

WINNING THE EDOMITES

TURNING ENEMIES INTO FRIENDS

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1. A Part of the Whole Body

Every Member a Worker

WE HAVE various channels through which we can reach people in the world. We have a health clinic, agriculture, restaurants, a shop, a kindergarten, the work in the university, and so on. These are the channels through which God is working today, and each of us is in a different place according to the various gifts that God has given us.

But because of this we sometimes lose sight of the work as whole and tend to see only ourselves and our own world. We lose sight of the fact that our fellow believers are also working on the front, and this causes the whole body to suffer.

1 Corinthians 12

¹ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:

² You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.

³ Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.

⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.

There are two words that I want to draw your attention to here: “each” and “all.” The Spirit is manifested in each one of us. Everyone who is a part of the body is a worker, through whom the Spirit reveals himself to people in the world. It is impossible for someone to be a passive listener or consumer. If we are not active then sooner or later we will lose our interest in the truth. Therefore we really need to understand that each one is a worker in the work of God, if we are a part of the body of Christ.

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one...

Paul is speaking here of the body of Christ, not of everyone in the world. And this manifestation of the Spirit is for the profit of all. When I think about my work at the university, this means that it is for the profit of all, and not just for the benefit of that part of the work I am in. And I myself am for the profit of all, not just for my area of the work.

The same is true for everyone else as well. Each one of us has our place, but the Spirit is manifested in each one for the benefit of all—for each member of the body. And each member wants to have something from the ministry I give; it is not restricted just to me and my working area. Yet the gifts are different, as are the various work areas.

For the Profit of All

1 Corinthians 12

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all.

If we transgress one law, then we transgress all Ten Commandments, no matter which commandment is transgressed. In the book of *Timothy*, there is a text which refers to the love of money being the root of all evil.¹ In other translations we read of covetousness as the root of all evil. Which commandment is that? The tenth commandment:

Exodus 20

¹⁷ You shall not covet.

This commandment is transgressed so often. In fact, it is the principle on which capitalism functions—the transgression of the tenth commandment. Everything is geared to this one aim—the sale of goods. Some translations speak about the love of money, which is the same thing. This is the negative side.

On the positive side we can say that if there is a gift of the Spirit, then it is for the benefit of all. And if it is not a benefit for all then it is not a benefit for the area I work in. So then, we must always see ourselves as being a part of the whole body, and not

¹ 1 *Timothy* 6:10.

just a part of the arm, or the foot. We are always a part of the whole body.

1 Corinthians 12

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:

⁸ For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,

⁹ To another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

¹⁰ To another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

We might be tempted to say,

“Well, I have my gift and that’s it.”

But the heading of this passage is “for the profit of all.” Never forget that!

⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one *for the profit of all*.

Now let us continue reading:

¹² For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.

¹⁵ If the foot should say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?

And now the point is raised,

“I’m not the hand. I’m the foot. Don’t expect me to do the work of the hand, I just concentrate on my work as the foot—and that’s all I’m responsible for!”

1 Corinthians 12

¹⁵ Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?

That's impossible!

¹⁶ And if the ear should say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?

If I were to say that I am in Giessen and I have to concentrate on my work there, so I'm not a member of the body, but I am just this part over there, is that possible? No, it's not possible!

¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?

¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

²⁰ But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.

²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

²³ And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty,

²⁴ But our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,

²⁵ That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

The comparison of the church to a body is very interesting, and it is very fitting. When a part of the body is sick, then the whole body suffers. And the members have a care for one another—they take care of each other. Not in a distrusting way, but because of their genuine interest for each other. Therefore, they are alert to see a need when it arises, and also to satisfy that need.

2. A Change of Supply

I WOULD like to come back to our own history now. We will be having a financial report later this week, and it was in just such a report two or three years ago that we saw how our income from tithes was falling away. This was rather depressing at first, and we wondered how things would continue. We have so much responsibility, but less and less income.

However, we soon saw that there was no reason to be sad, but rather to be happy. Why was this? How were we able to be happy when our financial situation was so perilous?

At the Entry of Canaan

Well, we saw a parallel to the income of the Israelites from Canaan. The Israelites had always had water during their wilderness wandering, but then the supply suddenly ceased. Let's read some scriptures in this connection.

1 Corinthians 10

¹ Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,

² All were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,

³ All ate the same spiritual food,

⁴ And all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

That was a really good object lesson. The Israelites did not have any dependable water supply in the wilderness. Today it is possible to live in deserts because we can drill deep into underground lakes, but back then they had no access to anything like that. So for such a large number of people, the wilderness was really a hostile environment.

But God miraculously provided for them, because a supply of water was essential for their survival. There was always a plentiful supply wherever they were, which flowed from a rock. And this is what Paul describes in the following words:

⁴ ...For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

When we look at the Old Testament we see that Israel was not always happy. In fact, they often complained. And at one point their complaining was particularly loud—when the rock ceased to supply them with water. They came to a certain place and suddenly water no longer flowed from the rock. They looked to see where the water could be and said to themselves,

“We have always had water, why is there no more now?”

Numbers 20

¹ Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.

² Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron.

³ And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!

⁴ Why have you brought up the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here?

⁵ And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink.

This was the first time that their supply of water had failed, but they immediately started to complain. From a purely human point of view we must say that there was no chance of their finding another supply. Their supply of water was always miraculous, but now it had stopped. I don't know how easily we can empathize with them in their situation.

When we go to work every day and get our wages at the end of the month then we take it for granted. But if we are self-employed and have our own business, and do not know how things will run this month, then we are very happy when everything works out right.

If you are a civil servant then you don't have such problems. You can't lose your job and you know things will continue just the same. But anyone who has an uncertain income will worry every month as to whether enough will come in.

Let's say the business is going well and everything looks fine for a while, but then the income starts to get less from month to month. The seller will start to wonder whether people are really interested in the goods for sale. And then comes the month when there are no sales at all and the cash box is empty—completely empty. Imagine that you have a restaurant and there would be no customers for a month. That would be a shock.

And so it was for the Israelites in the wilderness. Water was essential for them, and it was a real miracle that they had a continual supply—it was something very special. Many of the Israelites would probably have wondered whether there would be water at their next encampment. And when it was supplied they would have been relieved. They thought themselves lucky, or fortunate—although they would have acknowledged that God was in the background working for them. But in their hearts they would have longed for something more consistent and dependable for their supply. And so they began to cry out.

Why did they think like this? Because they did not understand that it was God who was their Provider—they thought that they would have to supply their own now. And that was their real problem. This can be a real problem for us in our work as well. When we can do something ourselves to ensure what we get, we feel fairly confident. But when we are completely dependent on the whims or mercy of someone else, or on nature—like a farmer, for example—what shall we do? When there is a really poor year and the harvest fails, what can we do? Just complain?

The Israelites saw themselves in just such a situation—there was nothing they could do and that was bad, really bad. And so they murmured.

Numbers 20

³ And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!

⁴ Why have you brought up the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here?

⁵ And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink.

⁶ So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them.

⁷ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

⁸ Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.

⁹ So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him.

¹⁰ And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?

¹¹ Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

¹² Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, Because you did not believe me, to hallow me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.

¹³ This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the Lord, and He was hallowed among them.

The same story is related in another place as well. God had a purpose in removing their supply of water. What was His purpose? He had given them another supply. They would soon come into another country where there was water in abundance.

In those days, Palestine was not as dry as it is today. The river Jordan was full to overflowing and there was plenty of water available. So their supply from the rock was no longer necessary. The drying up of the waters was actually a sign that they were close to home—the Promised Land. Was there then a reason for being sad when the water ceased to flow? On the contrary, it was a reason to be glad. God had given them a sign which said,

“You will soon be home. You don’t need this water anymore; soon you will have something else.”

How do we understand God’s messages? When God takes something away from us, do we understand that He is really giving us something, or do we see only that He has taken something away? If we understand that God is really giving us a blessing when we no longer have access to something, then we have trust in God. And God desired His people to have this trust. Moses had the same desire for his people.

Dealing with the Edomites

By the way, there is another part to this story. The Israelites had to pass through Edom before reaching the Promised Land. And God had directed them to buy what they needed from the Edomites.

Concerning the parallel to our day, what does the water that came out of the Rock mean for us today? We have already said that the Rock was Christ. And Christ is still the Rock that goes with us today, but what is the water? It is the word that is continually flowing, and which we need. This word can also be called light, or truth. It enables those who accept this light to be happy, and to give their tithes and gifts freely.

When the message is powerful there is a corresponding income. But now our income has begun to dwindle. So what does this mean? Is it a sign that He has left us or no longer cares for us, or is it a sign that we are close to the Promised Land? This was the question we had to ask ourselves. It was an important question. God does not take anything away from us.

Let’s return to the Israelites now. The people were to buy food and water from the Edomites until they reached the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 2

¹ Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness of the Way of the Red Sea, as the Lord spoke to me, and we skirted Mount Seir for many days.

² And the Lord spoke to me, saying:

³ You have skirted this mountain long enough; turn northward.

⁴ And command the people, saying, You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore watch yourselves carefully.

⁵ Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession.

⁶ You shall buy food from them with money, that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink.

⁷ For the Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing.

This was God's purpose for His people. He wanted them to buy food and water from the Edomites until they reached Canaan, where they would have these things for free. Of course, they would have had to work the land, plant, make vineyards, and so forth. They would have enough to do. But they could not do this in Edom—here they were to buy the things they needed.

This would have been a great advantage for the Israelites, who would have survived in this way. And the Edomites would have had a good income from this trade as well, because there were about a million adults or more. Imagine that we were in charge of a tourist region and suddenly a million people would announce they would be coming to visit the area. That would be something! But the Edomites didn't see it like that. Why not? Because they were afraid of the Israelites.

Why did God instruct His people to buy from the Edomites? This was His original purpose, and it would have been realized had they not hesitated. The delay that arose, because of their murmuring when the water supply ceased, led the Edomites to become distrustful and refuse them passage.

