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Three Revelations (Feb 1957)

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The Apostle Paul received many Divine revelations during his active life; to three of them I would draw your attention. Let us consider, first:

The Revelation Of The Gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4):

In the Epistle to the Galations, the Apostle states that the gospel which he preached was not after man, for he neither received it from man, nor was he taught it by man, but by revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12).

The occasion and the character of the revelation of Jesus Christ to his soul is recorded for us in The Book of Acts, chapter 9. Paul, who at that time was called Saul, was breathing out threatenings against the disciples of the Lord, and, having received letters from the high priest, he went to Damascus in search of any Christians, whether they were men or women, that he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. As he journeyed, and as he came near to Damascus, suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, and he heard One saying unto him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” “Who art Thou, Lord?” he cried in surprise, and the Lord answered, “I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest.”

What a revelation that was to Saul! In making reference to it, he says, “God called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen (among the Gentiles)” (Gal. 1:15-16). From that moment Saul’s attitude was seen in his question, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” His life was completely changed,

for Christ had been revealed to him in order that Christ might be revealed through him. He says to the Corinthians, “I delivered unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received,” the gospel that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

Now, the reception of the gospel brings with it a new nature. Each believer becomes a partaker of the Divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), and each has the Holy Spirit indwelling him (Eph. 1:12). While all receive the new nature upon the acceptance of Christ as Saviour, the old nature still abides, and only as each allows the Spirit of God to have His way can he overcome that old nature. With the new nature, and with the Spirit of God within us, we are able to enjoy communion with the Lord, for we are called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. We also are fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of the household of God. As partakers of the Divine nature, we enjoy the Word of God, and as new-born babes we desire the sincere milk of the Word that we may grow thereby. The Word of God is the food of the soul, the comfort of the heart, and the source of true strength to make us strong in the Lord; it is the power to protect us from the wiles of the devil. Job, long ago said, “I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12). Oh, that we likewise might thus value them! David said, “By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer” (Psa. 17:4). In a similar tone, Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” (Jer. 15:16). The Word of God in the Christian will

build him up, and check him up along his pilgrim pathway. The child of God finds in the Scriptures all that he needs, all that pertains to life and godliness. May it be the subject of our meditation day and night!

The revelation of the gospel to the soul brings with it a new standing before God, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (or a new creation)” (2 Cor. 5:17). Our old standing in Adam is gone; we are now in Christ, made accepted in the Beloved. Moreover, we are brought into a new society, for we are members of His mystical body, we are of His flesh and of His bone (Eph. 5:30). We are also members one of another. “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom. 12:5). We also have a new Master to serve, and our attitude must ever be, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” The Thessalonians “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:9-10). Therefore, “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;… for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23-24).

Christ is the very best of masters; may we give Him the very best of service. May we not be ashamed of the revelation of the gospel, for it is still the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

The Revelation Of The Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-24):

Paul, several years after it was instituted, received by revelation from the Lord the fullest account we have of the Lord’s supper. He was not saved when first the Lord

instituted this feast of love, and, contrary to what we might expect, he did not get the account of that supper from the other Apostles, but from the Lord Himself. On the night of His betrayal, the Lord took the bread and gave thanks and brake it, and said, “Take, eat: this is My body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me.”

Paul declared to the Corinthians, “I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.” This feast brings before us the wonderful love and the earnest solicitude of the Saviour for His own. In the supper, a Divine Person says, “‘Remember Me.” In so doing we proclaim the Lord’s death till He come; consequently, we must constantly bear in mind the warning, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (1 Cor. 11:28). In view of gathering together to eat the Lord’s supper, this is a most important excercise of soul.

Now, what characterizes the Lord’s supper is surely the spirit of thankfulness. Our blessed Lord, that night in which He was betrayed, took the bread and gave thanks in the full knowledge of all that it meant to Him. His body was soon to be broken, wounded, and bruised for us on the cross. “His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men” (Isa. 52:14).

He knew what Gethsemane with its unparalleled sorrow meant, its blood-like sweat, and its bitterness, and yet He gave thanks. He knew what Golgotha meant, the abandonment of His soul in which He would cry out, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Notwithstanding all, He gave thanks. He looked beyond

it all to the glorious accomplishments; for them He gave thanks.

