

THE WAITING TIME

AND

OTHER MINISTRY

BY

BERT TAYLOR

VOLUME 1



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2026
available from www.lulu.com

FOREWORD

The main object of these five volumes is to collect the articles of ministry by our brother Bert Taylor that were first published in two magazines, *A Word in its Season* and *Notes of Ministry*. These have been supplemented from addresses published in several other books, and a few recordings of meetings that have not been published before. Our brother served in a number of special three-day meetings for which notes were published in books; these are not included in this collection. Ministry published in periodicals becomes less available than what is issued in books, and I want some of this wealth of material to be available to different generations, some of whom would not ever have had copies of the magazines, or known our brother when he was serving.

Robert Taylor was born to Andrew and Lily Taylor on 11 September 1925 and grew up in Markinch, Fife, where his family supported the local meeting. His father was a cobbler. He served a bakery apprenticeship in Dundee and spent his working life in the industry, including, after his marriage, a time in Northern Ireland; and some years with a chain of shops owned by his uncle. A need for employment brought him with his wife and daughter to live in Hendon for nearly twenty years up to 1993, before he eventually returned with his wife to Kirkcaldy for the remainder of his life. The Lord took our brother on 15 December 2024, at the age of 99.

The articles collected in these books show how widely and for how many years Bert Taylor served the Lord and His people in ministry. They span a period of over 40 years from 1974 to 2017. These were years of recovery for those with whom he had fellowship; ministry the Lord gave through many different men not only re-establishing what had been overshadowed and departed from, but pointing a way forward, and bearing on their present state and needs.

Many will remember appreciating our brother's part in this—as I did—a sense of urgency with which he exhorted the brethren to look beyond the limitations of our times and

to seek out and stand in the good of the inheritance that God has set before us.

Previously published texts, which our brother will have reviewed, have not been materially altered; those appearing for the first time in these books have been lightly revised from transcripts.

I trust others who are now able to read this selection will profit from it for the glory of the Lord.

ANDREW BURR

2026

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ATTRACTION

Acts 26: 12-15

1 Chronicles 29: 1-5

It is thought that this occasion might be suitable to remind ourselves of how God uses the principle of attraction to hold us in our households, in our localities and in our exercises. He would hold us as attracted into what He has provided. It is a very attractive occasion today; the very basis of our being here is that persons were attracted to one another. Indeed, we are all here because we have been attracted. It is a principle that God works on. He is going to have things like that in a day to come. He says, “many shall come from the rising and setting sun and shall lie down at table with Abraham ...”, Matt 8: 11. What a journey that will be! Think of the movements there will be in that day, the whole extremes of creation being affected in movement as persons make their way to lie down in the place where Christ is honoured.

I have read about Paul at the end of his time and David at the end of his time and they are not speaking about hardships; they are speaking about the One who attracted them and maintained them in the power of attraction. What a thing, dear brethren, to be held, but not legally! What a thing to be there because we have been attracted! Not a hardship, not there because it is required that we should be there, (although that would be true too)—but there because we are attracted! Paul is speaking here—he could have chosen many subjects, he had a life of rich history to draw upon but what he draws upon is this light that attracted him—the last reference he makes to it but by far the finest, “a light above the brightness of the sun”—above it. That was what held Paul. It had happened a long time before. It happened before those in Asia forsook him. It happened before Ephesus and these places turned away, and this is what he falls back on, that there was a light “above the brightness of the sun” and a voice speaking to him in Hebrew,—that choicest and most feeling of languages, saying, “Why persecutest thou me?” Well, beloved, the Lord would appeal to us today as we are here—we are in

the testimony, we are in our households, we are in our localities—because of being attracted, and we are held here as committed to this One. He spoke to Paul, He has spoken to you. What has He said to you? While Paul says, “Who art thou, Lord?” He says, “I am Jesus”. He did not say, ‘I am the King of kings’. He did not assert His authority as He might well have done over such a rebellious soul, but He says “I am Jesus”—the Jesus of the gospels, the Man who was in that house in Luke 7, the Man of John 8 who said, “I am altogether that which I also say to you” (v 25). That was the Man who says, “I am Jesus”. That is what held Paul through the testimony. May it hold our brother and sister, may it hold us all! There are exercises among us, exercises ahead. What is the answer to be? Are we here because our parents have been? Why are we in the testimony? Paul would say, I am here bound with, a chain in answer to Jesus. Well, beloved, may we be helped to pursue like that. As I have said, none of us would have a harder time than Paul but he was held as attracted by that Man of the gospels. But not only that: he was held by the Man who was enthroned in heaven. That was what Paul was impressed with, that this voice came from heaven. It far exceeded the brightness of the sun—it came from heaven because that is where Jesus is—the Man who hung on the cross for you, the Man who bore my sins in His own body on the tree—He is in heaven and He is speaking from heaven and He is attracting us to heaven. These exercises we have to go through, dear brethren, are not the end—the voice came from heaven where He was, and to which He was attracting Paul. That is the secret of why Paul’s ministry is referred to as a heavenly ministry—not that Peter’s was not heavenly but Paul’s is distinctively a heavenly ministry because the Lord intervened from the glory and the voice was from heaven—“Why persecutest thou me?” May the appeal of “I am Jesus” hold us in these present times.