Again, it was God's purpose for them to pass through Edom. A new era was about to begin—a new era! Until now they had always wandered in the wilderness, and throughout this time God had always provided for them. It was risky, but at some point the people had become used to this adventurous life. They thought that things could continue in the same manner. Yet now God said,

“No, we won't continue like this. Now we will do it differently.”

And what did the Israelites say?

“No! To buy water is boring. It requires a lot of effort, bargaining skill, and new faith.”

It required faith for the water that came out of the rock, but they were used to that. Now a new kind of faith was required. A new era had begun. And we should never forget that change is the price of progress. They had to rise a step higher in faith. It was absolutely necessary for them to exercise more faith before entering Canaan. And this step of faith entailed being obedient to God and buying food and water from the Edomites.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 422:

Had the people, when brought into trial, trusted in God, the Captain of the Lord's host would have led them through Edom, and the fear of them would have rested upon the inhabitants of the land, so that, instead of manifesting hostility, they would have shown them favor.

But the Israelites did not act promptly upon God's word, and while they were complaining and murmuring, the golden opportunity passed. When they were at last ready to present their request to the king, it was refused.

Ever since they left Egypt, Satan had been steadily at work to throw hindrances and temptations in their way, that they might not inherit Canaan. And by their own unbelief they had repeatedly opened the door for him to resist the purpose of God.

This was really a golden opportunity for the Israelites, but they lost it through murmuring. Their only interest was in regaining their water supply instead of saying,

“God has a purpose in this lack of water.”

This was exacerbated by Moses and Aaron losing their patience and saying,

Numbers 20

¹⁰ Must we bring water for you out of this rock?

And this delay led the Edomites to refuse their passage.

¹⁴ Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that has befallen us,

¹⁵ How our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers.

¹⁶ When we cried out to the Lord, He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border.

¹⁷ Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King’s Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.

¹⁸ Then Edom said to him, You shall not pass through my land, lest I come out against you with the sword.

Can you imagine how the Israelites felt when they heard this? God had told them to go through Edom and buy food and water from the Edomites. And now they had done everything God had said and it wasn’t working. Had God’s promise failed? We just read what God had said in *Deuteronomy*: pass through, buy food and water from them, and so on.

But we should never forget that God’s promises are always dependent on conditions. And when these conditions are not met, the promise cannot be fulfilled. We tend to blame God when His promises are not fulfilled. Yet God does fulfill His promises—when the conditions are met. And in this case the conditions were not met.

The Israelites were surprised at this refusal, but instead of simply accepting the matter, they repeated their request.

Numbers 20

¹⁹ So the children of Israel said to him, We will go by the highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing more.

Basically, they said,

“We only want to go through and buy these things and apart from that we don’t want to have anything to do with you.”

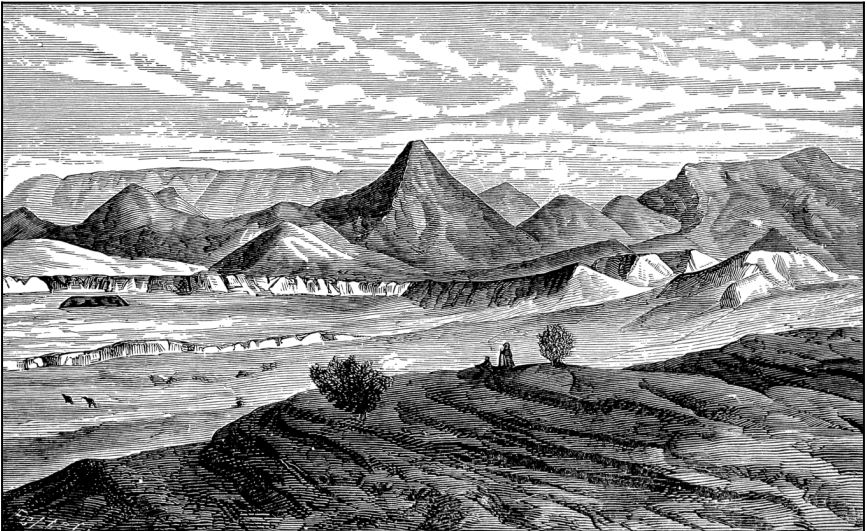
But that wasn’t God’s purpose for them. He wanted to bless the Edomites through the presence of His people in their land. It was an opportunity for them to see the blessing that comes through Israel. But the Israelites said,

“No, we only want to pass through.”

²⁰ Then he said, You shall not pass through. So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand.

²¹ Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

The Israelites then had to follow a long, circuitous route in which many of them died from fiery serpents and other calamities.



Wilderness of Kadesh (Handbook of Bible Geography, 1899)

3. Who Are the Edomites?

WE DREW a parallel between the people of Israel before Canaan and our situation today. The people of Israel at that time experienced a real delay because of the fact that they did not exercise faith at the crucial moment. Their murmuring and complaining at the rock really detained them, so that the Edomites refused to let them pass through.

Historical Edomites

We saw what the water and the rock symbolize. But what, or who, are the Edomites?

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 422-423:

Had the people, when brought into trial, trusted in God, the Captain of the Lord's host would have led them through Edom, and the fear of them would have rested upon the inhabitants of the land, so that, instead of manifesting hostility, they would have shown them favor. But the Israelites did not act promptly upon God's word, and while they were complaining and murmuring, the golden opportunity passed.

When they were at last ready to present their request to the king, it was refused. Ever since they left Egypt, Satan had been steadily at work to throw hindrances and temptations in their way, that they might not inherit Canaan. And by their own unbelief they had repeatedly opened the door for him to resist the purpose of God.

It is important to believe God's word and act upon it promptly, while His angels are waiting to work for us. Evil angels are ready to contest every step of advance. And when God's providence bids His children go forward, when He is ready to do great things for them, Satan tempts them to displease the Lord by hesitation and delay; he seeks to kindle a spirit of strife or to arouse murmuring or unbelief, and thus deprive them of the blessings that God desired to bestow. God's servants should be minute-men, ever ready to move as fast as His providence opens the way. And delay on their part gives time for Satan to work to defeat them.

Why do people hesitate? What are the reasons for it? We experience hesitation time and again, and we can hardly estimate how many opportunities are wasted by it. Have you ever experienced how an opportunity passed by because of hesitating? If you receive a job offer and don't grab it immediately, it will be gone. If you find a rare article and don't buy it straight away, it will be sold. That's why people do all they can to prevent any delay. Sometimes they wait entire nights in front of a shop in order to make sure they will get whatever it is they want so badly. If there's too much demand, the thing may be gone.

So why do we hesitate, spiritually speaking? We want to keep things under control. If I decide on one thing, I commit myself to that one thing. Then I can't easily change sides—no matter what side that may be. That's one reason. Doubt. Unbelief. Looking for my own advantage. Laziness. Yes, all of those are reasons. And every delay gives Satan time to work to defeat us. We have to be really clear on why it is that we hesitate, and remove the causes.

The main reason for hesitation is unbelief, and the fact that going forward requires an effort.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 423-424:

In the directions first given to Moses concerning their passage through Edom, after declaring that the Edomites should be afraid of Israel, the Lord had forbidden His people to make use of this advantage against them. Because the power of God was engaged for Israel, and the fears of the Edomites would make them an easy prey, the Hebrews were not therefore to prey upon them.

In other words, God gave them an advantage, and it was very important for them not to use that advantage selfishly. Why did God have so much consideration for the Edomites? Israel was supposed to buy supplies from them. The command given them was,

Deuteronomy 2

⁴ Take good heed unto yourselves therefore:

⁵ Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.

The ancestors of Edom and Israel were brothers, and brotherly kindness and courtesy should exist between them.

Who were the Edomites? If we understand the situation back then, we will also understand today better. Who are the Edomites today?

Esau was the father of the Edomites, and he was Jacob's brother. Both were sons of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham. From Jacob came the Israelites, and from Esau the Edomites. Why did they become two nations at all? Why did they not remain one nation, as did Jacob's twelve sons? There was a good reason for this, and to find it out, we will look at the history of Esau. The Bible unflinchingly describes Esau as a godless person.

Hebrews 12

¹⁶ Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau, who traded his birthright as the firstborn son for a single meal.

The term "godless" does not mean that Esau didn't believe in God. He was not an atheist, as we would say today. Rather, he was someone who didn't pay much attention to godly things. This verse tells us that it was because he sold his birthright for a single meal.

Genesis 25

²⁹ One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry.

³⁰ Esau said to Jacob, I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew! (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means red.)

³¹ All right, Jacob replied, but trade me your rights as the firstborn son.

³² Look, I'm dying of starvation! said Esau. What good is my birthright to me now?

³³ But Jacob said, First you must swear that your birthright is mine. So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.

³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.

The Birthright Blessing

What is this birthright? A birthright entitled the first-born son to be heir of the house. The father's name and possessions were all passed down to him. He was responsible for the household. In Isaac's case, this especially meant being the spiritual heir, because the patriarchs, beginning with Abraham and continuing with Isaac and Jacob, all received the promise that they would become God's people and that from them the Saviour would be born. This was a very dear promise to them, and it was also why having children was so important in those days. They did not simply have children in order to multiply. The goal was the Messiah. Which child would become the Saviour of the nation and of the whole world? They waited in eager expectancy.

This spiritual blessing was the most significant aspect of the birthright. But the birthright also meant receiving the father's possessions. Now Esau did not appreciate the spiritual side of the birthright. Jacob, on the other hand, wanted it very much. Esau was interested in material gain, but even that would still be a long time in coming. Right now, dinner was more important to him.

If a person is able to sacrifice the interests of the present for the future, this shows maturity. In fact, this ability to delay gratification is a very important feature of a mature character. Remember this well. Fewer and fewer people have such maturity of character. Why? Because people want immediate satisfaction, right now. I want it, and I want it now! And if I don't get it, I become impatient and discontent. That is the spirit of the world, more and more.

It also applies in a special sense to spiritual matters. Let's read some texts which show this.