What thanksgiving and praise should fill our hearts as we gather on the first day of the week to remember Him, His glorious person, and His wonderful love to us. The Son of God loved us, and He gave Himself for us. Our hearts should respond and say, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15).

“O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy” (Psa. 107:1-2). Let us join with the Psalmist who declares, “‘I will praise the Name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs” (Psa. 69:30-31).

“By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name” (Heb. 13:15). May the Lord enable us to be a praising and a thanksgiving people as we journey along the pilgrim pathway to that Better Land.

The Revelation Of The Lord’s Coming (1 Thess. 4:13-18):

The Apostle Paul in this passage says, “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord… the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.” He also declares, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51-52). The most of

the details of the Lord's coming for His people, His Church, were given to this Apostle to the Gentiles.

The coming of the Lord is the blessed hope of the Church, and also of Israel, but we are not dealing with their aspect of the subject. Our blessed Lord, in the Gospel of John, spoke to His disciples about His going away and His coming back again, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (14:3). Here is something most definite; He intimated that He was going away, and that He would return, but He did not give any of the details of that return. To His disciples at that time He made only the plain statement, "I will come again." The doctrine of the coming of the Lord is given to us progressively throughout the Scriptures.

As we have said, in John's Gospel the Lord makes only the bare statement, but in the Book of The Acts we have additional information. After Christ's ascension two angels appeared to the disciples saying, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (1:11).

He went away literally and personally; He will come back in the same manner. In 1 Cor. 15:51, we read, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." From this passage we learn, that when the Lord comes all shall be changed, the dead and the living in Christ. What a blessed change! In

writing to the Philippians, the Apostle asserts, “We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (3:21). We shall all be like Him.

Let us consider another passage, 1 Thess. 4:17, for here we have the added statement, “Caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Every born-again Christian, no matter what his religious connection may be, will rise to meet the Lord in the air, “Caught up together” with all other saints.

The coming of the Lord to the air for His own will close the day of grace, for the Mystical Body of Christ will be complete, the Church for whom He gave Himself, and when this is accomplished, God’s purposes in this age will have been completed.

The coming of the Lord should be a very great incentive to all believers in their service for the Lord. It should also be an encouragement to them in suffering, trial, and difficulty. “For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:37). What a comfort to know that we sorrow not as others who have no hope! Paul assured the Thessalonians that their loved ones which had fallen asleep in Jesus would not miss that great event as some had told them. The Apostle states that we which are alive and remain shall not prevent (go before) them which are asleep.

The coming of the Lord is most imminent; may we, therefore, seek to love Him more, to live for Him better, and to labour more devotedly until we see Him face to face.

The revelation of the gospel gives us a new nature to begin the Christian life; the revelation of the Lord's supper gives us a new character with which to pursue the Christian pathway; and, the revelation of the Lord's coming reveals a new body with which to enter our heavenly home. When eventually we are translated into the place that the Lord is preparing for us, we shall be completely new in every respect; consequently, we shall sing that new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou was slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10).

Hudson Taylor said, "We must be careful what we do with the Lord's money. If we do the right thing the riches of earth will receive compound interest from the Bank of Heaven, and He who sits over against the Treasury and watches will smile His approval. The smile of Jesus is worth more than all the millions and pleasure promoters of earth.

Harshness Intolerance Cruelty (July 1959)

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Zeruiah sister of David had three sons: Abishai, Joab, and Asahel (1 Chron. 2:16). They became officers over David's army, and manifested deep loyalty and devotion to him, even as the disciples of Christ did to their Lord at a later date. Nevertheless, David had to say of them, "These men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me" (2 Sam. 3:39).

Similarly, the Lord Jesus had to say to His disciples, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Luke 9:55). May we learn from both these men and the disciples, lessons profitable in Christian service.

Asahel

Asahel, the youngest of the three, was a valiant man and one of the thirty of David's mighty men (2 Sam. 23:24). He was noted for his swiftness of foot.