In David I would refer to one who committed his all, may I say, to the local assembly. He says, “I have prepared”. He prepared in his power—that was one thing and maybe we do not have so much opportunity as he had for that—but I want

to speak especially of what he says, I have given “in my affection”. It was not so great in quantity but the quality was surpassing. The gold that he provided in his affection was not just gold, it was gold of Ophir; what he provided was silver that was refined—that is what he provided of his own hand, dear brethren. That is what he provided as a result of exercise, but here he is at the end of his days. I think he gained this very early in his life. Our brother has been speaking of reading the ministry, reading the Scriptures, applying ourselves to what the Lord would be saying—I think that is where David gained this—because he became very busy. Exercises almost overwhelmed him, but I think he gained that gold of Ophir in his early days. There was something there that the Spirit could expand. May I appeal to us all, especially to those who are younger, to commit ourselves early to have this gold that the Spirit can refer to as the gold of Ophir—something that was matured—silver that was refined. I think these things were gained—they began at least—in his early exercises and he maintained them. He says, “Behold, we heard of it at Ephratah, we found it in the fields of the wood”, Ps 132: 6. It came into his heart early. Oh, beloved, if things come into your heart early, apply yourself to them. It may not look worthwhile. Did it look worthwhile for David? A great Saul on the throne and he in the wilderness. Did it look worthwhile? He would say here it was well worthwhile—like Jacob at the end of his time with God, “that shepherded me all my life long”, Gen 48: 15. What a fund he had to draw on and what a fund here David has to draw on—that gold of Ophir and refined silver. Oh, let us appreciate divine things in broken days, beloved, and let us commit all that we have in our homes, in our localities, to the furtherance of what is going to finish in glory—not in breakdown but in glory. So David finishes with this appeal. He says, “And who is willing to offer to Jehovah this day?” Are you going to commit yourself today, beloved? Our brother and sister have made certain vows today. Are you going to join in avowal to God today? Who is willing? Is anyone going to hold back in the presence of such attraction? As I said, how many were drawn here today! God would just speak attractively. He says, “I will allure her, and bring her into the

wilderness, and speak to her heart”, Hos 2: 14. Oh, what a word to an erring, guilty Israel. That is what God says, “I will allure”. Well, He is doing that to you today. May your heart be affected, with our brother and sister, with us all, to willingly commit yourself today to what God has proposed that is so attractive, so blessed and soon going to issue in glory!

EDINBURGH

24th August 1974

On the occasion of a marriage



GUIDANCE BY GLORY

Matthew 2: 2, 9

Luke 24: 31-34

2 Corinthians 3: 18

It was our first hymn, dear brethren, that led me to refer to these passages as to having a view of Christ in His glory and being led by it. It is striking that at the beginning of the wilderness journey God should have appeared with His glory, as if at the outset He would lift our view. The wilderness journey was before them, but in that journey there was to be guidance by His glory. I believe that God would normally meet things by His glory. The references in Hebrews to what was in the ark would substantiate that; the golden pot with the manna, Aaron's rod and the tables of the covenant: these things were like the intervention of the glory in answer to murmurings. May we be helped to have our eyes lifted from murmurings and confusion and despair, to be led by the glory, to be led normally we may say. Few of us may have trodden that way, and yet may we be helped to speak of it, so that we may be encouraged to move that way. It is the basis of speaking, I believe, the basis of ministry. It says that Esaias "saw his glory and spoke of him", John 12: 41. How much speaking there may have been without our eye on the glory!—maybe our eyes on the brethren, maybe our eyes on difficulties, but the basis of ministry would be that it is with our eyes on the glory, so that God is rightly spoken of, so that He is rightly represented.

I just thought that in Matthew the star may be an allusion to His glory, guiding these men, simple souls maybe but guided through a maze of confusion and the great weight of the enemy's power against Christ. It says His star: "we have seen his star in the east". There was a great area of speculation, Herod was troubled, his wise men were troubled; they all knew more than these men but they did not have their eye on the glory. Many other stars there must have been in the firmament that night, but it says, "we have seen his star", His star. And that star guided them through all that confusion

and brought them to an area where they were able to open their treasures and offer gold, frankincense and myrrh. So may we be helped, dear brethren, to seek in simplicity to be directed by the glory. His star: it will surely come, it is always there. These men for a moment were deflected from it. That may be in accord with most of our histories. But the star appeared to them again and it “went before them until it came and stood over the place where the little child was”. May we be conscious that we are being led like this; may we be helped to get free of other influences, however oppressing, and be led like these men to the area where there is liberty to unfold our treasures and bestow them on Christ.

The ones in Luke were despairing a bit, maybe. It says that the Lord drew near to them on that journey. They were disappointed persons—something else that may ring a chord within us—and yet the glory was so near at hand, so close by them. It says, “their eyes were opened, and they recognised him”. Would that we were helped, by prayer it may be, to recognise Him more quickly. How many things crowd in on us! —the breakdown, the sorrows of the testimony; there is not a heart here today but what carries these; but may they not overcome us dear brethren; may we be guided by His glory. As I said, it is always there. And as they see it they said, “Was not our heart burning in us”. None of these other things that they spoke of so much caused a burning heart; and things which we so often revert to do not cause a burning heart save as He comes in with a touch of His glory. The Lord is ever ready to do it. He was more ready to show His glory than they were to behold it, and that is so often with us. How ready He is to come near to us in our difficulties! He came near them as they were oppressed, but how quickly He would cause our hearts and our feet to move in relation to a presentation of Himself.

In Corinthians it is possibly more normal. It says, “We all, looking ... are transformed”. It is meant to affect us, that we are not the same as we were before. The word would be that it leaves us different. We could refer to many that that happened with. Paul himself speaks of “the glory of that light”

at the outset of his life, Acts 22: 11. That light, the glory of it, the impact that it made on him, changed him, transformed him into a new man. That was a drastic change we may say, but may it in measure cause a change with us as we behold His glory. This very dispensation we are in has not only been inaugurated in glory but it subsists in glory, a glory that will never be annulled. This whole page in Corinthians is full of these references to the surpassing glory that marks our time. How Paul would encourage us! Abraham too, the God of glory had appeared to him, causing him to move in relation to the glory, not in relation to the breakdown. So it says “having this ministry ... we faint not”, 2 Cor 4: 1. May we be encouraged that we are not among those that faint. What a time of fainting it is! What a time of going back it is! And yet all the time, dear brethren, so near at hand, there is the glory to lead us, the glory to guide us. However we may magnify the peculiar nature of our circumstances the glory of the Lord is there to lead us through. May it be that we are among those of whom Paul can say “we faint not”.