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we

do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

¹⁸ For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Who would call their affliction “light” and “but for a moment”? If Israel had said that about the fact that they had no water, how different would the outcome have been! Here Paul clearly shows maturity of character, because the present things were not as important to him as the future. He kept his eyes on what was to come.

How do we see that the spirit of the world is focused on the present? We see it by the fact that humanity as a whole is running up against a wall, with everything that this implies. People do see that our present course is piling up problems for us in the future. But the satisfaction of the present is more important to them than thinking of the future. And this clearly shows a lack in the character.

The same applies to spiritual things. When we see gratification in the present as more significant than the things of the future, we show a spiritual lack. Spiritual maturity, on the other hand, is just what we read here.

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

Paul had this maturity of character. He says:

Philippians 3

⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

For Paul, the things of the future were far more important than the things of the present. What was it that he counted as loss? His reputation as a Pharisee, his position, his income, and all those things. It was all rubbish to him in comparison to being with Christ.

Another text speaks of Abraham, who also had this maturity. He saw himself as a foreigner and lived in tents.

Hebrews 11 [NLT]

⁹ And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there by faith—for he was like a foreigner, living in tents. And so did Isaac and Jacob, who inherited the same promise.

¹⁰ Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God.

Two Different Characters

Let's return to these two characters, Esau and Jacob. Who had maturity of character and who did not? Esau obviously lacked this maturity. He wanted to have his food now; the future was of no interest to him. Jacob, on the other hand, always thought of the future. His thoughts spanned far more than just the here and now.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 177:

Jacob and Esau, the twin sons of Isaac, present a striking contrast, both in character and in life. This unlikeness was foretold by the angel of God before their birth. When in answer to Rebekah's troubled prayer he declared that two sons would be given her, he opened to her their future history, that each would become the head of a mighty nation, but that one would be greater than the other, and that the younger would have the pre-eminence.

Esau grew up loving self-gratification and centering all his interest in the present. Impatient of restraint, he delighted in the wild freedom of the chase, and early chose the life of a hunter. Yet he was the father's favorite. The quiet, peace-loving shepherd was attracted by the daring and vigor of this elder son, who fearlessly ranged over mountain and desert, returning home with

game for his father and with exciting accounts of his adventurous life.

Jacob, thoughtful, diligent, and care-taking, ever thinking more of the future than the present, was content to dwell at home, occupied in the care of the flocks and the tillage of the soil. His patient perseverance, thrift, and foresight were valued by the mother. His affections were deep and strong, and his gentle, unremitting attentions added far more to her happiness than did the boisterous and occasional kindnesses of Esau. To Rebekah, Jacob was the dearer son.

That was the situation. The two sons had very different characters, and unfortunately, the father loved Esau more and the mother Jacob. This created tension in the family. The father wanted to bless Esau, saying that this was his eldest son. The mother tried to prevent this. A fraud resulted, as described in *Genesis 27*. After this deception Jacob was forced to leave home, because he had fallen from favor and his brother was very angry with him.

For a time, Jacob was a fugitive. Later God led him back. Meanwhile Esau's anger had not abated; rather, it had even increased, since his father had become old now and was soon to die, so the inheritance would fall to either the one or the other. Esau thought he was the rightful heir and that Jacob had stolen the father's blessing from him, which to him was unpardonable.

Jacob had no interest in the physical blessings of the birthright. By now his character had so matured that he thought nothing of the present, but only of the future. He thought of God's cause, and, just like his father Abraham, of a heavenly home. In this situation the two finally met. The story is important for us today because we have the same two classes of people. How should we deal with one another? That is the big question.

Reconciliation

Jacob's return is described in *Genesis 32* and *33*, which you can read for yourselves. His prayer, his wrestling, and his victory are

things we have often contemplated in the past. So now let us turn to chapter 33.

Genesis 33

¹ Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men.

² So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. He put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, then Rachel and Joseph last.

³ And then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

⁴ But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

What a beautiful scene! It's very pleasant, no question about it. Why was Esau no longer angry with Jacob? Obviously God had moved his heart. He did this through a dream, and Esau allowed himself to be moved. He no longer resented his brother, nor did he feel threatened by him any longer.

⁵ And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, Who are these with you? So he said, The children whom God has graciously given your servant.

Jacob clearly described himself as the one with lesser power—Esau as the master, and himself as Esau's servant.

⁶ Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down.

What reverence they showed Esau! Yet he was merely Jacob's brother—his twin brother, in fact. Esau was just a few minutes older, since he was born first.

⁷ And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down.

Just think—this was the man who had hated them for such a long time, their “evil uncle,” so to speak. But their respect was real; it came from the heart. It was not just put on. They were not afraid of Esau anymore.

Genesis 33

⁸ Then Esau said, What do you mean by all this company which I met? And he said, These are to find favor in the sight of my lord.

⁹ But Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.

He didn't say, "My servant"—he called Jacob his brother. Esau didn't take advantage of Jacob's position and tell his younger brother to serve him.

¹⁰ And Jacob said, No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me.

It's interesting. By this statement Jacob wasn't making Esau into God. Rather, he was saying, "I see it's from God that you are the way you are."

¹¹ Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. So he urged him, and he took it.

¹² Then Esau said, Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you.

¹³ But Jacob said to him, My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die.

¹⁴ Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir.

¹⁵ And Esau said, Now let me leave with you some of the people who are with me. But he said, What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.

¹⁶ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.

Esau offered Jacob everything—soldiers, protection—but Jacob said he didn't need any of it. Why not? Because he had God as his protection. Jacob truly understood this. He had grown much in maturity during this time, and he relied completely on God.

¹⁷ Jacob then settled in Succoth.

Genesis 36

⁶ Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of his household, his cattle and all his animals, and all his goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan, and went to a country away from the presence of his brother Jacob.

⁷ For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together, and the land where they were strangers could not support them because of their livestock.

⁸ So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir. Esau is Edom.

There wasn't enough space for them to live close to each other, and although Esau treated Jacob well, it was obvious that his character hadn't changed. He was still focused on gratification in the present, which was why the two didn't fit together. So they separated, and Esau took possession of most of the land. Jacob had nothing against that; he was perfectly content. Jacob had the spiritual blessing, which no one could take from him. When they separated, they were in mutual agreement, and they went their ways on amicable terms.

At Isaac's death, the brothers met again.

Genesis 35

²⁸ Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years.

²⁹ So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, being old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

This is the story of Edom. Esau's descendants were no different from the patriarch—not unfriendly, but godless nonetheless, as it says in *Hebrews*. They did not think of future salvation; rather, their entire attention was focused on this earthly life.

It's interesting how a patriarch can influence an entire nation. That's how Esau's children, the Edomites, were molded. Let's recall that "Edom" means red and refers to the stew Esau ate. This word was a constant reminder of how Esau had sold his birthright.

Brotherly Kindness

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 424:

The ancestors of Edom and Israel were brothers, and brotherly kindness and courtesy should exist between them. The Israelites were forbidden, either then or at any future time, to revenge the affront given them in the refusal of passage through the land.

Although the refusal was an offense, they were forbidden to avenge themselves. Does this remind you of anything? There is a similar story in the New Testament. The Samaritans also refused Jesus lodging in their city when He was going to Jerusalem. The disciples were enraged and wanted to call fire down from heaven upon them. But Jesus told them that they did not know of what spirit they were. And later many Samaritans were converted.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 424:

They must not expect to possess any part of the land of Edom. While the Israelites were the chosen and favored people of God, they must heed the restrictions which He placed upon them. God had promised them a goodly inheritance; but they were not to feel that they alone had any rights in the earth, and seek to crowd out all others.

This is a very important point. We too are not alone on this earth, but often the children of God think that everything belongs to them. However, this is not so. Others have rights too, and it's essential for us to acknowledge these rights.

They were directed, in all their intercourse with the Edomites, to beware of doing them injustice. They were to trade with them, buying such supplies as were needed, and promptly paying for all they received.

As an encouragement to Israel to trust in God and obey His word they were reminded,

Deuteronomy 2

⁷ The Lord your God has blessed you;...you have lacked nothing.

They were not dependent upon the Edomites, for they had a God rich in resources. They must not by force or fraud seek to obtain anything pertaining to them; but in all their intercourse they should exemplify the principle of the divine law,

Leviticus 19

¹⁸ You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Had they in this manner passed through Edom, as God had purposed, the passage would have proved a blessing, not only to themselves, but to the inhabitants of the land; for it would have given them an opportunity to become acquainted with God's people and His worship and to witness how the God of Jacob prospered those who loved and feared Him.

But all this the unbelief of Israel had prevented. God had given the people water in answer to their clamors, but He permitted their unbelief to work out its punishment. Again they must traverse the desert and quench their thirst from the miraculous spring, which, had they but trusted in Him, they would no longer have needed.

Coming back to our parallel, the fact that we have now seen one source of income cease is also an opportunity for us to rejoice, because God has told us to buy from the Edomites now. The Edomites are the people in the world. They are our brothers, just as Esau was Jacob's brother, even if they are godless. We are brethren, and our task now is to buy from them what we need.

In other words, the right-arm work God has given us, and through which we serve the people, is a source of income for itself. That is a brief summary.

4. Trading with Heaven's Goods

The Conflict With Edom

LET'S read the paragraph which summarized the journey around Edom.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 424:

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Israel alone had received a blessing from the water that came from the rock. But now God wanted to give Edom water too. He had given them physical water, but He also wanted to give them living water. That was His goal. But this became impossible because Israel wanted to retain the blessing for themselves. They thought only of themselves—they did not pass through the land as God had planned.

Only later after having second thoughts about it did they decide that they wanted to go through, but by then it was too late. Why was it too late? Not because God arbitrarily decided that they had one chance and now it was over. Rather, it was simply because their attitude had not actually changed, even though it appeared to be different when they said that they wanted to go through now. That becomes clear when we read a text from the Bible.

When they were finally ready to go through the land, they requested that the Edomites let them pass through, and that was proper. That was what they should have done.

