt that the Lord was with them in it. In that path you will find rest to your soul. If they say, I am not so sure, I do not think that we did that in my day, I do not think that we used to do that, I do not think that the brethren used to do that - not that they had rules, but that there was a climate of spiritual formation in them which did not do it and they would advise you; and if you ask, you could be told. You need to ask and then you would be told and advised and you would be encouraged to find the old path and in it you would find rest to your soul. I think that this is the only occasion in the Old Testament save for the allusion in Psalm 116: 7 where that expression occurs; it occurs in Matthew 11: “ye shall find rest to your souls”, v 29.

I just draw the beloved brethren's attention to this. I think there is something in this scripture in Jeremiah for us and we need to help one another in it, and we who are older need to be approachable so that we can be asked. We are not standing there with a stick but we are standing there with the counsel of experience, memory, recollection. Let me say to the younger brethren that when we were young there were quite happy times among the brethren; we did not need this adjunct, that adjunct and the other adjunct. The brethren went on happily with one another, everyone contributed to it. If people are to ask for the ancient paths it requires that the older men and women be approachable so that the young people if they ask do not feel as though they are going to have their ears boxed; they feel that they are going to be advised that this is the way, this is in the ancient path, or it is not.

I leave this thought with the brethren that we might encourage one another by seeking to maintain these ancient paths lest they become overgrown. As the older generation goes to be with Christ (which they are doing at a rate we have hardly experienced before), the younger generation is growing up and this should give us all great cause for thankfulness, but it would be a tragedy if the ancient paths

were no longer marked out and they had somehow to find their own way. The Lord would help them but we could help them. I just leave this thought with the brethren.

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