LONDON

15th October 1974



ASSEMBLY LIGHT

John 14: 2,3; 20: 22,23

Genesis 24: 53, 61-67

RT We often say, and rightly, that we seek in our time to walk in the light of the assembly. The day we are in makes it increasingly necessary, I think, that we should speak often about what that light is. We are so prone to revert to something less, and to walk below what that light is. Not that we could compass it in this time, yet we could maybe get an impression of some of the glory of that light. One prominent element would be the heavenly feature that marks the assembly. Other scriptures were in mind and maybe Paul's ministry would be predominantly what we should be thinking of—maybe it would be covered in the scripture in Genesis—but Peter got the impression about it in that sheet in Acts 10. It says it came from heaven and went back to heaven: it took place thrice as if to leave an indelible impression with him that the dispensation that was coming in was heavenly.

The Lord refers in John to many abodes, but there seems something distinctive about this place that He has prepared. He says, "I go to prepare you a place". I think that speaking of these things would have a practical effect on us in the way things are done and the power in which things are done. The Lord breathing into them, I think, would produce something internally in the way of character, something of His own power, His own life, that would come out in character through the dispensation, so that we would do things as heavenly persons, the heavenly stamp and the grace and wealth of the dispensation would come into all that is done. What confidence the Lord has in these persons! He says, "whosoever sins ye remit"—that is final—"they are remitted". So there are resources and power in the Spirit as we see in Genesis, to maintain in a practical, substantial way the light that has come in in our day. Every family will have its own distinctiveness, but the assembly is in it now. The other families await their glory. I understand that the place is prepared as He has gone in: it has established our place and

it is fine at times just to look in and see our place. Mr Wells says in his hymn (hymn 83) -

Every circle gathered round Thee
Yields of Christ some beauteous ray

There will be those many families that Paul speaks of but here is this family that is in it now. Israel awaits it, that would come into Genesis 24, too, that Rebecca goes into Sarah's tent, the place that was empty, she is filling it now. We are to have something of the glory and freshness of all these things that Israel is yet going to come into, in our souls now.

ECB While the assembly is not formally taken up in John's gospel, does it help in what you are saying that it was written after the light of the assembly had been given, so that the reference to 'you'—"I go to prepare you a place"—would be looked at in the light of what the Lord had given through Paul before John wrote this.

RT Yes, I thought of that. I thought in John that we had the Lord addressing the concentration of the thing, as it were. He says "you"; He is not speaking to the world. This section in John is a private section, is it not, so that it is the personnel that form the assembly. I think He is leaving an impression on them that while they were going to be left here, their place really was up there. Do not you think that as we speak about our place, we will fill out our place down here far better?

ECB When He says, "and shall receive you to myself", that is something that belongs only to the assembly, is it not? It must imply the rapture which the Lord does not dwell on in the synoptic gospels, but John brings it in here.

RT Yes. It is something that we would always be looking for, is it not? "Shall receive you" brings out the substantiality, that what He is going to receive is entirely suited to the place. Is not that what is being worked out now, that the place is prepared? I think we do well at times to abstract ourselves and look at the glory of the place. Hebrews would expand it, the great Priest that has gone in: that word is very affecting that He has gone into heaven for us, "into heaven itself, now

to appear before the face of God for us”, Heb 9: 24. What a lift it gives to our souls in the breakdown that we are in, to look in and see that we have a place there that nothing can ever touch.

JCE Do you think the great importance of having the light of the thing, and as you are saying now, the light of the assembly, is that we can grow up to it? I wondered if this chapter showed in its detail as it goes on in the enquiries that the apostles make, that they were gradually growing up to the truth that the Lord was bringing in.

RT Yes, I think in the beginning of Acts we see that how these men moved. “Silver and gold”, he says, “I have not; but what I have this give I to thee”, Acts 3: 6. He had some sense of his place in Christ, had he not? And they could move down here amidst all the confusion and the pressures that were against them in the light and the joy of what their true place is.

HAH In regard to the reference to the breakdown, is it right to think that John brings in the life in which the light is answered to in such a day as ours?

RT He does indeed. The scripture in John 20 would give us the power for that life, would it not? “He breathed into them”. It is the life of an ascended Man, is it not? He is ascending in John 20 and He gives them the power from that position, that they may fill out the details of that light in the power of life.

AJEW I was thinking of the force of this word, “were it not so, I had told you”. That suggests the immediate import of what the Lord has in His mind. It was necessary for them to know it immediately. That would reinforce what you are saying as to looking in now and seeing what our place is. It is an essential ingredient, so to say, in the continuance of the work of God in the saints.

RT Yes. He says, “there are many abodes”. So that we are to have some impression that God is looking after everything. The whole climax of divine operations will be treasured in the

Father's house, will it not? As you say, "were it not so, I had told you". So He is inducing confidence. He is trying to wean them from the pressures of the testimony and the sorrows that may come in, to fix their gaze on something that is settled, that He has told them about. So in the joy and light of that place we can tread our path here.

CRB Does this stand related to the Son of man being glorified and God glorifying Him immediately? It all seems to flow out of the Lord viewing the great work on the cross as completed, and God glorifying Him immediately is really the assembly brought in, is it not? There is an area in which Christ is glorified and yet God is glorified too.

RT So that gives the assembly some peculiar glory, does it not? I was thinking of the whole chapter in Genesis 24, "bring not my son thither again". As soon as Isaac in his glory comes into view, Rebecca comes into view as entirely suited to the glory of that man? What a privilege to have a place like that. I think the joy of that—as we say we walk in the light of it and the joy of it is to come to bear on us in the circumstances in which we are.

EP Do you think the expression, "receive you to myself", would imply that what is received is altogether suitable and pleasurable to the One who receives it?

RT Yes, I am sure that is right. It is very substantial. It would be like Rebecca, that what is received is entirely suited, indeed, it adds some lustre, some glory and comfort, and joy to the position. If we could just be established that our place is prepared! It is said that every other family awaits its day, every other family awaits something else happening, but our place is already secured, is it not? And in the joy of it we will fill out our place here all the better.