After the death of Saul, David was proclaimed king over the house of Judah (2 Sam. 2:4). He began his reign by seeking guidance from the Lord and walking in communion with God. Moreover, he acted in kindness to those around him. He was God's anointed king and in these things, the man after God's own heart.

Abner the son of Ner who was Commander-in-Chief of Saul's army took Ishbosheth the son of Saul and made him king over Israel. Abner knew better; he had heard Saul say to David, "I know well that thou shalt surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established

in thy hand (1 Sam. 24:20). Abner linked himself with the wrong man, and fought for the wrong cause. This was a very serious wrong, but finally he yielded to David. The civil war between the house of Saul and the house of David must have been a grief to David. How wicked strife is among brethren! It can be long and bitter. Abner, on one occasion, said to Joab, “Let the young men now arise and play before us.” What folly! That sport resulted in the death of many, “For there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David” (2 Sam. 2:17).

Asahel, being light of foot pursued Abner who said to him, “Turn aside from following me,” but he refused. Abner said to Asahel again, “Turn aside; wherefore should I smite thee to the ground?” Again he refused. Consequently, Abner was obliged to smite him in self-defence and Asahel died. Asahel in revenge was bent on taking the life of Abner.

We should never let our Christian zeal be revengeful. It was not in David’s heart to destroy Abner. He could have done so on an earlier occasion, but Asahel, the hard man, would have killed Abner that day. There are some like the sons of Zeruiah for whom it would be easier to take off the heads of others than to control their own heads. Peter, in the garden, when he saw Judas and the multitude come to lay hold on Christ became excited, and drew out his sword and struck a servant of the high priest and smote off his ear. Perhaps he intended, as the sons of Zeruiah would have done, to cut off his head. Jesus said to Peter, “Put up again thy sword into his place, for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

We often, like Asahel and Peter out of professed loyalty to Christ, would destroy the reputations of good and honourable men by our jealousy and carnality.

O beloved! Let us see to it that we are loyal and devoted to the glorious person of our blessed Lord; and, let us hold fast the faithful Word of God in these times when it is being set aside by the traditions of men (Mark 7:9). Nevertheless, let us do this in the spirit of Christ for then we shall please the Lord and be a blessing to the saints.

Young Asahel, because of his hard vindictive spirit, lost his life that might have been most useful to David. We notice again the words of David and learn the lesson, “These men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me.”

Abishai

Abishai was the eldest son of Zeruiah. He was a devoted follower of David. He was chief among three, for he lifted up his spear against three hundred enemies and slew them. “Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain” (2 Sam. 23:18-19).

He also rescued David from the hand of a gigantic Philistine, Ishibenob (2 Sam. 21:16-17). At the outbreak of Absalom’s rebellion, Abishai was true to David and commanded a third part of the army in the decisive battle. Yet, with all these marks of loyalty and devotion, David had to say concerning him, “What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah that ye should this day be adversaries unto me?” (2 Sam. 19: 22).

Saul in his jealousy was seeking the life of David (1 Sam. 26:5). “David came to the place where Saul had pitched and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner

the son of Ner, the captain of his host; and Saul lay in the trench and the people pitched round him." Saul was sleeping. What an opportunity! Abishai said to David, "God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day; now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time" (1 Sam. 26:8).

Abishai would finish him with the first blow. "And David said to Abishai, destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?" (1 Sam. 26:9).

David had manifested to Saul the grace and kindness of God in sparing his life. Abishai would not have so done; he was a hard man.

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

On another occasion when David was fleeing from Absalom, a man of the family of the house of Saul whose name was Shimei came forth and cursed as he came (2 Sam. 16:5). "Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head." Shemei had sinned, but David said to Abishai, "Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David."

To Abishai, Shimei was only a dead dog. To David, he was a messenger of God. David, judging himself in the presence of the Lord, accepted what Shimei said as from the Lord. The troublesome son of Zeruiah lacked that spirit of meekness which David showed and which only a noble character displays.