Numbers 20

¹⁴ Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that has befallen us...

When Israel called themselves the “brother” of the Edomites, they didn’t just say,

“Let Israel pass through, whom God freed from Egypt by slaying the Egyptians even though they were so powerful...”

They might have talked like that, but what do you imagine that such an approach would have done? It would have caused real fear and trembling. It would have been like saying,

“We’re a mighty people. If you don’t give us what we ask, then...”

That’s the reason why people obtain the services of a good lawyer. The better he is, the greater the threat to the opposing party. Israel could have really built upon its threat potential, but instead they called themselves Edom’s brother. In this way they revealed that they saw themselves as being on the same level as the Edomites. Through this they showed that they didn’t assume the Edomites to be their enemies, but rather simply brothers.

After this initial statement, Israel related its experience in Egypt, then they added that they wouldn’t take anything from the Edomites—they wouldn’t go through their vineyards, nor take water from their wells. But they would let the Edomites give to them, and they’d be very respectful towards them. It’s understandable that they added this. They probably were trying to remove every reason for any fear that might have been there.

On the other hand, if they were truly brothers, then this fact wouldn’t have to be expressly stated. They would simply say,

“We’re passing through, and we know you’ll look after our physical needs.”

But the two nations had been far apart for a long time, so it was proper to disarm their fears.

Self-Centeredness Revealed

But Edom responded with a denial of permission to pass through and the threat of war if they tried. The Israelites were completely taken aback by this. Therefore they said,

Numbers 20

¹⁹ We will go by the highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing more.

Did they really want nothing more? Correct, they didn't, but it's really a shame that they didn't want any more than that. They only thought of themselves. All they wanted was to get through. For God it wasn't about their getting through. He wanted them to be a blessing to the Edomites. The self-centeredness of the Israelites is revealed in their statement that they wanted to "only pass through on foot, nothing more."

²⁰ Then he said, You shall not pass through. So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand.

²¹ Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

It was in agreement with God's will that they turned away. They could have said,

"Alright, then we'll fight. We won't stand for this because if we allow this to happen once it will set a precedent, and then the other nations will do likewise when we meet them. We have to show everyone that we're the strongest and that they should fulfill our requests."

The Israelites could have said this, but they hadn't gone as far as that in their thinking. Instead, they obeyed God's voice. Nevertheless, their minds were full of the thought of passing through, for their own sakes only.

When we do business with someone, do we really think of this as an opportunity for the other person to learn of God's character, or are we mainly concerned about obtaining the product we want or selling the product we have? Each of you can ponder this for

yourself and see what's in your heart. How often do we think like this:

“Yes, I'm courteous and friendly, but the main thing is the security of my business and my dealings. That's the main thing.”

Yet the most important thing to God in every transaction is the salvation of souls, and we need to become aware of that. When we offer care to others, how often do we think of ourselves?

There is one situation when maybe we don't think of ourselves, and that is when the other person is really in a bad way. Then there's nothing else you can do but help them, and in such situations you forget yourself. But how nice it would be if we always forgot ourselves—in every encounter and every transaction!

An Open Door

God wants to give us an open door to the people of the world—to Edom all around us. I would like to read some texts with you about this. The first one has a somewhat different application, but we want to apply it here.

Revelation 3

⁸ I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept my word, and have not denied my name.

The open door Jesus promises us is the door into the heavenly sanctuary. We have always understood and believed that, and it is true, but it is more than that. It is also an open door to the hearts of the people, and God opens this door. We would like to read some examples of this

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 136:

Many of the Gentiles had been interested listeners to the preaching of Peter and the other apostles, and many of the Greek Jews had become believers in Christ, but the conversion of Cornelius was to be the first of importance among the Gentiles.

The time had come for an entirely new phase of work to be entered upon by the church of Christ. The door that many of the Jewish converts had closed against the Gentiles was now to be

thrown open. [“See, I have set before you an open door ...”] And the Gentiles who accepted the gospel were to be regarded as on an equality with the Jewish disciples, without the necessity of observing the rite of circumcision.

How carefully the Lord worked to overcome the prejudice against the Gentiles that had been so firmly fixed in Peter’s mind by his Jewish training!

At the beginning, the disciples were not at all ready for this new phase. They didn’t even see the open door to start with. And the question is: Do we see this open door which God has given us?

Acts 14

²⁷ Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

Now they began to see the open door God had given them—the door of faith to the Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 16

⁹ For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

Paul said this when he was on his missionary journey. Paul wrote this letter to show that they now had an open door for giving the gospel to the Gentiles.

⁹ For a great and effective door has opened...

This didn’t mean that there was no resistance. That’s why he said,

⁹ ...there are many adversaries.

And when we see an open door, we shouldn’t expect zero resistance.

2 Corinthians 2

¹² Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord,

¹³ I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.

He had no rest and had to depart. That was a holy unrest, and the question is:

“Do we have such holy unrest, or are we content with the way things have always gone?”

A new era had begun, and God had opened a door for them to preach the gospel of Christ.

2 Corinthians 2

¹³ I had no rest in my spirit...

Yes, you could read it as no rest because either he couldn't find Titus, or no rest because he was itching to get going with his work of preaching the gospel. In any case, Paul saw plainly that a door had been opened. Similarly, God has also really opened a door for us. When we look back and see what God has done this year, there has truly been an open door.

For example, there is our experience in the clinic and the pure-air therapy we offer. It is all quite amazing. It's an open door. The people of the world, particularly those who bear responsibility, really want to support this work. There is quite an open door for the restaurant too. The medical course in Giessen is another open door. Then there is the kindergarten. People really want this for their children.

These are only a few examples of the obvious fact that there is an open door. And this door has been ajar for a while, although we've been so slow to see it and go through it. And we not only have this particular open door, but it's there everywhere. As we travel through Edom, it is really important to do so in the right spirit and forget ourselves in every respect.

At Jacob's Well

I would like to look at the story of what happened at Jacob's well. It shows how Jesus dealt with the Edomites, which in this case was a Samaritan woman. But let's think of her as an Edomite—that is, as Jesus traveled through Samaria it was like traveling through Edom. So what happened there?

John 4

³ He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.

⁴ But He needed to go through Samaria.

⁵ So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

⁶ Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

The sixth hour was noon, the hottest time of the day, and on this particular day it was indeed hot.

⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, Give me a drink.

⁸ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

⁹ Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman? For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.

The Desire of Ages, p. 183:

On the way to Galilee Jesus passed through Samaria. It was noon when He reached the beautiful Vale of Shechem. At the opening of this valley was Jacob's well. Wearied with His journey, He sat down here to rest while His disciples went to buy food.

The Jews and the Samaritans were bitter enemies, and as far as possible avoided all dealing with each other. To trade with the Samaritans in case of necessity was indeed counted lawful by the rabbis; but all social intercourse with them was condemned. A Jew would not borrow from a Samaritan, nor receive a kindness, not even a morsel of bread or a cup of water.

The disciples, in buying food, were acting in harmony with the custom of their nation. But beyond this they did not go. To ask a favor of the Samaritans, or in any way seek to benefit them, did not enter into the thought of even Christ's disciples.

Although the Jews decided they needed to be separate from the Samaritans, it was alright to do business with them. And this was

just the attitude of the Israelites as they wanted to journey through Edom.

“We want nothing to do with you. Nothing! Only business transactions and then we will go through as quickly as possible. We don’t want to be dependent upon you. We want to show that we are dependent upon God and not you. We want to show you our superiority over you.”

That was their basic thought, and it was the reason why the Jews didn’t want anything from the Samaritans except to do business.

“Trade. Yes, we’ll do that. But what’s yours is yours, and what’s ours is ours, and then we’re out of here.”

They didn’t see the open door—not at all—and the Israelites in the wilderness also didn’t see the open door. The disciples didn’t see the open door to Samaria. That came a little while later. The question for us is: Do we see the open door?

“We’ll do business. That’s alright on a fair basis, but as soon as it’s over, we’re gone.”

That is often the thought, and under those circumstances we can’t see the open door. It’s not possible. God wants more than that.

The Desire of Ages, p. 183:

As Jesus sat by the well side, He was faint from hunger and thirst. The journey since morning had been long, and now the sun of noontide beat upon Him. His thirst was increased by the thought of the cool, refreshing water so near, yet inaccessible to Him; for He had no rope nor water jar, and the well was deep. The lot of humanity was His, and He waited for someone to come to draw.

Jesus wasn’t pretending that He was thirsty in order to talk to the woman about the gospel. He was thirsty for sure. It was the hottest part of the day, and He felt what we feel because He had taken on human nature the same as we have. He was not pretending in the least. He was tired and thirsty.

Nevertheless, a Jew wouldn't have dared to ask a Samaritan for a drink, least of all a Samaritan woman. He would rather have suffered from thirst.

In Jesus' case, the woman had the means of drawing water, but He had nothing. When she came to the well, she acted as though she didn't see Him. She also would have done nothing for Him had He not asked. Why? Because she lived on the other side of this wall between the two nations, and the only communication between the two was via trade. Unless Jesus offered her money, she thought He didn't want anything. But at that very moment, Jesus had a longing—a longing to go through the open door God was giving Him. There was an open door there. Who would see it in that situation? Jesus did, and so He asked her for a drink, and she responded with surprise. The woman was totally surprised and began a conversation. Then Jesus told her of the water of life as we have already read in *John 4*. Finally Jesus addressed her about another matter.

John 4

¹⁵ The woman said to Him, Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, Go, call your husband, and come here.

This was somewhat of a change in the conversation.

¹⁷ The woman answered and said, I have no husband.

¹⁸ Jesus said to her, You have well said, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.

¹⁹ The woman said to Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

She didn't want to talk about this anymore and tried to distract Christ by telling Him that she could see that He was a prophet, and He allowed her to redirect the conversation to theology.

¹⁹ The woman said to Him, Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.

²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.

Jesus did not insist that they stay on the subject He'd introduced, but responded to her topic.