EMW It seems that the recovery in which we are privileged to have part was given a tremendous impetus by the light of the fact that Christ's place is the assembly's place. You are thinking the Spirit would maintain that in its power and reality

in our souls. The effect the light of this had on Mr Stoney struck me -

Yon heaven is our home

(Hymn 7).

It affected him and the Spirit would affect us by this light, would it not?

RT We used to sing that more often than we do. I think the fact of it should be more in our souls, 'yon heaven'. But the Lord in the intimacy which He brings in in John, would not put it very far away. In times like this we can speak together, reminding ourselves of how near that place is, of something of the glory of the place. As we speak of it, something of it rubs off on us, does it not?

DJH The fact that He says, "I am coming again" in the present, not 'I will come again' emphasises that, does it not, that the place is already there now and we can enjoy it together?

RT Yes. I think it is very important to lay hold of that, that everything has been done. To say again, every other family awaits something else to be done, but as far as the assembly is concerned, everything has been done; it awaits the rapture, as we know, for the actuality of it, but this is the Lord's attitude throughout the whole dispensation, "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself". He does not say, 'I am coming to adjust things', He does not say, 'I am coming to start up the prophetic calendar', He just says, "I am coming ... and shall receive you to myself". The expectancy of that would give some colour to us down here, would it not?

ECB Would you think that when at the end of the long chapter 6 Jesus says, "If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where he was before", He might have had in mind to go on to open out this area of things. As He says later, "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now". It is clear that at the end of chapter 6 they could not bear more—"this word is hard". I was thinking of the reference to the Son of man being glorified; does not the Son of man ascending up

where He was before open the way for the assembly to be brought to light?

RT Yes. I was thinking of Stephen too. He sees that, does he not, and the very next chapter is Paul coming in, for the expanding of it. The assembly comes in as His complement, it is suited to that glory. I think we will see that as we speak of Rebecca, that as soon as Isaac in his glory comes into view, she is mentioned. Something comes in that is formed by the Spirit that is entirely suited to that place.

AAB It is interesting that when Moses had pitched the tent outside the camp, and he says, "Let me ... see thy glory", Exod 33 :18, the Lord says, "there is a place by me", v 21. Would that fit at all, do you think? You spoke of intimacy just now: that is the assembly's place, is it not?

RT The breathing in John 20 is a very intimate thing, "He breathed into them". I think it emphasises the nearness of this family. Every family will have some feature of Christ; whatever has been worked out of Christ in that dispensation, will be substantiated in that family, but there is a fulness about this because of the glory, as we have said, of the Son of man, is there not?

AAB And in that sense there is the present fulfilment of divine purpose, "The place ... that thy hands have prepared" (Exod 15: 17) agrees with this verse.

RT Yes, I think that is something to speak of that brings us to Ephesians which is really the light of the assembly, and that was that He chose us before the world's foundation. The assembly is not an after-thought, it is not something that has come in as an emergency measure, but it was planned before the world's foundation. It has come to light in our day, dear brethren, the light of it has come in this day in which we are. How we should value and cherish the distinctiveness of that light.

AJEW Does it help to compare this thought of receiving "you to myself" with the Ephesian touch, "present the assembly to himself glorious", Eph 5: 27? There you have the matter as

the ultimate fruit of the Lord's own service in love in the course of this present time. Here the great end in its excellence is presented to us. Paul shows us the end in a different respect, does he not, but maintaining still the unique place of the Person in reference to it all.

RT You can understand the hope that this must have stirred in the breasts of these disciples, "shall receive you to myself". Whatever day you care to think of in the dispensation the Lord's attitude is "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself". What a history is covered in that, but what a climax, "shall receive you to myself".

AEB Would that represent the many dispensations then?

RT Yes, I think it refers to the families that Paul speaks of in heaven and earth, all blessed of the Father. These abodes would all come into the Father's house. The Father's house, I understand it, is a great universal idea, it includes the universe, I think Mr Raven said, vol 13 p71. In that house there will be every family, everything will be housed, suited to God. But in the midst of all that, you may say at the very centre of that, is this "I go to prepare you a place". I think that that place should be very attractive to us.

CRB The Supper is the unique privilege of the assembly, is it not? Is that where we particularly touch this in current experience?

RT I think that is very interesting to speak of. Certain things are distinctive about the assembly; that is one of them, as you say, and that antedates this verse, does it not? "Shall receive you to myself". Do we not get a touch there, the Supper like a gateway into being received to Himself, would you say?

CRB The working out of the light of the assembly primarily involves the maintenance of the Supper, does it not ?

RT I think so. So that there are many who are of the assembly and yet the light of the assembly is not attractive to them. They have given up some of these things. I thought that speaking of it would revive this kind of thing in our hearts in

the breakdown. As you say the Supper lies at the centre of Christian experience.

EMW It is interesting that in a way it was breakdown here. Judas had gone out and Peter was about to deny Him and they were all about to forsake Him and flee; there is that side of it, and yet this is so stabilising to the soul, is it not? The Lord speaks with absolute certainty, no 'ifs' or 'buts'.

RT I thought that was very comforting, because the Lord was looking, you may say, down the dispensation of time and He knew what was going to come in in the Acts and in all these years that have come in between. But I think He left this word for us that we may, as you say, come to stability—"a place". Now who could affect this place? Can my history affect it? Can anything that has come in in the ways of men affect this place? No. He says, "I go to prepare you a place". The Person that has prepared it has given colour to it. It is a glorified Man that has prepared the place, a Man, who, as it says, "has been received up in glory", 1 Tim 3: 16. He has prepared the place. It has not been left to angels, it has not depended on our state, it has depended on nothing of man, He Himself, a glorified Man, has prepared the place. No breakdown can ever reach it or ever upset it. But then the Spirit is here, I think, to bring the lustre, the glory of that place to be resident in our hearts.

ECM It is there the Lord says, "Let not your heart be troubled". There is no trouble if we get through to this area where He is.