We think of how the disciples in the Gospel of Luke failed to enter into the spirit of the blessed Lord. John said to Jesus, “We saw one casting out devils in Thy name and we forbad him because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us” (9:49-54). Even John (who afterwards became the disciple of love) lacked the spirit of tolerance. “We forbad him,” said John, as much as to say, how dare he cast out devils? We are the people to do that.

What need there is for a spirit of tolerance among us in matters of our service for the Lord! It is clear from the Epistles of James and John that they did learn of that spirit, that gentleness of Christ. Abishai seemed to carry all through his life the spirit of hardness.

May we seek grace from the Lord to be saved from that hard spirit while we seek to be loyal and faithful to our blessed Lord.

Joab

Now we come to Joab, the most remarkable son of Zeruiah, whose story is full of instruction. He occupied a prominent place. He did and said many good things. There is, notwithstanding, no mention of him among David’s mighty men.

Abner had turned away from Ishbosheth and had joined with David who in grace received him. However, when Joab heard that Abner had been received by the king, he went to David and questioned him about it. He then sent messengers for Abner without telling David. As Abner entered Hebron, Joab took him aside as if to speak privately to him, but he smote him in revenge that he

died for Asahel (2 Sam. 3:23-27). That was only a pretext; Joab, treacherously, killed Abner for he knew that David would promote him to be one of his generals, and Joab was jealous. The green-eyed monster jealousy had possessed him; he was revengeful and heartless. When David heard of the death of Abner, he said, “Ye sons of Zeruiah, ye be too hard for me.”

David lamented over Abner saying, “Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?” (2 Sam. 3:38).

Abner lost his life in a noble attempt to unite Israel. May the Lord keep His beloved people seeking to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psa. 133:1).

Joab became the Commander-in-Chief after the death of Abner. He was loyal to David at times, but a hard man. It was he who had a hand in bringing back Absalom without any real repentance for his sin, and we know the awful result, Absalom rebelled against his father. Joab during this ordeal stood true to David.

Before the decisive battle David counselled the three generals, “Deal gently for my sake with the young man even with Absalom.” The battle resulted in a great slaughter. Joab then sent the tidings to the king. He told Chusi, “Go tell the king what thou hast seen; and Chusi bowed himself and ran.” When he came, David asked, “Is the young man Absalom safe?” Chusi answered, “The enemies of my lord the king and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.” What a blow to the heart of David! He lamented, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died

for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam. 18:5-33). What grief was David's! He knew Absalom had lost his soul.

We need to heed the words: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32).

Trouble arose again for David; a man of Belial whose name was Sheba, a Benjamite, rebelled against him saying, "We have no part in David; neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel" (2 Sam. 20:1). David said to Amasa, whom he had promoted to Joab's former position (2 Sam. 19:13), "Assemble the men of Judah within three days and be thou here present" (2 Sam. 20:4). Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah, but he tarried longer than the time appointed him; David, therefore, commissioned Abishai to pursue Sheba.

Joab, the deposed general, went with the troops, and when they met Amasa, Joab said to him, "Art thou in health my brother? and Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him; but Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand. So he smote him therewith in the fifth rib … And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway" (2 Sam. 20:10-12).

Jealousy again had taken hold of Joab; notwithstanding, he seems to have once more attained to the place of commander, in which place his success in the capture of Sheba kept him until the close of David's life.

Before he died, David enjoined Solomon to keep the charge of the Lord, to walk in His ways, to keep His

statutes and commandments and His judgments. He also said, “Thou knowest also what Joab the son of

Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the host of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace” (1 Kings 2:5-28). And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled into the tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, sayin, Go fall upon him. Often those who are cruel to others become cowards when they have to answer for their sins. “Joab slew two men more righteous and better than he,” said Solomon.

We must not forget that all must stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Our attitude toward our brethren will be brought before us. “Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. So every one of us shall give an account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:10-12).

O beloved, may the Lord give us grace and meekness of spirit in all our service for the Master! May He deliver us from the harshness, intolerance, and the attitude that cruelly harms our fellow-believers.

Oh, to be like Him, tender and kind;

Gentle in spirit, lowly in mind;

More like to Jesus, day after day,

Filled with His spirit, now and alway.