



**There must be
Divisions**

**A Word
for the Present Moment**

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS
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THERE MUST BE DIVISIONS.

A Word for the Present Moment.

Notes of an Address, by J. S. G., in the Town Hall, Prahran, Melbourne, 17th April, 1911.

Numbers viii. 1-4; 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19; Rev. ii. 4, 5; xxii. 16, 17, 20, 21.

I FEEL impressed, dear brethren, to bring before you this evening a subject which I am sure troubles and perplexes many of the Lord's dear people. Then we must remember that Satan often harasses exercised souls, taking advantage of their lack of knowledge of the mind of God to hinder them treading the path which is pleasing to the Lord in these last days. If a person is pious and devoted, and seeking to follow the Lord in separation, yet lacks understanding in the ways of God, the enemy can raise doubts in his mind as to whether he is travelling the road which is according to the will of the Lord. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance that every Christian should be exercised concerning clearly apprehending the mind of God for His people for this present moment.

We are now living in the last days of the Church's history on earth, and many earnest souls are stumbled through the numerous divisions among the people of God everywhere. It distresses them to see the general break up; and the more an

individual loves the Lord Jesus Christ the more keenly will he feel and mourn over the strife and divided state that now exists. Therefore, it is of very great importance to have light from God, through gathering from the Holy Scriptures, why these divisions have taken, and do take, place; and what His mind is concerning us in view of the many divisions that have occurred.

The first point I desire to call attention to is that it is now impossible to walk **merely** as an individual if one is to please God to-day. However blameless in character, devoted in service, successful in winning souls the individual may be, yet if he does not walk in the enjoyment of Church privilege, maintaining the truth of the House of God and the Body of Christ, he has missed the path the Lord would have him tread. It matters not how he may appear in the Christian world; his name even may be blazed abroad as the greatest man of the century, yet if not enjoying Church privileges he is "fallen" (Rev. ii. 5), and his course is not according to the will of the Lord. He has missed God's chief thought for him, and, though perhaps unintentionally, is travelling a path according to the will of man.

We will now turn to the testimony of Holy Scripture. In the early days of this world's history God had no collective testimony on earth, but purely an individual one. Saints individually walked with God, and, like Enoch, pleased God. God called Abram, Isaac, and Jacob thus to walk before Him, but even to them He spoke of collective blessing.

Then when God delivered Israel from Egypt a great change took place in His dealings with men. He had now a nation, a collective testimony, con-

sisting of the twelve tribes of Israel. This nation was placed in Palestine, to be the centre of the world, from which the light of God was to shine for all men on earth. If an Israelite desired to please God, he must walk individually before God, fulfilling his individual and collective responsibilities, and in connection with the temple whence the light of God shone. The nations who knew not God could go there and learn the mind of God. They had fallen into darkness worshipping idols, but God had raised up a testimony for Himself in the nation of Israel. Henceforth no man, however earnest, could please God unless he recognised his place as one connected with the chosen nation, which with Jehovah's temple and city had been placed in Jehovah's land—His centre for all the earth.

Now we will pass on to this present period. The Church has been set up here on earth, and, as long as the Church period lasts, no one can fully please God unless he recognises his place in it. An Israelite had to fill his place as one of the chosen nation, and now, in like manner, we have our place in that specially privileged company the Church. Thus, we have seen that God brought in what is collective with Israel, and henceforth this will always be maintained, but there are also marked contrasts between Israel and the Church. Israel was a nation taken up in the flesh, and a man in the power of the flesh, if supported by God, might accomplish, like Samson, a service for God; but now God's people are taken up in the Spirit, and it is only by the Spirit's power the service of God can be accomplished. The Church was set upon earth in the power of God the Holy Spirit. It is God's

habitation by the Spirit. The Spirit was, and still is, the power by which those who formed the Church could live, walk, serve, and be a light for God here. They simply had to see that they did not move apart from the power of the Spirit, and thus God's testimony would have been maintained. Thus the Church testimony was entirely produced and could only be maintained in the power of the Spirit of God. Flesh cannot contribute to it. The Spirit of God alone (though He works through God's people) can produce or maintain anything for God during the Church interval. Israel fell, but alas! how much greater and more serious the fall of the Church, seeing God the Holy Ghost was here to support its testimony to Christ!

The Church is looked at in two ways in the Scriptures. It is viewed as in the life of Christ apart from flesh and blood, as in the epistle to the Colossians. Then it is also presented as God's testimony on earth, the light bearer, set up in responsibility in the power of the Spirit, and subject to the government of the Lord, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. To-night we are not looking at the Church as built by Christ, against which the gates of hades cannot prevail, but as the responsible witness established on earth during the absence of Christ, as brought before us in the book of Revelation.