RT No. Many of our loved ones even say that the light of the assembly is not workable today. And many others may even profess the light of it and walk in ways that are foreign to a heavenly dispensation. But I think the distinctiveness of the assembly as a heavenly family—we may say, the heavenly family, as Paul says "such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones", 1 Cor 15: 48—should lay hold of us more.

DEB The question that Thomas asks, "how can we know the way?" remains a current question, does it not, for all of us?

RT I think if we know the Person, we will know the way. I think that the question comes up in our day. Whom is our confidence in? Many have made so much of the recovery depending on men, but the recovery has not depended on men, it has been carried through in the power of the Spirit and the recovery depends on Christ where He is and the Spirit here. Nothing can upset that, can it? Why should not we know the way? If we know the Man who has gone in and what He has done and the place He has prepared, I think we will know the way. I do not think we are ever left without guidance and I think this should be our guide that there is a Man in the glory, in the worth and majesty of His own Person gone in, and the fact that He has gone in has given me a place up there: not only me, but He has established a family who belong there. The present time is provisional—I think that Mr Taylor taught that—but to fill out our place rightly in the provisional time I think we should know what our eternal portion is.

JCE Do you think we probably know more instinctively than we know in detail? The Lord said distinctly of these that they knew the way, they knew where He was going and they knew the way, which must be an absolute thing, it was in their consciousness but they had to be taught the detail of it.

RT I think what tests us is whom our confidence is in. How often it has been in men! But if our confidence is in this One who has prepared a place there and has given resources here we are maintained in the joy of that place now.

ECM It would involve, too, our knowledge of the Father. I was thinking of Mr Stoney again, how he emphasised the importance of knowing the owner of the house. The Lord immediately goes on to speak about the Father.

RT It is something we may speak of in Genesis 24; it was the Father's desire that there should be someone like this. What an answer to the manhood of Jesus, that there is one who is suited to be alongside of Him in the glory where He is!

ECB Is it of some interest that in Mark's gospel, Jesus institutes the Supper in what He calls "my guest-chamber",

Mark 14: 14, as if He has in mind the place into which He will be able to receive others.

RT Yes: it is prepared, you mean.

ECB Yes, but the Lord defines it as already His own, He is going to have the passover but in that same setting, in “my guest-chamber”, He has the Supper, as if to carry our thoughts easily into the area in which He is able to receive persons for His own enjoyment.

RT It is fine to think that nothing can obstruct that. It is like the absolute rights of love that has prepared this, and nothing can upset it. It would give us desires to enter into it. I was speaking to someone the other day and he said he considered himself a practising Christian, yet the Supper is just a foreign idea to him. What is the centre of Christian life if it is not as Paul has placed it in the assembly, if it is not that we are together in that occasion? I think, as we have proved in our experience, it is a gateway into tasting something of being received to Himself.

ECB Such practical matters as have been recovered as that the Supper takes place at the beginning of the meeting, all bear on that, do they not? It is not as in some services held at the end as if that is what you have worked up to or you go home with, but it is the beginning of things.

RT Yes. It is the area that commandment leads us to, is it not? Paul makes much of the Lord in Corinthians, the idea of commandment. I think the commandment leads us to the area where the Supper takes place. But then something private comes in, does it not? “I shall receive you to myself”.

JAH Then He goes on to say, “that where I am ye also may be”. Is not the Lord’s objective that we should be with Him in His own circumstances?

RT That is what will make heaven so attractive is it not? “That where I am”. For the moment we may be where He is absent, but our hope and our home is where He is. What colour He has given to heaven as He has gone in.

RL Does it add a glory to His service in chapter 13 which precedes this, in speaking of going to the Father? He serves them in view of part with Him.

RT He would have them suited, would He not, “part with me”. You wonder what was in the Lord’s mind, and how slow, perhaps, the disciples were to take it on. He has far more in His mind for us than we are ready to enter into, has He not? I thought Genesis 24 would provide an area for expanding our thoughts. In John 20 He breathed into them and it may connect with something of the character that is seen in Rebecca, that she comes out as entirely suited. What grace marked her! What dignity! It is something that we need to think of, that as belonging to this family a certain dignity should mark us. So that questions come up as to whether things are right whether they are proper—well, the test would always be, are they suited to the dignity that belongs to the assembly. So that in the provisional time, the eternal and what is suited to our home should be what regulates us.

AAB Paul gives commandment in the Corinthian epistles. That would be one side, but the inbreathing of His Spirit really covers what you have in mind in the way everything is done.

RT Yes, I was thinking of Philippians, Paul uses the word “let” more than once there. If that in-breathing has come to us, there will be some expression. He does not give them commandment in Philippians, he just says ‘let’, “Let this mind be in you”, (chap 2: 5), “Let your gentleness be known”, chap 4: 5. So that there is capacity and character in the assembly, that we need to ‘let’ come into expression, I think.

AAB Is it what is priestly? I am just asking for help, feeling the importance not only of things done being right but the way they are done. There is an inimitable touch, is there not, sometimes, in the way a thing is done, that carries confidence.

RT I think that is what peculiarly should mark the assembly, the way things are done. And the way certain truths are in the assembly. For example, Israel will have certain things, as Paul says, “whose is the adoption ... the

covenants ... the fathers” Rom 9: 4, 5. Israel will have certain glories, but the assembly will have these same glories in a far greater lustre, will she not? Does it not say that angels and principalities are learning now how things are done? (Eph 3: 10). I think what you say is right, it should be an exercise to us that not only right things are done but they are done in a right way.

EP Do you think that that would touch the matter of the answer to the light? We speak about the light of the assembly, but the walking in that light would be the way things are done. Is that what you have in mind?

RT Yes. What I primarily was feeling was that unless we have the light of it, we will not be walking in the light of it. The thing is not reached legally, I think the thing is reached through the light of it being attractive to us and the light of it regulates us so that it comes into practical expression. So that the predominant thing is that it is heavenly, it is a heavenly light; it is not a legal light that is to be seen. There is to be an impress left on what is done that it is heavenly.

AJEW Do you think if we speak of revival, which is right, we really have to come back to this inbreathing? It is the character that the Lord imparted at the beginning and if revival is true, it must be back to this inbreathing.