The Desire of Ages, p. 188:

Patiently Jesus permitted her to lead the conversation whither she would.

He didn't insist that she listen to what He had to say. He didn't break the door open, but He saw how the door had been opened by God, and He went through. That is a very, very important principle in our association with people. I would like to pose the question:

What does it mean when Christ permitted her to lead the conversation whither she would?

This statement has often gone through my head when I have talked with other people. And sometimes the conversation ended up I didn't know where. Is it right to do this?

Jesus didn't allow her freedom in the sense of letting her talk about whatsoever she wanted and He would just follow her. In a certain sense Jesus was actually leading the conversation by speaking of the water of life, and by distinctly answering her question about where they should worship. Where the Spirit is, there is truth. He was in fact continuing His original theme about the water of life.

Now if she had wanted to end the conversation, Jesus would have allowed that. He wouldn't have pressed her. But He didn't allow her to have arbitrary control of the conversation, because He had a goal. When we speak with others it is also important that we allow them the same total freedom that God gives us. But on the other hand, we need to have a definite goal in mind.

In such matters I have not always acted correctly. I have sometimes allowed people the freedom to speak of what they wanted without my having any definite goal in mind to which I wanted to direct them. When this happened, the conversation ended up in small talk, which was not the case with Jesus. Furthermore, the woman was interested in more than small talk.

Every follower who accepts the message God gives will themselves become a source of the water of life.

John 4

²¹ Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father.

²² You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

Jesus was earnestly keeping the conversation on track.

²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

In this statement to the woman Jesus is giving her living water. He constantly did that during the entire conversation.

²⁵ The woman said to Him, I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.

²⁶ Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am He.

²⁷ And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman...

²⁸ The woman then left her waterpot...

Jesus hadn't drunk any water yet, but that wasn't important now. The subject had moved to something completely different.

²⁸ The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men,

²⁹ Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?

³⁰ Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

This woman couldn't give a sermon about the water of life and explain it in detail, but she could say,

²⁹ [He] told me all things that I ever did.

Just like that. This statement bubbled out of her. This reminds us of the man who was born blind and couldn't explain just exactly how he was now able to see, which is what the others wanted to know from him. He could but say,

John 9

²⁵ I only know one thing. Whereas I was blind, now I see.

And this witness was really powerful. Everyone who has drunk of the water of life becomes a missionary. It can't be any other way. Every disciple of Christ becomes a missionary. With that the open door opens even wider. This means that more and more souls will be won in this way. The important thing is that we begin to see this open door.

Christ is the Door

I would like to read another text with you which describes the open door:

Ephesians 2

¹¹ Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—

¹² That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For He himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

¹⁵ Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

¹⁶ And that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.

¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

²⁰ Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone,

²¹ In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

²² In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Paul repeatedly says that Christ, in himself, broke down this wall of partition and made one out of two. In himself—what does that mean? It means that Jesus became human. It means that He became our Brother, and for that reason it was good that Israel called Edom their brother. By addressing Edom as “brother” they thus placed themselves on the same level. That is why Jesus became human and needy like us. It was to make a connection between God and us.

And this connection is also supposed to exist between the people of God today and the Edomites. It’s a connection of communication. For this reason we must leave our comfort zone, just as Jesus did. We must become human as Jesus did. That sounds strange because we are already human, but perhaps we have had an incorrect view. We must become truly human in order to reach humans, and that is God’s plan. He called people in order to reach people—to create a channel of communication between heaven and earth. And that is His plan still today.

5. A Fitness for the Work

WE ARE studying Israel's journey around Edom, and we want to see how Israel can win Edom. What is it that gives power to Israel's influence? The answer is given by Jesus in His intercessory prayer. He is praying for unity among the believers:

John 17

¹⁷ Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth.

¹⁸ As You sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

We could also read this, "I also have sent them [Israel] into the world [Edom]."

¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

²⁰ I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word;

²¹ That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in me, and I in You; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that You sent me.

²² And the glory which You gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as we are one:

²³ I in them, and You in me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world [or "Edom"] may know that You have sent me, and have loved them as You have loved me.

The reason why Jesus wants His disciples to be one is so that the people of the world will be blessed by it. This unity is not an end in itself. The focus is not that it is so good and pleasant when brethren dwell together in unity. Of course it is a good and pleasant experience when this occurs, as we read in *Psalms* 133. However, the purpose of the unity is for the world to know that God has sent His Son into the world. The aim is that through this unity, God's cause will be built up and people will be saved. If this is not understood, we will never become one.

A club that's in harmony with itself, where it's so pleasant to be unified and we invite everyone to come and share this nice unity,

will not work. God's way is different. The world must recognize Christ through our unity. That is the purpose.

Unity in the Early Church

Now let's look at the early church:

Acts 4

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

³² Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

³³ And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

³⁴ Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,

³⁵ And laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

Some people have difficulties with this text because it sounds so much like communism. But we must not forget that with communism, the point is:

“What do I receive?”

Whereas here, the point is how to show that God sent His Son into the world. This is a very different approach, and therefore quite a different result. We know the result of communism. I don't need to describe it. And we also know that communism came to an end, and is continuing to come to an end. But God's unity is something that lasts. It doesn't last only because those who take part in it are blessed. Even those who do not take part will recognize that God has sent His Son into the world.

And that is the purpose of the multitude of believers being of one heart and soul, and no one saying that anything they possessed was their own, but rather having all things in common. Having all things in common refers not only to material things. We saw this point yesterday and I would like to emphasize it

again now. It doesn't mean just houses, money, food, or clothes. Rather, it refers to all of life. Having all things in common means thinking the same, feeling the same. It means acting as Christ would if He were in our place. And the fact that we don't cling to our material possessions, but have even these in common, is merely a fruit of this unity. The actual basis for unity is thinking, feeling, and acting the same.

This sameness does not happen just by our rubbing against one another, as stones do. That helps a little, but it's not the full answer. This unity comes about only when we become one with Christ. That is the key. We know the text that...

Acts 2

⁴⁶ They continued daily with one accord.

This unity was the fruit of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is clearly described in another place:

Acts 4

³¹ ...they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

The result was that...

³² ...the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul.

Unity in the Advent Movement

But how did this happen? How did they receive the Holy Spirit?

The Great Controversy, p. 379:

The first angel's message of *Revelation 14*, announcing the hour of God's judgment and calling upon men to fear and worship Him, was designed to separate the professed people of God from the corrupting influences of the world and to arouse them to see their true condition of worldliness and backsliding.

In this message, God has sent to the church a warning, which, had it been accepted, would have corrected the evils that were shutting them away from Him. Had they received the message from heaven, humbling their hearts before the Lord and seeking in sincerity a preparation to stand in His presence, the Spirit and power of God would have been manifested among them. The

church would again have reached that blessed state of unity, faith, and love which existed in apostolic days, when the believers “were of one heart and of one soul,” and “spake the word of God with boldness,” when “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” Acts 4:32, 31; 2:47.

This paragraph describes the condition of the early church, and clearly says that this same condition could have existed during the proclamation of the first angel’s message. What would have needed to happen in order for this unity to come about in the early 1800’s? In order for this unity to take place, the Adventists would have needed to receive the message. Let’s read it again.

The Great Controversy, p. 379:

Had they received the message...

What does it mean to receive the message? It means to accept it in their hearts. The answer is right here.

...humbling their hearts before the Lord and seeking in sincerity a preparation to stand in His presence...

If they had done this,

...the Spirit and power of God would have been manifested among them.

That means the Holy Spirit would have been poured out as at Pentecost.

The church would again have reached that blessed state of unity, faith, and love which existed in apostolic days,

–if they had received the message! God has given us a message, and the condition is clearly stated: *if we receive* the message. Therefore we must ask ourselves the question:

“What does it mean to receive the message?”

Does it just mean we say “yes” to it? The text reads,

...humbling their hearts before the Lord and seeking in sincerity a preparation to stand in His presence.

Obviously this means more than just saying,

“Yes, that’s true. Yes, that’s logical. Yes, that’s right.”

Receiving the message means taking it into my life. It means that the Spirit of God constrains us so that the message bears fruit in our lives. Receiving the message does not just happen at a snap of the fingers; it’s not just a matter of a decision based on reason. There is more to it.

Resisting unto Blood

We see this when we look at what a battle we are actually in:

Ephesians 6

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

This wrestling is not referring to the time of outward persecution. It’s about the struggle in our hearts, which is no game. The battle against the principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this age, is the battle against demons. This is the struggle against Satan. And it is no game to battle with him. We cannot just mentally tick the “completed” box next to the message.

A game is something where you can win or lose without any great consequences. If you’re playing for money, you might lose your money, but you won’t lose your life. Yet here you risk losing not only your physical life, but also your eternal life. So it is no game at all. It’s serious.

Paul describes this battle in *Hebrews*, and I am convinced he would tell us the very same thing today:

Hebrews 12

⁴ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

The struggle against the powers of darkness is no game, and Paul clearly says here that we have not yet resisted unto bloodshed.

⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him.

We always seem to struggle against the wrong thing. Often believers say that they have prayed for entire nights. But first of all, if we prayed the entire night then we need not say so, because it is better to show the fruits of it. If we emphasize this fact, then there are two reasons: either we are exaggerating or we prayed the wrong way. Resisting unto bloodshed is something else. Resisting unto bloodshed means that a real change is there, and that change is visible. You don't have to announce it or talk a lot about it. It's just obvious.

Hebrews 12

⁴ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him.

We feel as if the chastening of the Lord—be it rebuke, circumstances, or a lack of recognition from other believers—is a terrible thing for us. Yet we should not despise the chastening of the Lord, but instead understand

⁶ For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.

He scourges every son whom He receives. Do we accept that He receives us in this way? It is no game. We must put off whatever is childish and give up our struggle against the chastening of the Lord. Otherwise we will not make any progress. Paul clearly says that we have not yet resisted unto bloodshed in the struggle against sin. That is what it means to receive the message. It means to accept the light and to accept the rebuke. It really means to give up self.

