

Andrew Bonar:

'Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.'

Galatians 1:18

For three years after his conversion Paul was out of sight in Arabia. The Lord sent him there, as He sent Moses to Midian, to be trained for after work. It was an education time. He would, no doubt, visit Sinai (see 4: 25), and on the top of that hill get new thoughts about the Law. He would visit Elijah's cave, and think of the 'still, small voice' that was to work greater things than fire, or wind, or earthquake. No doubt, too, he received there teaching in the Gospel and the ordinances, for (1 Cor. 11:23) 'I received from the Lord,' *parelabon apo tou Kurion*. We see plainly the Lord looking forward to evils that would arise in His Church as to the Supper, and, therefore, re-instituting that ordinance with careful simplicity. 'This do,' and no more—no appendage—no preface. Was it in Elijah's cave? and there did Paul hear Jesus say, 'as often as ye eat this bread . . . ye do shew the Lord's death, till He come.'

But we are hastening to Jerusalem after these three years. When it was noised abroad among the disciples, 'Paul has come!' how great would be the interest. He goes to the upper room and worships, perhaps preaches, and then goes home with Peter. 'To see Peter' (*historesias Kephan*, v. 18) is to make acquaintance and ascertain by inquiry. What an interesting sight it must have been—Paul listening to Peter, and Peter listening to Paul. We may learn from this incident

I. A disciples brotherly love to other disciples.—Paul goes to his own company. He does not care to visit Gamaliel, his old teacher, or any of his fellow-students. He seeks fellowship, and so goes to Peter, to talk over the past, and to learn more specially about the simple Gospel-message. They spent fifteen days together; on one of these James (not the Apostle) called; they heard each other preach; and Paul found, as he tells us in this epistle, that they entirely agreed in all their views of the truth—salvation without works or ceremonies—salvation by the Son of God, and His one offering and sacrifice—and more than ever they resolved to preach 'none other name.' They go out to walk together. What would Paul's feelings be as they came to where Stephen was stoned! O to have heard him speak of God's sovereign grace! 'The grace of our God was exceeding abundant.' 'I, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious.' 'That in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern,' etc. Peter would point out the spot where he 'went out and wept bitterly.' How much there was there to humble him—that God should so use him who said, 'I know not the Man.' Such visits and reviews are most helpful and humbling. There might be in the history of each of God's people a Book of Deuteronomy, going over again the wilderness journey.

II. A disciple's love to the Master.—Why does he go to Peter and not to John? The Master had said to Peter, 'When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,' and Paul went to get some of the strength. Then Christ had said again, 'I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' God gave to Paul and Barnabas, too, the keys to 'open the door of faith to the Gentiles' (Acts 14: 27). See these two upon the house-top, in the moonlight, turning toward Gethsemane, and Peter tells Paul of the 'strong crying and tears.' See them next day go forth. 'Here is where Jesus raised Lazarus!' and 'Here is where He wept over the city.' And now, this is Calvary, the Great Altar! How long they linger there! and I would like to know what they said there to one another. Paul would ask Peter about Christ: 'What was His look? Is it true He never smiled? What were your feelings when you and John looked into the sepulchre? And Peter would take him to the spot where Christ ascended after saying, 'Go ye into all the world.' Then he would ask Paul to tell him what he saw of Christ on the day he was converted near Damascus. How their hearts would burn! Anything about the Master is fuel to a disciple's love.

III. A disciple's humility.—Paul was a cleverer man, and far more of a scholar than Peter. He had very much he could tell, but he wished to learn, for what is a disciple if not one who so learns? Paul had been to Sinai, but he had been further than Sinai—he had been to the Third Heavens. Still, he can learn from fellow-disciples. If you are a true disciple, you are always learning. Every disciple you meet with has something for you if you could only get it. One disciple is the eye; he sees a great deal into the truth. Another is the hand; he does a great deal for God. Another is the foot, quick to run messages for the Master. But the eye has no right to say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.' We are wrong if we are not trying to draw out of others what God has given them. Try this; it knits us to one another. Paul says, when he is coming to see the Roman Christians, his desire is to get something from them, 'That I may with you be refreshed' (Rom. 15: 32); 'Comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me' (Rom. 1:12). So Peter says also, 'Like precious faith with us,' (2 Pet. 1:1). Never think you can be of no use to another disciple. God does not give everything to one. Aquila and Priscilla could do a great deal even for Apollos.

IV. A disciple's anxiety to know exactly the will of God.—For the context in Galatians lets us know that it was

Paul's fifteen days' visit to Peter.

mainly in order to this that he came to see Peter —to be sure he was not misrepresenting the Gospel. He tells us that 'he added nothing' on that point (chap.2:6), nor did friends who came to his house; and so he went away, more than ever rejoicing to proclaim the glad tidings to Jew and Gentile. For fifteen days these two good men thus talked and searched the Scriptures together. How they would pray before separating—perhaps going together up the Bethany road, and parting at the farewell spot where Christ ascended! Let us ask the same Saviour to send us the same blessing—looking up to the Right Hand and asking 'gifts for men !'