RT Yes. I thought that what was seen with Rebecca was the character. All sorts of influences come in to bear on her that may have been right. We might have said, well, it was natural, but the character that comes out in her is the character of a heavenly nature is it not? So that the inbreathing is there, I think. It is not as He was, it is the ascending Man in John 20. “He breathed into them”, that breath. So that as we take that in, we are bound to have an expression of the heavenly Man, are we not?

Ques Do you think as the servant brought forth silver vessels and gold articles and clothing and gave them to Rebecca, she was worthy of those gifts, morally worthy of them?

RT Yes, the earlier part of the chapter shows that. The particular thought was that having received them she had to go. I think as the light of the thing comes to us and we receive it, we have to make a step, we have to move. It says that he brought them forth “and he gave them to Rebecca”. Could she have worn those silver articles in Laban’s house? Could she have worn those garments anywhere else? I think as we take some impress of the heavenly character that is ours, it involves movements toward Christ where He is.

CCI The footnote to “the last Adam a quickening spirit” (1 Cor 15: 45) is ‘making alive’. Do you think all this enters into the Spirit’s service and how the Lord is speaking even at the present moment?

RT Yes. I think these things the servant brings forth are calculated to make us alive—silver articles and gold articles and clothing. It says he gave the others precious things, but I think what the Spirit has brought to us is calculated to make us alive. Think of the value of redemption, the power of divine love, the clothing that He has brought to the assembly, these things are calculated to make us alive, I think, and they produce a movement in us that is marked by heavenly steps.

WJW Would the verse in Acts 2 where “they persevered in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers” be something like an outline of the light that should govern us?

RT Yes, I think that is how it would find external expression. They continued in it, it found an external expression there. I think the inbreathing as we have spoken of it would be the internal thing. I think as the light comes into us it finds expression externally, as you said.

CAB “He gave to her brother”.

RT Yes, well that comes in by the bye.

CAB The brotherly element comes in, does it?

RT Yes, I think there is an extension of the blessing; there is an extension of the blessing that has come into our day, but

the prime thing is what Rebecca received, is it not? There is detail about it, silver articles and gold articles and clothing. I think that is the light of the thing. The Spirit has brought something within our range of the glory of a glorified Man and He has clothed us in it, He says it is yours. 'I have brought this from the glorified Man and it belongs to you'. Well, are we going to wear it? As taking it I think we must move in the light that is ours. That involves the Supper, as we said; I think it involves sonship and the liberty that marks those that are of the assembly.

DJH So are there two sides in John 20, He breathed into them, but then the word is "Receive the Holy Spirit", that is that they are actively taking things on.

RT Yes. I think that the Lord was anticipating what was coming in in Acts 2, where there would be the external power and expression of things. But what intimacy came in to John 20, "he breathed into them". Something of that Man that was no longer governed by the limitations of flesh and blood, something of the glory of that Man who was going to "my Father and your Father, my God and your God". What a link they had with Him! He would leave that with them that they had a link no matter where He went, whatever glory He went into, they had a link with Him that He had breathed into them.

CRB Union would be the private side of joy, would it not? Sharing in headship would be more related to display. Is the Spirit seen here as preparing Rebecca for both.

RT Yes. Well, which comes first?

CRB Union must come first, must it not?

RT Yes. Mr Taylor has a very fine touch on the end of Revelation. He says in Revelation 21 that historically the millennium comes before the eternal day but John puts the eternal day first. He says John, being the lover that he is, has the private side as the predominant thing. Administration is a secondary matter, is it not? The coming out in display, that will be all right. He says what John is at is the internal thing. Something of that should burn in our hearts, should it not,

the private joy of union and it is a heavenly bride. Rebecca is not trammelled with these things, she shows how she is walking in the light of things, the way she is prepared to leave everything, that the joy of union may be known.

TB Is it interesting to note how the Spirit delights in bringing Rebecca forward, and then when the Spirit comes and sees Isaac “That is my master!”. Is not that a delightful way in which the Spirit so graciously stands?

RT Yes, you can well understand what a bond had been formed between Rebecca and the Spirit in this journey. Is not that what is sustaining us now? But think of a divine Person coming here to sustain us in that light. We say we walk in the light of the assembly, but that is sustained in our communion with the Spirit. What exercises have come in through the dispensation but the light of the assembly has been maintained in the power of the Spirit. It is not angels that have come in to maintain it—the law as given by angels—but the light of the assembly is maintained in the power of the Spirit.

AJEW Referring to Mr Byng’s point, it is very interesting that in the first presentation of the city John is said to have seen it, in the second presentation he was shown it. John was at home in respect of what he saw, was he not? What he is shown is a matter of, could I say, the necessities of his prophetic service.

RT That is very good. It puts administration in the right focus, does it not, that what is prime is that “I ... prepare you a place ... and shall receive you to myself”. Would that the internal thing was burning more in our hearts. As you think of the exercises of past times, how we missed the heavenly side of the thing. Galatians is that, that there is a tendency to revert to a lower level as Mr Bellamy said, in the way things are done. We may carry on formal doing of things, even the Supper, but it is the way it is done. “When ye come together in assembly”, 1 Cor 11: 18.

ECB So the way things are done in the assembly would be the way they should be done in the universe. Is not that right?

RT Yes, go on.

ECB I was thinking of Isaiah 60 that is quoted in Ephesians 5, “Arise, shine! for thy light is come”, but “the nations shall walk by thy light”, vv 1 and 3. It rather suggests, although the immediate setting there is millennial, that what is done in the city is the way things should be done in the universe.

RT Yes. That chapter is very beautiful, is it not, the way that the whole earth, the very ships and the seas and children are all going to be affected by persons coming into the light. And that word in verse—“the house of my magnificence”. Think of what we have come into, “the house of my magnificence”. We did not prepare it; it is the things that God prepared. That is what Rebecca came into, the very clothing that she went into Isaac’s presence with, she did not sew it, no earthly hands went into its preparation, but there were articles that found their source in divine purpose and divine workmanship. So that is the light that is to govern us, is it not? We speak about divine principles, but they are not man-made, they are divine principles. They found their source, and formulation in God.