We must remember that it was the mind of God that the unity of the Church should have been **manifestly** maintained. His mind was that first Israel, and later the Church, should have through the enjoyment of His blessing **remained actually one**. It was not His will that His own should be

divided. His will was that they should all be one, and that this oneness should be manifested and maintained. Did not Christ die to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John xi. 52)? Did He not pray that His people "may be one," that the world "may believe" that the Father sent the Son? Then the Spirit of God came and baptised all His own into one body. Were His people formed into one body to divide? If they did divide, could the Head recognise any party? The Spirit also formed the House of God that a clear testimony of the Saviour God may be livingly expressed to all men. Alas! alas! all outwardly has been marred. Saints are scattered, and the manifestation of the unity of the Body can no longer be seen by the world. Instead of a bright united witness for God the Saviour, we see saints "in selfish strife divided." We can only exclaim, why is this? Whatever answer is given, one thing is clear, it was never according to the mind of God that His people should be divided.

Now, in Numbers viii., we find Moses had been instructed to make the candlestick of beaten gold. The candlestick appears to represent Christ glorified, the One who has suffered here. The seven lights were to show up the beauty of the candlestick, and the Church was set up on earth to display the moral and spiritual traits of the One rejected by the world, but who has ascended in glory into heaven (1 Tim. iii. 16). The thought of God was that the Church, in the power of the Spirit, should shine in majestic splendour, displaying the glory and beauty of the Son of God, who had died that His people might be actually one through the enjoyment of His love and the love of His Father.

Then the Son, as Man, having ascended into heaven, and the Spirit being here on earth, heaven and earth are linked together, and the people of God are brought into sympathy with heaven. Man has entered heaven, for the Son of God is there, and God the Holy Ghost has come to form a vessel adequate for the display of the Son on earth. Therefore division amongst God's people must be contrary to His mind.

Now we will turn to 1 Cor. xi. 19: "There must be sects among you, that the approved may become manifest among you" (N.T.). Notice these words carefully, because some say, "Oh! it does not mean that." But we must believe that God means exactly what He says, and that He says what He means. Be wise, and take the Scriptures as they stand. God has not written a book only for the intellectual, but also for the most simple believer. J.N.D. said: "The cream lies on the top," and, if we are simple and childlike, having confidence in Him, we shall get the cream; but, if wise according to man, we shall dip below the cream and get only the skim milk. We do not need man's wisdom to understand the mind of God, for the Spirit has been given that we may know even the deep things of God.

God says there must—mark, "must"—be heresies, sects, or divisions. How can this be? Have we not seen that God's mind is that His people should be one? Then why must there be divisions? We must not speculate as to this, for speculation is very dangerous, but we can turn to Holy Scripture to see what God says.

Let us notice that Revelation ii. does not commence with the Church at Jerusalem. It starts with Ephesus, the Assembly formed by Paul's labours in

the full light of God (Acts xx. 27). What a wonderful epistle Paul could send to them! The great and deep counsels of God are unfolded therein. What a privileged company they were! Yet at the close of that epistle the apostle had taught them they must fight, or they would fall. Satan would use all his skill and wisdom to cause the Church to become unfaithful. Could Satan prevail against those whom God the Holy Ghost has come to sustain? Not if they are wholly dependent on the Lord, and strong in the power of His might. If fully cast on Him, equipped fully in His strength, they could then defeat even all the host of spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies. But, alas! within two years they have so fallen as to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, and in the Revelation the Lord brings this solemn charge against them: "Thou hast left thy first love." The most privileged company that ever existed on earth had fallen. They even had left their first love—the One who loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. They had turned from Him, flirted with Judaism, flirted with the world, and, therefore, were no longer a true testimony for Him. They had thus forced the One who loved them perfectly to take His place as a judge in the midst of the Assemblies. He had taken His place in the midst of His own as the Son (John xx. 17-20), that they might enjoy, in association with Him, the place given to them in divine grace. He could not leave them on account of His great love for them; therefore He assumes the character of Judge, and they had forced Him to do this by their unfaithfulness.

Still His heart is unchanged, and He cries to them: "Remember, therefore, from whence thou

art fallen, and repent"—Mark, "Repent" . . .
 "or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

It is true they laboured, they also abhorred evil, but Christ was not all to them. There was still external unity, but in His eyes it was a sham, and He would break it up, unless they repented. Does He value a mere outward unity? It must be a unity in heart and soul, or it is an abomination in His sight. What parent would value outward order if his children were not together in family affection? A merely outward oneness, agreeing to differ, will not suit the Lord. Therefore He says: "Repent . . . or I will remove thy candlestick out of his place."