This reminds me of the parable Jesus told about the pearl:

Matthew 13

⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls,

⁴⁶ Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Resisting unto bloodshed means selling everything—my pride, my honor, and my possessions—although selling my possessions is only the result of first truly giving up my pride and honor. But we don't give these things up for nothing. On the contrary, we receive something far better in exchange, and that is the valuable pearl—the privilege of being one, and through this unity to show the world that God has sent His Son into this world.

Do we see this costly pearl? Do we appreciate it so much that we will resist unto bloodshed for it, and really sell everything to find it?

Harmony Through Prayer

What is this struggle unto bloodshed like? In actual fact, it happens in prayer:

Acts 1 [NLT]

¹⁴ They [the believers] all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

Some people are expressly named here. We can read about the disciples in the verse before this one, and then this verse includes the women, Mary, and Jesus' brothers (the sons of Joseph) as well.

¹⁴ They all met together and were constantly united in prayer.

Again and again they sought Jesus' presence in prayer. That was during the time before they received the Holy Spirit in fullness. Then the Holy Spirit came in full power, as described in the next chapter.

Acts 2

¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come...

When was the day of Pentecost? The word "Pentecost" is Greek and means "fiftieth." In other words, the fiftieth day after Jesus' resurrection was when the Holy Spirit came. When did Christ ascend into heaven for the last time? As you know, He appeared to the disciples repeatedly after His resurrection, and then He left them for good on the fortieth day—ten days earlier. So for ten days, they were doing what we read in *Acts* 1:14. They were con-

stantly together and united in prayer. Then, when the Day of Pentecost came,

Acts 2

¹ ...they were all with one accord in one place.

It is quite self-evident that they were all together in one place, for they had been praying together all along.

² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

They felt the necessity, the real need, to be together in one place. It wasn't an organized occasion. No one said,

“We'll have a meeting on the fiftieth, at eight o'clock, and then the Holy Spirit will come.”

Rather, they felt a real need to be one and to be together. Now someone like Thomas, for instance, could have said:

“Oh, I would like to go to Galilee. There I have a few interested souls whom I'd like to tell about Jesus' resurrection.”

Then Peter could have said,

“Well, I would prefer to stay in Jerusalem.”

Two others could have left for two more towns to do missionary work. In fact, they did do this later, but at that time they felt the need to be together in one place. They had all things in common. They were one in feeling, thought, and action, and no one dared to advance independently of the body. Nobody had to tell them,

“You cannot be independent now.”

Nor did anyone have to tell them,

“You need to be self-reliant now.”

It was simply in them, because they truly resisted evil unto bloodshed. Every thought of independence, of being separated from the body, they put away. They resisted unto bloodshed.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 37:

These days of preparation were days of deep heart searching. The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised.

If you are really hungry, you look eagerly for something to eat. If you're really thirsty, you will take whatever you find to drink, and you'll keep looking until you find something.

What is the hunger here? When Jesus was hungry and thirsty at Jacob's well, what was He actually thirsting for? What was His hunger? It was a hunger for souls, and the disciples felt the same thing here. They were not satisfied with the fact that they were simply hungry and thirsty. They wanted more; they prayed more. They withstood unto bloodshed the indolent desire to relax their efforts.

They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised.

During the patriarchal age the influence of the Holy Spirit had often been revealed in a marked manner, but never in its fullness. Now, in obedience to the word of the Saviour, the disciples offered their supplications for this gift, and in heaven Christ added His intercession. He claimed the gift of the Spirit, that He might pour it upon His people.

Acts 2

¹ And when the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

They really resisted unto bloodshed. They fulfilled the condition, and for this reason they received the Holy Spirit, through which they came to the point of being one in heart and soul and

having all things in common. This condition is the one we wish for and are seeking.

Acts of the Apostles, p. 36:

As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief. As they called to remembrance the words that Christ had spoken to them before His death they understood more fully their meaning. Truths which had passed from their memory were again brought to their minds, and these they repeated to one another.

They reproached themselves for their misapprehension of the Saviour. Like a procession, scene after scene of His wonderful life passed before them. As they meditated upon His pure, holy life they felt that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great, if only they could bear witness in their lives to the loveliness of Christ's character. Oh, if they could but have the past three years to live over, they thought, how differently they would act!

If they could only see the Master again, how earnestly they would strive to show Him how deeply they loved Him, and how sincerely they sorrowed for having ever grieved Him by a word or an act of unbelief! But they were comforted by the thought that they were forgiven. And they determined that, so far as possible, they would atone for their unbelief by bravely confessing Him before the world.

True Repentance

“They were comforted by the thought that they were forgiven.” Yes, we know that we are forgiven. But then we leave out everything else that's written there, and that is too abbreviated. In the end, it's not an encouragement. If a person who has really sinned just passes over everything else and says,

“I'm forgiven,”

–you can't grasp what that means in the end. Forgiveness means cleansing. It means that a change has happened. And this change was very visible in the disciples. First,

...they felt that no toil would be too hard, no sacrifice too great...

Was that the case before this point? Not at all. These eleven disciples—Judas was no longer with them—had really made sacrifices in their association with Christ. They had left their occupation; they'd left everything to follow Christ. He called them to follow Him right when their career was most promising, and they let it all go and followed Him into an uncertain future. They patiently endured all kinds of unpleasantness—persecution by the Jews, difficulties everywhere, and rebuke from Christ time and again. Once Christ even rebuked Peter so strongly that He said,

“Depart from me, Satan!”²

Still, Peter accepted it. So the disciples had made sacrifices. But later, looking back, Peter would have admitted that many toils were too hard and many sacrifices too great for him at that point.

“How differently I would act now if I could have the past three years to live over again!”

Have we ever heard a statement like that in a confession? Many times I don't know what people who give confessions would do differently if they had to do it over again. They simply say,

“I sinned, and now God has forgiven me.”

But what would they do differently? Certainly the disciples would have been very specific. Peter would have said,

“I wouldn't tell Jesus, ‘No, Lord, I won't deny You’ anymore, if He said, ‘Peter, you will deny me.’ I would react totally differently. I would humbly fall at His feet and tell him, ‘Lord, You know me better than I know myself. Please help me—help my unbelief.’ That's what I would do today.”

And Thomas would have said,

“I doubted. I didn't believe you. I was jealous when you said you saw Jesus, and out of jealousy, I refused to believe you until Jesus appeared to me personally and told me to put my hand in His side. I grieved Jesus terribly by my unbelief. Today I would be so thankful if you told me that you had seen Jesus.”

² *Matthew 16:23.*

Every disciple would have had such a specific statement to make. Now no toil was too difficult, no sacrifice too great.

“That sacrifice was too great for me, and that toil was too difficult,”

...they would have admitted,

“But now I would act very differently if I could live the past three years over.”

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 36:

If they could only see the Master again, how earnestly they would strive to show Him how deeply they loved Him, and how sincerely they sorrowed for having ever grieved Him by a word or an act of unbelief!

It was good that they felt this way. The only sad thing about it is that we cannot relive the past. We would love to do so, but we cannot.

But they were comforted by the thought that they were forgiven.

In other words, if they did go through the experience again, they would act differently.

A Fitness to Meet Men

And further,

...they determined that, so far as possible, they would atone for their unbelief by bravely confessing Him before the world.

At the moment when Christ was crucified and all the disciples ran away, they did not want to confess Him. It wasn't that they didn't confess Him at all back then, but in comparison to the way they were burning with love now, that was nothing. Sometimes I wonder whether I'm still ashamed at times to confess Christ, and I wonder how I will judge that shame later.

...they determined that, so far as possible, they would atone for their unbelief by bravely confessing Him before the world.

This was not a decision just based on reason. Rather, they were really driven to it. They had an immense hunger for souls, and

they knew that in order to satisfy it, they must be one and have all things in common. But it was self-evident—they simply could not do any differently. And they knew that for this purpose they needed the Holy Spirit. That’s why they prayed and called for it.

Acts of the Apostles, p. 36-37:

And they determined that, so far as possible, they would atone for their unbelief by bravely confessing Him before the world.

The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ.

In their daily intercourse does not mean within the framework of a sermon, given from a pulpit. It means during their daily work. While Paul was making tents, he was talking with his fellow workers. That was what they prayed for. In other words, they prayed that their right-arm work would lead to the salvation of souls.

The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship.

The same thing happened at the proclamation of the first angel’s message.

The Great Controversy, p. 379-380:

If God’s professed people would receive the light as it shines upon them from His word, they would reach that unity for which Christ prayed, that which the apostle describes, “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” “There is,” he says, “one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” *Ephesians* 4:3-5.

Such were the blessed results experienced by those who accepted the advent message. They came from different denominations, and their denominational barriers were hurled to the ground; conflicting creeds were shivered to atoms; the unscriptural hope of a temporal millennium was abandoned, false views of the second advent were corrected, pride and conformity to the

world were swept away; wrongs were made right; hearts were united in the sweetest fellowship, and love and joy reigned supreme. If this doctrine did this for the few who did receive it, it would have done the same for all if all had received it.

Those who truly received the message experienced this unity. They also received the Holy Spirit. If you read the history of the first angel, you will find powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit. It was the same with the early disciples. They put aside all differences. The believers at the time of the first angel's message came from various denominations, and they believed various doctrines. Protestant churches were rather splintered at that time. But when they came together, all these differences meant nothing. They simply dissolved away. Only one thing was important to them, and that was to proclaim Christ's coming and reach the people.

It was the same with the disciples. Everything else became unimportant. They would have been truly ashamed about the fact that they had once asked Christ who was the greatest, and requested to sit at His right and left hand.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 37:

Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. They drew nearer and nearer to God, and as they did this they realized what a privilege had been theirs in being permitted to associate so closely with Christ. Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them.

When we think of failing to understand something, we think it's not our fault—we just didn't understand.

“Since I didn't understand, I couldn't do any better. I'm sorry, but I just didn't understand. But now I've understood, so from now on, things will be better. God will overlook the past, since I didn't understand.”