SGS Had you anything more to say about the father in this chapter?

RT Not really, except that it connects us with Ephesians 1, it brings the idea of our repose into it, does it not?

SGS I was trying to follow through what you said earlier as to the father in Genesis 24.

RT He is insistent, he says “bring not my son thither again”. Think of the Father’s consideration, that there is going to be a bride. It reminds us of the Father’s pleasure in the Son that there is going to be an answer that is entirely suited to Him in every way. The servant brings up that she may not be willing, but in our day how willing are we? In our day the light has come within our range; are we willing to take it on and make the journey and be regulated by the glory that Christ is in?

WTA You have been speaking as to the way things are done and it says here that he “led her”. How did he do that?

RT Well, the first thing is that Rebecca arose, that is the way things are done; she arose. How are we going to do things? Things come up, exercises come up, how are we going to do them? Well, rise up. As Mr Burr has quoted, “Arise, shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee”. That is the day we are in, the light has come. Let us rise up. As you say, he led her. I suppose there is a touch of intimacy about that. It would bring up what we have been speaking of—at the Supper, there is something of the leading of the Spirit; it is also true in the wilderness, the sons of God are led by the Spirit of God.

WTA Yes, I was looking at the reference in Song of Songs 2: 6, “His left hand is under my head, And his right hand doth embrace me”.

RT Well, that is the area the Spirit would bring us into, to know the embrace of Christ.

FMK Rebecca gets a real link with the servant from the start. When they first met she lets down her pitcher on her hand. She did it in a dignified way although a small matter perhaps? She is held by the power of the servant.

RT She is true to her origin, is she not? Is not that something that always tests us. Our origin is that we are “born, not of blood, nor of flesh’s will, nor of man’s will, but of God”, John 1: 13. The origin of the saint is heavenly, is it not? I think our exercise would be to be true to our origin so that things would be done in a right way.

EHW Is there a suggestion here of the committal to the Spirit? “Wilt thou go with this man?”, she says “I will go”. And then later on she “followed the man”, in view of committal to Christ.

RT Yes, that is heavenly light, is it not? “I will go”. I think the light involves movement. As was said, the light has come in in our day and many are not prepared to move, indeed, some have moved backward, but Rebecca is prepared for the journey as she takes these things that the servant brings her.

EHW I was only thinking that for us we need to be committed to the Spirit to be brought into the light and the joy of these things, do we not?

RT Yes, indeed. It brings up the reverence we have for the Spirit. I think what was said earlier is right, that the Spirit has carried the thing through. He will never stoop below what is heavenly. Mr Taylor laid very great emphasis on the fact that the Spirit is not in the world. He says He is here, but He is in the assembly, He is not exactly on earth, but He is in the assembly. So that a divine Person has come within our range. He has brought with Him the glories of the heavenly Man and He is conducting us so that we are suited to the presence of the glorified Man.

EHW The Lord said, “whom the world cannot receive”, (John 14: 17) indicating that we can and do receive Him.

RT It brings up how we respect Him and how we respect the things that He has brought within our range, the things of Christ.

CGH What you have brought before us, is extensive. We have spoken of the light, or the truth, as to the assembly, and then we have thought of the expression of it, which involves, of course, that it is light in our souls, and then there is the power of it in the Spirit. What has been touched on also involves history, because we have spoken about the breakdown. When there is state and when the Spirit is relied on, to what extent is there, we might say, a lack of approximation in our experience to the assembly itself and what is here because of breakdown as, I do not like to use the word ‘mere’, but as an expression of it.

RT I think the light of the thing needs to govern us. We may own the weakness, but there is no weakness in the Spirit, is there? The way through things is that we are prepared to suffer. Rebecca shows that but I think the way that we will enjoy the light of the assembly is that there is a preparedness to sacrifice. So many have brought their own wills into things, but I think as the light of the thing comes to us, formation

comes by suffering. As you said, it is very extensive, and I think we should get the impression that it is extensive. It is heavenly, and who could compass it. But I think the glory of what we have been called into should lay hold of us and if there is preparedness with us to suffer, I think we will be in the joy of it.

CGH That is most interesting because it comes back to an earlier remark of yours about the Lord personally. You said, if we know Him, we should know the way. The disciples were questioning this, as you mentioned but then He brings before them, I take it, the fact that He is it and that brings in what you have spoken about, suffering; because who suffered as He did?

RT I think we should say that there is no point in the history where we are left without guidance. The people of old had the tabernacle system and they could look day and night, they could see a centre in that system as to how they should move. I think equally we are never left without guidance. It was said here on Wednesday night, “the firm foundation of God stands”, 2 Tim 2: 19. That stands. So I think the light of the assembly will always be. The Spirit has come here to maintain the light of the assembly. My exercise for myself is that I may have the fulness of that light before me. I may come into it in part, but may the impress be left on my spirit that what marks the assembly distinctively is that she is heavenly and she has a link with the Spirit that no other family will ever have; the assembly has a link with Christ that no family will ever have and she has it now. Now these things are to be enjoyed.

DER Do we need to be established in the fact that the assembly in its aspect as the body of Christ has not broken down?

RT Yes , that is right. My exercise is to be in it and filling out my part in it. So that we should not be looking on the breakdown. “I go to prepare you a place”. That is my place. He has gone “into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us”, Heb 9: 24. He went in there with my name on Him, did He not? So I think if I could get in my soul a sense

that my place is there, it puts the other things in their proper perspective.

LAB Do you think the encouragement of these scriptures is that as the light is appropriated, the experience is presented as a very near thing?

RT Yes, I think so. I think as we obey the light the experience is very real. So that it is not abstract. So many people today say that is all abstract; it is concrete. Christ gone into heaven to appear before the face of God for us. Is that abstract? It is concrete. Unless I realise it is concrete, I will never move here in my true dignity or in any measure of joy, shall I?