Has the Church ever repented? Alas! Never. Therefore the Lord has removed the candlestick; the one united testimony seen at the commencement has disappeared from the earth. The Lord would not have the Church outwardly one when inwardly unfaithful to Him. If it did not continue to display Him, it must bear the marks of His disapproval until He translates it to heaven.

The Church not only never repented, but, alas! fell lower and lower. The world captured it, though there was the greatest assumption, and the Lord could not tolerate it any longer. Still, if He must remove the candlestick in judgment, He will do it in a way that will help His own. The Reformation commenced, and, through the Reformers, the Lord recovered justification by faith to His people. How good He is! Still the candlestick is removed, the one united testimony has gone—for ever? No,

thank God, not for ever, but until the Lord brings the Church out of heaven to shine for His praise through the ages of ages.

The saints having become unfaithful, there must be divisions, and we have therefore on earth Romanists and Protestants. God's people are divided, never to be one here again. Romanism is not characterised by division, but Protestantism is. The truth has only been preserved by division, and thus, in chastening His people, the Lord works for the good of His own. The confusion is great, the scattering dreadful, for there are something like two thousand sects, but the Lord is unchanged. He is enough for all who desire Him. The candlestick has indeed been removed, and divisions will still increase, but He will not fail the true heart who turns to him.

Still, should we not try to do something to at least heal some of them. Could not some who are called orthodox come together? But, if departure from the Lord brought division, the remedy is not amalgamation. Nothing less than all God's people repenting could take away division, but this will never be until the Lord calls us hence. The divisions must increase, for everything is growing more and more corrupt, and the Lord will chasten us and break up what is not of Him, because He loves us.

If we could bring all God's scattered people together, it would only make a Babel of confusion. It would not be acceptable to God. He will only have unity which is the result of the soul being filled with Christ. To amalgamate without removing the cause of division is only adding rebellion to sin.

Did not the Lord cause the division between the ten tribes and the two in Israel (1 Kings xii. 24)?

Did He not forbid Judah to fight against the ten tribes? Israel was divided, and must so remain until through mercy they become one in heart in that day.

We cannot hinder divisions; they come on account of the low state of God's people generally. We must accept them from the hand of the Lord, and should walk in lowliness of spirit, treading softly, seeking quietly to do the Lord's will, remembering His chastening hand is upon us. Do not let us fight like the two tribes did against the ten tribes. How sad to see brother fighting with brother. Some cannot say anything too bad against those they depart from! What a shame this is! A man of the world even would try to hide his brother's fault, but alas! those called with Christ's name publish it abroad. Surely we should bow under His hand, and seek to keep out of sight, on account of the great dishonour brought on His name.

Still it is only through division the truth has been maintained. Then the light given by the Lord has caused some to move forward spiritually, and others were not prepared to follow with them, and thus a separation took place which is called division. There are outwardly in Christendom two companies—Romanists (including the Greek Church) and Protestants. Then hidden (largely in Protestantism) from man's eye, but under the eye of God, is Philadelphia, which will be preserved until the Church is translated. It must be maintained, though its characteristics may only characterise the few, or the translation could not take place. The Lord preserves what is pleasing to Him, but He will translate the whole Church. The many are often de-

livered through the few, just as Lot was delivered through Abraham. Thus Philadelphia is the whole Church, though at the close its characteristics may not characterise each individual; but, through grace, not one will be left behind.

It is well to notice, when the Lord had distinctly moved through the Reformers, that division or separations characterised the result of their labours. That from which they separated (Romanism) has gone on outwardly one, because the testimony of God moved with the Reformers. Through separating from evil fresh light was acquired, and, through division, the light was maintained. Then when the Lord gave light as to the Church, and increased light as to the Gospel, again through separations fresh light was acquired and the truth of the Church maintained. The Lord thus manifested where He was, and those that missed their way gradually gave up unconsciously what once they upheld.

Therefore we can say that all division is on account of departure in heart from the Lord, and that He in His great goodness uses it for the blessing of His beloved people who desire to go on with Him. Thus the approved become manifest. The two thousand divisions are indeed a great reproach to us, but they are used like a sieve to sift God's people, and make manifest those who want to do the will of the Lord.