But are we really ashamed of the fact that we didn't understand? Or is this more of an excuse? The believers here were truly ashamed. We read that sadness filled their hearts—sadness, not self-justification.

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 37:

Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them.

By their failure to understand, they had grieved Him. They had been too indolent to understand. That was the real problem.

These days of preparation were days of deep heart searching.

Here again we see resisting unto bloodshed.

The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised.

Here again they had a hunger and thirst for souls, just as Christ had when He was at Jacob's well.

During the patriarchal age the influence of the Holy Spirit had often been revealed in a marked manner, but never in its fullness. Now, in obedience to the word of the Saviour, the disciples offered their supplications for this gift, and in heaven Christ added His intercession.

This was the gift Jesus wanted to give them. How did they become one? They became one through their unity with Christ. They did not stop praying until they became more and more unified with Christ, and that is how they put away all differences. This is described further on:

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 45:

Under the training of Christ the disciples had been led to feel their need of the Spirit. Under the Spirit's teaching they received the final qualification, and went forth to their lifework.

No longer were they ignorant and uncultured. No longer were they a collection of independent units or discordant, conflicting elements. No longer were their hopes set on worldly greatness.

They were of “one accord,” “of one heart and of one soul.” *Acts* 2:46; 4:32. Christ filled their thoughts; the advancement of His kingdom was their aim. In mind and character they had become like their Master, and men “took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.” *Acts* 4:13.

For ten days the disciples prayed in the temple, and after ten days the temple of their body was cleansed. Then the Holy Spirit came down upon them with full power:

Acts 4

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

³² Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

³³ And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

³⁴ Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,

³⁵ And laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

This unity is also described in *Acts* 2, which offers us a further piece of very important information:

Acts 2

⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,

⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

⁴⁷ Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Here we see that Jesus' prayer was fulfilled. What did Jesus pray for? He prayed for them to be one so that the world would recognize that God had sent Him.³ And this is exactly what happened. They had "favor with all the people." What does that mean? It means that the people recognized that they had been with Jesus. The people missed Jesus. He had done a lot for them, and when He left, sick people came to the temple asking for Him. Those who had heard Him, who had eaten the loaves and fishes, were constantly asking,

"Where is Jesus?"

Now they all saw that Jesus was there through His disciples. In this way the disciples found favor with all the people. And then we read that...

Acts 2

⁴⁷ ...the Lord added to the church daily.

Every day! How often do we have a baptism? How many souls are baptized at that baptism? Every day? Then it would be worth leaving the swimming pool heated. We wouldn't let it cool down again. Every day—and how many souls? One soul? Two?

⁴¹ Then those who gladly received His word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

And this happened in a town like Jerusalem! I don't know how many people lived in Jerusalem back in those days, but it wasn't a million or so like the cities today. Yet three thousand were baptized in one day! This made the Jewish leaders quite afraid. But the disciples' hunger for souls was satisfied. Because the people saw Jesus again, they were converted, even though there were tares among the wheat in the many thousands of converts who came in at that time. It was not without problems that so many people were converted in one day. Nonetheless it was a time when the church worked mightily.

³ *John* 17:21.

But that was back in the time of the apostles, right? Let's read what God intends to do today:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 20:

Acts 4

³³ With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them.

Under their labors there were added to the church chosen men, who, receiving the word of life, consecrated their lives to the work of giving to others the hope that had filled their hearts with peace and joy.

Hundreds proclaimed the message: "The kingdom of God is at hand." They could not be restrained or intimidated by threatenings. The Lord spoke through them; and, wherever they went, the sick were healed, and the poor had the gospel preached unto them.

So mightily can God work when men give themselves up to the control of His Spirit.

To us today, as verily as to the first disciples, the promise of the Spirit belongs.

To us today—here and now.

God will today endow men and women with power from above, as He endowed those who on the Day of Pentecost heard the word of salvation. At this very hour His Spirit and His grace are for all who need them and will take Him at His word.

Sometimes we tend simply to wait. The disciples waited too, didn't they? They waited until the early rain came, and then they went out and proclaimed the gospel. The problem is only that we don't understand why they waited. They waited because they were really hungry. While it took ten days before the Holy Spirit came upon them in its fullness, it might take longer with us.

In addition, we are also pursuing our everyday occupations. Do we, like the disciples, pray for the ability to reveal Jesus in our everyday lives? Only when we really understand this and feel such a hunger as the disciples did, will the Holy Spirit come. He will not come if we just sit there passively and wait for something to

happen. He will come only if we earnestly pray. Then this promise will be fulfilled.

It is my deep desire for us not to rest satisfied, but rather hunger for more and pray as the disciples did in our seasons of prayer. Then God will endow us with the Holy Spirit, and we will go forth to proclaim the message to the people.



6. Understanding the Needs of Another

IF ISRAEL had gone through Edom, it would have required them to put all the energy they had into it, and the same is true for us. For this reason it is necessary to take time to rest, as Jesus said,

Mark 6

³¹ Come...rest a while.

The purpose of these studies is to come into greater harmony with God. We are always in danger of becoming proud and crediting the success of our work to ourselves and not to God. That is why it is necessary to pause and reflect from time to time.

That's why God gave us the Sabbath. If the Sabbath had always been kept, there would have been no turning away from God. These meetings are like one long Sabbath, and give us a longer period in which we can behold God.

We are considering the topic of unity. Unity is the prerequisite for people to see that God sent His Son into the world. This means that our unity is not just for us. The aim is the honor of God and the goal is to portray His character. Today we want to study how this unity can come about.

Selfish Service

Matthew 7

¹² Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

This verse gives us the key to unity of thought, feeling, and action—anything you want people to do to you, do to them. There is a great depth of meaning to this text. At first glance this is not so readily seen because we read it through the tinted glasses of our preconceived ideas.

How would someone understand this who had never read the Bible? There is a saying,

“You scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours.”

You could also say,

“How you treat me is how I’ll treat you.”

In Cologne they say,

“We know each other, and we help each other.”

But what is meant by all of this? It’s a way of saying that if I want something from someone, then I must give them something. What you want others to do to you, do to them. And I want people to treat me well, so I do something for them. A lot of wrong things are justified on the basis of these sayings.

“You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.” If you do something unjust, I won’t inform anyone and don’t you squeal on me either. Everything I want others to do for me, I’ll do for them too. Isn’t that how the concept in this verse is often applied? That way of thinking is completely wrong of course. It’s a perversion of what Jesus meant. He said exactly the opposite of this.

Incidentally, the same is true of unity. There is a type of unity in this world that makes God very sad. It’s a unity where people agree to do something wrong. It’s only unity for the sake of each other’s advantage and nothing more.

There are many examples of this in politics. People will band together in order to give themselves an advantage over something or someone else, or over another group. The whole world would unite if people thought everyone would be advantaged by doing so, but what kind of unity is that? It is not the unity for which Christ prayed. It is not the kind that pleases Him. Why not? Because a unity that is only about personal advantage is not real unity. It falls apart as soon as something disturbs it.

Selfless Service

Jesus wasn’t talking about mutual back-scratching. Jesus was trying to tell us not to seek personal advantage but to ask,

“What can I give?”

That's what this text is about. He was telling us to put ourselves in the other person's shoes. Put yourself in their place. Feel what they feel. Feel their difficulties, disappointments, joys, sadness, and so on. Jesus is talking not only about empathy. He includes this, but He is also talking about feeling your way into a state of empathy, and your feelings change as your heart changes.

Matthew 7

¹² Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.

It's not so easy to achieve this ability to move into a state of empathy. It means a complete cessation of thinking about yourself and making your ideas the standard of judgment. It means trying to understand what the other person is thinking. Be still and really think.

Do this as an exercise for a while. Try to work out what your neighbor is thinking right now. Or what am I thinking at the moment? Although that is not so important—instead try to think what God's thought is right now. The Holy Spirit is present. What is He thinking? Put yourselves in God's place. What does He want from us now?

Why is it so hard for us to put ourselves in the place of others and understand what they are thinking? Because we are so busy with our own knowledge and perceptions. We want to tell others how we see and understand things, and it's important that they grasp our understanding, and to do that they must listen to us. That's why we have no antennae for what the other person is thinking and needs.

But Jesus calls upon us to have this ability. Just this very thing—to put ourselves in the other person's place. In the New Testament, Jesus expressed what was already in the Old Testament:

Matthew 22

³⁹ You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Even this command has been distorted. Many people think that you must be egotistical and love yourself before you'll be able to

love others. That is not the case. Jesus is telling us to put ourselves in the other person's place. "...as yourself" means that you know the situation. You understand it from your own experience. We wouldn't be able to put ourselves in the other person's shoes if we came from another planet.

Let's say you're a robot. Robots can't think, I know, but you're aware of artificial intelligence. So just imagine that you're a robot. Can a robot feel or think its way into empathy with us? Not really, unless it is programmed to do so. Why doesn't it have the ability to become empathetic? Because it is entirely different from us.

If we came from a totally different environment on another planet, we could hardly progress from a state of non-empathy to one of empathy. Can we think our way into empathy with an animal? A little, sure, but completely? They are different from us. We don't know exactly how an animal sees. We can figure it out to a point, but we don't know precisely.

The more like another being we are, the more we can put ourselves in that being's place. That's why Jesus said,

Matthew 22

³⁹ Love your neighbor as yourself.

This means that you already know them—you understand how you can love them. You are also a human, and that is why you understand how to love your neighbor. The more similar we are to others, the more we are like them, and the more we can put ourselves in their very place. And because we are human, we can do this.

People from different cultures understand each other differently. When I visited Africa for the first time, I had a preconceived idea of what African people were like, and it took a while before I really understood them. First I had to live with them and get to know them better, which brought me closer to them. And in turn, the closer we are to others, the better we can understand them.

Matthew 7

¹² Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.

You know what people need because you also want the same things. That's why you understand them. You are able to put yourself in the place of the other—so do it.

