

LITTLE NORTHWEST FELLOWSHIP SUNDAY

OPENING REMARKS- BELLINGHAM 10/8/72

Br. Ted Smith

Dear Brethren, it gives us a great deal of pleasure to welcome you into our midst for another Fellowship Sunday. If we have kept our records correctly, I think our first Fellowship Sunday was in 1958. If this is so, then today is the 15th annual Fellowship Sunday.

Over these fifteen years, we have felt that we have been specially blessed with the precious truths of the Harvest Message. Our panel today will no doubt touch upon some of these special blessings. The special blessings cannot be comprehended by our friends who are still natural men and women; neither can they be fully grasped by those who may not be advancing in the truth as they should.

I am going to read you something, and you think back and see if you can remember the source: "The reverence of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom." Only the foolish say in their heart, "There is no God." "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." "The heavens declare the glory of God."—Psalm 111:10; 14:1; 19:1, 2.

Now the short paragraph which followed: "An appreciation of the infinite Power of the Creator and of our own littleness, should make us teachable. The study of Creation is the 'Key of Knowledge.' Using this Key we begin to realize that the only worthy ambition is to cooperate with our Creator's beneficent designs respecting His Creation." This may not be fresh in our memory, So I will tell you where this can be found—in the first two paragraphs of the Photo Drama book.

What a striking thought this is—that "the only worthy ambition is to cooperate with our Creator's beneficent designs respecting his creation." How true this is, when we stop to think about it. We might have many worth- while ambitions in life that would be interesting and a credit to our efforts, and satisfying to our human inclinations. But the enjoyment of such ambitions could last only as long as we live on the earth; and as a general rule, the results of our ambitions do not extend much beyond our present life, and they do not make too much of an impression upon the world. The world is apt to forget very soon the efforts and results of those who have ambitions in this life only.

But when it comes to cooperating with the beneficent designs of our Creator respecting His Creation, the picture is entirely different. The Creator's designs are of the highest order for the blessing of all and these designs will have permanent value and results. Not only that, but if we do cooperate with His designs, we are lifted above everything that is selfish and look to our Creator for the directing of our energies and the results are permanent. In cooperating with God's designs, we grow in character and advance in the favor of God and eventually find ourselves in line for abundant rewards.

So we can see that the simple little statement on the first page of the Photo Drama book is of tremendous importance to the welfare of those who see the point.

In addition to being active in cooperating in the beneficent works of God, and knowing that the results will be permanent, and that we will be in line for special rewards, there is something else of supreme satisfaction to the deepest longing of our hearts—the enjoyment of having our Creator be a Father to us—a HEAVENLY Father. We might say well, that this is the supreme blessing of all. We read the words of Jesus in # John 14:21 and 23: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our above with him."

And on the same level of blessing is the special love of our Redeemer, Master and Head. It is heart- warming to consider the reasons why we feel drawn to Jesus personally. He is the one altogether lovely and, with the one exception of the Heavenly Father, we feel drawn to him more than to any other person in creation: we love him above all others of our friends and intimates. He occupies the supreme position in our heart's affections.

As we say, it is heart- warming to consider the reasons why we love our Redeemer So much. We will touch upon only three points in particular. First, we esteem him for his absolute loyalty to the purposes of God in the redemption of the human race from condemnation to death. Jesus esteemed the quality of justice in His Heavenly Father's character So much that he was willing to die to satisfy that justice quality. This quality of justice is inflexible in all that is right, and gives us confidence in God's absolute righteousness. Jesus was possessed of the same character quality, and showed it by his willingness to pay the supreme price to

maintain this quality absolute. There is no deviation from the demands of justice, either in our Heavenly Father a character, or in the character of Jesus.

Second, we esteem Jesus for his character of pity, mercy and love toward the human family, in that he was not only concerned that the justice quality of God a character should be maintained at all costs, but that his dying to satisfy justice would mean the rescuing of the human family from Adamic condemnation, So this great family would have an opportunity to experience restitution in perfection—to be developed in a perfect character of righteousness and love and the reward of eternal life on the human plane.

Third, we esteem Jesus for his special love toward the New Creation—that he was willing to have associates with him in the work of restitution of the human family, and that these associates would be constituted joint- heirs with him in all his work and station. We note the last three verses of John 17—the last sentences of Jesus' prayer, right after the last Passover, when Jesus was walking with his disciples in the night on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father, I will that these also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and those have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." And the words of Paul in # Romans 8:17: "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint- heirs with Christ; if So be that we suffer with him, that we may be glorified together."

Someone of the world may not understand why we feel such an intimate and personal love for our Redeemer, more than for any other person in existence (with the exception of our Heavenly Father, of course). He may reason something like this—"You Bible Students are constantly referring to the love of Jesus in dying to redeem the human race from the condemnation brought upon the race through Adam's sin. And I can see that indeed this was a very worthy act on the part of Jesus. But I was born into this world through no will of my own, and I cannot help being under condemnation because of Adam's sin. If God's law had to be satisfied in this manner, I feel this was something between God and Christ."

This is a fair statement in certain details, but it misses the very kernel of Jesus' attitude toward the human race, including the church. It is true that Jesus did die to satisfy the principle of justice, and his sacrifice is a perfect ransom to free mankind from condemnation when the proper time comes. But, there is something more concerning Jesus' attitude and motive in dying for the human race. He had pity love for the human race, and voluntarily and whole- heartedly came to earth for the express purpose of rescuing the race from condemnation So that man would have an opportunity to have an individual trial for life. So he had a deep love for us, as the human family—he was willing to do this for us. Is it any wonder we reverence him with intense gratitude and view him as an example of unselfish love, par excellence? Knowing all this, how could we do less than love him supremely as our Redeemer and Saviour?—he has indeed rescued us from Adamic condemnation. If one in this life were rescued from a tragic and certain death, by the act of another person, would he not have a supreme degree of gratitude toward the one who rescued him? Yes, surely!

But Jesus is more to us than Redeemer—Saviour from Adamic condemnation. We have been invited by our Heavenly Father to be joint- heirs with Jesus in the outworking of the human drama, during the Gospel Age and particularly during the Millennial Age. There is a New Creation, and Jesus is the Head of this New Creation, and we are the Body members. All during the Gospel Age, Christ has been working on his Bride class to prepare this class in character, to be without spot or wrinkle to be his associates in glory, honor and immortality, and to work with him in bringing mankind back from the tomb and giving them an opportunity to walk up the Highway of Holiness.

If we grasp all these wonders of lovingkindness toward us, is it any wonder that Christ occupies first place in our hearts above any other love that we may have—in the Truth or out of the Truth? We love our wives, we love our husbands, we love our children, we love our parents, and there are others we might love very much. But no love compares with that which we feel personally for our Redeemer, our Master our Head. He is head and shoulders above all others in our heart's sentiments.

We are expressing these matters with the hope and prayer that the love we feel for our Redeemer will be still greater by the time we leave this one- day gathering today.

As a final thought—I read something some time back from the pen of Bro. Benjamin Barton that impressed me very deeply. He expressed the thought that our personal love for our Redeemer and for our Heavenly Father is such, that if these two Heavenly Friends want us to be a certain place, we will do everything to be in that place. The particular point he was touching upon was the hope of the high calling. If the Heavenly Father wants us to be joint- heirs with His Son, then we will respond with love and gratitude and make every effort to cooperate to this end.

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