How often people say, "It is so difficult to find the true path; among so many divisions how can we tell which is right?" If we had indeed to decide from the rival claims of each, it would (as we say in America) puzzle a Philadelphia lawyer. Thank God, this is unnecessary. We simply need hearts

only desiring to do His will, and then, with a single eye, His mind can be known in the most difficult day. Never let us forget that the least departure from the Lord or the truth will bear its solemn fruit in due time.

We will now look at the leading features of the approved at the close of this present period. No individual or company of individuals would even **think they are the approved**, for each would be conscious of the complete failure of the Church, and also how little the true marks of the approved are seen in him. Yet each should be exercised to be moving forward on these lines.

The Lord says, "I am the root and offspring of David, the bright [and] Morning Star" (Rev. xxii., 16, N.T.) The Lord in these words speaks of Himself as connected with Israel, and with the Church. We know Him, the Morning Star, the herald of the coming day. The light that will shine and characterise the day we can enjoy now. Christ as the Morning Star is the centre of the heavenly relationships. Hence the Lord says to the overcomer in Thyatira, "I will give him the Morning Star." We are privileged to know the Son of God as the centre of the heavenly relationships which characterise Christianity (John xx. 17). Thus we are morally and spiritually fitted to occupy the place, for the light of the wonderful revelation of God will shine through the Church to His praise and glory. (See Rev. XXI. 11, 24.)

The first feature of the approved is expressed in their invitation to the Lord. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." The Spirit is still here, and there can be no failure with Him. The Spirit is still working producing bridal affection, leading into

the enjoyment of heavenly privilege, and then in unison with the Spirit they cry, "Come." The more our heavenly privileges are enjoyed, the more we shall join in this cry to Christ. Thus the desire that He may have His Church with Himself for His satisfaction, that He may publicly have the highest place in the universe of God, and that He may place His Church (which is the masterpiece of His handiwork and formed to display Himself) to light up with its radiance the universe of God—will be strengthened.

The second mark is: "Let him that heareth say, 'Come.'" None can be in the enjoyment of their heavenly privileges and desiring His coming, without seeking the good of every member of the household. Therefore those who say "Come" to Christ desire each individual believer also, in response to His love, to join in inviting Him to come, that He may rest in His love, and rejoice over His people with singing.

Then God still works in sovereign mercy. Souls around us thirst, and they are not in the secret. Those who know God alone are. Therefore, they cry aloud, "Let him that is athirst, **Come.**" Christ said, "Come to me." His people say, "Come." They know the joys which never fade, through drinking of the water of life. The Spirit as the power of life is still on earth, and this gift is still available for man. This is the third feature of those answering to the Lord's mind at the close of this present interval.

The fourth mark is that the true character of the Saviour God is made known. God has expressed His love and grace to all men, to black and white, to men of all nationalities and all social grades.

Therefore if enjoying our heavenly portion we shall ever be evangelistic, and declaring in word and deed the unlimited testimony of His grace: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Still, it is well to notice the order in which these features are placed in the holy Scriptures. They do not commence, but end, with the Gospel testimony. We need to know the warmth, the light, the love of the inner circle, and then we shall go forth with a true testimony to the fulness of His grace.

Is there one here who is discouraged? Are some inclined to give up on account of the difficulties? There is indeed much to humble us, much to exercise us, but, thank God, everything to encourage. The Lord's coming is drawing nigh, the day of public victory is at hand, and the eternal day of blessing has already commenced for His own. The Lord knows the pressure, the difficulties and exercise, but His love is unchanged, and He would cheer us with these words, "Surely, I come quickly."

There must be no thought of giving up or yielding one iota of the truth. The truth of the Church and of the Gospel must be held fast, and to yield the former is soon to lose the clearness of the latter. The truth cannot be merely maintained in the letter. We must have the power and enjoyment of all that encircles His blessed person in our own souls, or we shall decline and gradually lose, probably unconsciously, that which we have enjoyed. Therefore let us take courage from His last words to us, "Surely, I come quickly." He will come the moment the work of grace is completed. The Church will be translated the second it is complete. He loves it too much to leave it longer. May we be kept true, responsive, ever replying, "Amen. Even so, come

Lord Jesus." May His grace be with us, that we may be kept true to Him, until that happy moment.

Lastly, let us be warned; the germ that leads to departure, to unfaithfulness, is in each one of us. It is easy to miss the path, but often very difficult to find it again. How easy even to become blind, and, therefore, be unconscious that the way has been missed. There is only one mind in heaven, and, let us remember the Spirit as long as He is on earth will maintain a people in accord with the one mind that exists in heaven. May there be great exercise and heart searching, and with each one judging even the germ of what is displeasing to Him, that we may be kept in the power of the Spirit, sharing the one mind of all heaven until He comes!