Thinking God's Thoughts

I asked you to put yourselves in God's place and try to think His thoughts. Is it even possible to do that? That would be a big jump, but we can do it. I would like to read two texts about this. The first one is from *Hebrews 2*. This is about Jesus Christ, who was not a peculiar, special person, but was God who became a human.

Throughout religious history the question has been asked: Who was Jesus? Many view Him as a human with a special ability from God. Jesus was not a human who was exalted, but rather a God who lowered himself, which is a completely different matter. Perceiving Him as He really is, was difficult for even His disciples to do. But that's what He was, and that's how He is presented in *Hebrews 1 and 2*:

Hebrews 2

¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

¹² Saying: I will declare your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.

This is an interesting statement because it speaks of two and tells us that they both come from one. Who are they both? Christ and humanity. They both come from one. What does that mean? It means that we are brethren.

And because we are siblings, we understand each other. We are able to put ourselves in each others shoes. A brother can put himself in the place of his brother. He can! And Jesus has become our Brother, which is why we are able to put ourselves in His shoes and He in ours.

Do unto others as you want them to do unto you. You could say, everything you want God to do unto you, do unto Him too. Do we understand what God wants? Do we? Can we feel with Him? Can we empathize with Him? Yes, because He has become our Brother. This is the reason we can—because we have the same origin.

Hebrews 2

¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

¹² Saying: I will declare your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.

¹³ And again: I will put my trust in Him. And again: Here am I and the children whom God has given me.

¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

¹⁵ And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

What Jesus says, He does. When He tells us to treat others as we want to be treated, then He does this too, in relation to us. This means that He puts himself in our shoes. He understands us. He knows how we feel. He knows our difficulties, disappointments, joys, cares, sadness—everything. He knows us through and through. Why? Because He was...

¹⁷ ...made in all things like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God.

That means He is not only our Brother, but also our High Priest.

Hebrews 2

¹⁸ For in that He himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Why? Because He can put himself in our place. He understands us. Connected with His being a High Priest, we read something similar in chapter 4:

Hebrews 4

¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Empathy with Sinners, Not with Sin

Being without sin is not a restriction or limitation of Christ's ability to empathize with us. This is not about limitations. It doesn't say that He was tempted in all points as we are but with the exception of something. Even though He was tempted in all points as we are, nevertheless He remained without sin.

If we want to put ourselves in the place of another, it's necessary to take the same steps as Jesus did. We must put ourselves at the other's level. But that doesn't mean that we need to commit their sins, for Jesus did not commit our sins. Yet some people see it that way. They think that in order to become like others, I must do everything they do. If they transgress, then so will I, and then I'll know how they feel. But that's not what this means at all.

Sin deadens our ability to understand and empathize with others. It makes us self-centered. Therefore, only the removal of sin can bring us back into sympathy and help us understand our neighbor. Jesus remained free of sin. He did not break the law. He needed to keep separate from sin in order to feel for others and understand them. And we too can understand what other people are thinking without committing their sins. We can, because Jesus did.

The Edomites are our brethren exactly the same as Jesus became our Brother, and He wants us to understand other people and enter into their thoughts. We are to think and understand

their thoughts and feelings. We are to understand the situation they are in, their perceptions, and so forth.

Within the Church Family

God also wants us, as brothers and sisters in the church family, to understand each other.

Philippians 2

¹ Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

² Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit.

Here again it's about having everything in common:

² ...being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

This is the opposite of mutual back-scratching.

³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

⁷ But made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Why? In order to understand us and to give us the opportunity to understand Him. He wants us to be able to put ourselves in His place, which is really the main reason. We could argue that God is all-knowing and knows everything from the beginning, but do we know that He knows? We know because He became human.

⁸ He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

The psalm writer reveals just how much God really does understand our thoughts.

Psalm 139

¹ O Lord, You have searched me and known me.

² You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.

³ You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.

The first part of this Psalm is about how God understands me. He can put himself in my shoes. But that doesn't happen just because God is all-powerful. It happens because He became a human. That is the key. It's good to understand that God is all-powerful, but the thing we really need to grasp is that He understands us; that He became human. And why? So that we can understand Him and put ourselves in His shoes and understand His needs.

Christ himself expressed His own condescension in the following words:

Matthew 20

²⁸ The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

In this way Jesus really showed that He does exactly what He wants us to do. He said to himself,

“Everything I want people to do unto me, I do unto them. I put myself in their shoes so that they can place themselves in my shoes.”

The Lesson in Foot-Washing

Nowhere did Jesus express this better than at the foot-washing:

John 13

¹ Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

² And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him,

³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God,

⁴ Rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded himself.

⁵ After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

Christ came into this world, not to be served, but to serve. At this last supper with His disciples He did not think of himself. You know what event was just in front of Christ at that time—His crucifixion. But it was not just this. He was to be taken captive as a criminal. He was to lose the sense of His Father's presence. And His disciples weren't understanding Him very well at all. They couldn't put themselves in His shoes—not at all!

And why not? What was the problem that evening? The problem was that the disciples were preoccupied with thoughts about who would be the greatest and have the highest position in the coming kingdom. How distorted! Jesus was just about to be crucified, and they were thinking of a kingdom where everything would go well for them—they wouldn't have any problems, all their enemies would be conquered, and now the most important question is: who would have the highest place?

The real problem is that they were thinking of themselves. That's why they couldn't put themselves in Jesus' place. They couldn't grasp a personal application of the golden rule in their lives. They weren't in any condition to do that. They wanted Jesus to exalt them, which is why they couldn't appreciate what Jesus was feeling or thinking at that moment.

Jesus, on the other hand, was not thinking of himself—not at all—even though thoughts about himself would have been understandable, had He lost himself in self-pity. Everyone would have understood Him if He had pitied himself, but He had no self-pity.

Jesus did not think of himself. He thought only of what the disciples needed at that moment. What did they need? Jesus' ability to enter into their feelings and needs, His ability to put himself in

their place, was a trait of His character that He manifested until the very last moment of His life. I would like to remind you that:

- When He was hanging on the cross, He forgave someone who asked Him for forgiveness.
- As the men were nailing Him to the cross, He asked His Father to forgive them because they didn't know what they were doing.
- When the women burst into tears as He fell beneath the load of the cross, He told them not to cry for Him but for themselves, because He was thinking of their future and the calamity they would suffer.

Jesus' thinking of others was such a natural habit of His, it was so constantly in Him that it simply couldn't happen any other way. That is a feature of a healthy mind.

Sometimes the schools of this world teach us that a healthy spirit consists of a desire for recognition and other selfish things, but something is wrong with this picture. Jesus' spirit was a healthy one. It was a spirit that could think of others.

This doesn't mean that thinking of others should lead us to have sympathy with their sins, mistakes, or bad spirit. This is about really seeing the need of the other person, because in the end the sinner is a slave to sin and doesn't want to stay that way. The sinner too wants to be free from sin. When we put ourselves in the other person's place, we will know exactly what they need and in reality want.

Jesus thought about what the disciples were feeling, and He fully understood that they wanted the highest position. And He knew that this wouldn't make them happy. He knew that their fondest hopes were about to be disappointed, for instead of a kingdom, they were about to experience shame—a cross and no crown.

Jesus knew that they would all run away when He was captured, because they'd be ashamed and would fear that the same could happen to them. And because He knew this and foresaw it

all, He thought about how He could help them and prepare them. How could He lessen their disappointment? That is why He did what He did. He stood up and washed their feet. I would like to read this:

The Desire of Ages, p. 643:

Christ knew that the time had come for Him to depart out of the world, and go to His Father. And having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end. He was now in the shadow of the cross, and the pain was torturing His heart.

He knew that He would be deserted in the hour of His betrayal. He knew that by the most humiliating process to which criminals were subjected He would be put to death. He knew the ingratitude and cruelty of those He had come to save. He knew how great the sacrifice that He must make, and for how many it would be in vain.

Knowing all that was before Him, He might naturally have been overwhelmed with the thought of His own humiliation and suffering. But He looked upon the twelve, who had been with Him as His own, and who, after His shame and sorrow and painful usage were over, would be left to struggle in the world. His thoughts of what He himself must suffer were ever connected with His disciples. He did not think of himself. His care for them was uppermost in His mind.

This is the meaning of doing unto others as you want them to do unto you. Jesus understood what people needed. The situation is further described:

There was “a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.” This contention, carried on in the presence of Christ, grieved and wounded Him. The disciples clung to their favorite idea that Christ would assert His power, and take His position on the throne of David. And in heart each still longed for the highest place in the kingdom. They had placed their own estimate upon themselves and upon one another, and, instead of regarding their brethren as more worthy, they had placed themselves first.

The request of James and John to sit on the right and left of Christ’s throne had excited the indignation of the others. That

the two brothers should presume to ask for the highest position so stirred the ten that alienation threatened. They felt that they were misjudged, that their fidelity and talents were not appreciated. Judas was the most severe upon James and John.

“They felt that they were misjudged.” They thought Jesus didn’t understand them, but actually Jesus did understand them because He had become their Brother. Then Jesus asked himself how He could change this whole situation.

The Desire of Ages, p. 644:

How was Christ to bring these poor souls where Satan would not gain over them a decided victory? How could He show that a mere profession of discipleship did not make them disciples, or insure them a place in His kingdom? How could He show that it is loving service, true humility, which constitutes real greatness? How was He to kindle love in their hearts, and enable them to comprehend what He longed to tell them?

Those were Jesus’ thoughts. Whatever you want people to do for you, do for them. He set His whole mind to understand the task of how He could help them. He wanted to understand them even better, and in understanding them, He wanted to give them exactly what they needed. That is why He stood up, took the form of a servant, as we read in *Philippians 2*, and began to wash their feet.

There was no servant present as was customary on such occasions, so one of the disciples should have done it, but none of them wanted the job. Instead, Jesus stood up and did it.

(The transcription ended here, where Andreas took a break and said they would come back and discuss Peter’s reaction)