LAB So that it is walking in the light, not exactly talking in the light, do you think?

RT That is very good, "as he is in the light".

LAB I am impressed with the blessedness of these things and you realise as you appropriate that there is a glorified Man in the presence of the Father, surrounded with all the affections of the Father, that that is my place. What else can I desire?

RT Yes. When we come together, maybe very few, but when we come together, say for the Supper, for the prayer meeting, for the reading, the ministry meeting; is there not some experience of the working out of what our place is? Do not we have some foretaste of what our eternal place will be?

EP In John 8 the Lord speaks about "the light of life", (v 12) and it is in a setting of walking, is it not? Do you think the experience is the life, because that is what life is, is it not?

RT Yes, Rebecca became his wife, I think it has been remarked that there is no wedding referred to with Isaac and Rebecca. It is not a question of the bride; the present time is the wife. The bride will come into display, as we have referred to, but what Mr Barlow refers to is the experience, it is the wife side, is it not? We are here in faithfulness, we are here knowing divine support, we are here, too, knowing intimacy, especially as we come together. We know something of what

it is to be in this tent, filling out a place that other families will yet come into, but we are having the joys of it now.

EHW Having the joys of love in the tent, it says, “she became his wife, and he loved her”.

RT Yes, I think that we should remark that this is very precious to Christ. It is not only precious to us, but it is precious to Christ. It says, he was comforted. The Lord felt Israel’s despisal, the Lord felt the fact that He did not have the nation, Israel, but it says, he was comforted. Think of it, that the few walking in the light of the assembly, the few in South Africa, the few in New Zealand, some parts of America, too, a few walking in the light of the assembly; the Lord is comforted. I think that side should affect us.

ECB Does what transpires at the end of the chapter bear on what was remarked earlier in the reading? She says, “Who is the man?”, he says, “That is my master!”, which is in principle an administrative idea; but immediately she took the veil and covered herself, as if on that journey she had learned that something else must precede the administrative side. She covered herself and he loved her. That is union, is it not?

RT Yes. How do you say this is the administrative side?

ECB “That is my master!” involves dominion, does it not, operations and the exercise of authority and so on. It is like the millennial scene. I wondered if the Spirit’s education of Rebecca on the way had led her to see that as soon as she knew who the man was, the first thing is to be for Him.

RT Yes, very good. So there is the official side of the economy is there not, that the Lord positionally has taken a place that is lower and so has the Spirit, but as we come into this, we come into the private side, into the joys of the union, the joy of His embrace. Think of the capacity of comforting the Lord, think of the capacity of meeting the grief that He has known and bringing in comfort. These things would encourage us to walk in the heavenly light, that as there are a few walking in it the Lord is comforted.

CRB Does the Spirit have a very great place in the matter of our coming together in assembly, as you referred to earlier? I hoped you would enlarge on that. Coming together in assembly seems to be very important in relation to what you are saying.

RT Yes. I thought it was one of the distinctive features that we spoke a little about, when you come together in assembly. I think it is the practical expression of the light of the assembly, that however few—the light of the assembly does not require numbers, it requires persons. But ‘when ye come together in assembly’, I think is the way we gather, in dependence on the Spirit?

CRB So that the Spirit being who He is means that Christ can have the portion He is looking for, regardless of the breakdown and regardless of numbers. It is a wonderful evidence, is it not, of the Spirit’s present activity and power.

RT Is that not the whole point of the assembly, that there is something for Christ. We have spoken of what our side is, what light has come and what glory has come within our range, but the whole point of the assembly is that there is a vessel that is for Christ. So should not we consider this, she took the veil. We are for the Man, are we not? So when we come together in assembly, we are for the Man.

ECB Does what is being said about the Spirit in relation to our coming together in assembly require both John 1: 33, “He it is who baptises with the Holy Spirit” and the inbreathing in chapter 20? The first is being baptised into one body, the inbreathing animates that and I wondered, therefore, if the Spirit Himself, but the Spirit of the ascended Man, does not enter into our coming together in assembly so that we are immediately ready for the heavenly Man.

RT Yes. I think it has been said in ministry that the Spirit leads us but there comes a point when the Lord can take over what has been led. That is what you have in Rebecca here, that the Spirit has been dominant, He has been preeminent but there is a time when He, as it were, recedes so that union

is made way for, there is something for Christ. So we should consider that when we come together for all our occasions, as there is the heavenly light regulating us, there is something for Christ.

SDKR Would the coming together in assembly be an answer to those who say there is no collective position today?

RT You are sorry for hearing these statements, are you not? It just shows that some persons are not up to date with the Spirit. It is a slight. The first time I heard that I felt that it was a slight on the Person of the Holy Spirit to say that there is no collective position today. I think that is making everything of man. The continuance of the dispensation has not depended on man, the Spirit is carrying the thing through and He is carrying it through at its own level. My exercise is to be with Him.

LONDON

19th April 1975

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“THE LAMB’S WIFE”

Philippians 2: 5-11

2 Corinthians 4: 16-18

John 9: 35-38

Revelation 21: 9-14

We have been speaking already of the assembly as the counterpart of the heavenly Man. I would seek grace that we may get some help at this time as to how she is also the counterpart of the Lamb. The assembly has its origin in the death of Jesus. You will remember that in Solomon’s temple there were certain vessels that were cast in the clay-ground of the Jordan, see 1 Kings 7: 46. You see there divine workmanship in its perfection in these vessels but their origin was in those banks of the Jordan. That is where we have begun dear brethren, that is where things have been worked out. I think that the way the assembly has gone through in suffering will be a feature of admiration of every family; the bride, the Lamb’s wife, conveys some impression about that. Israel broke down but the assembly has not broken down, it has gone through in suffering. That is the way by which you can always get through things. So that man in John 9 was cast out, he had not a hope; where was he going? He found a way through because he suffered. That is the way Jesus has gone. Paul says to these Philippians, “let this mind be in you”, let it be in you. That would refer to our attitude, dear brethren. How are these heavenly features going to be preserved and enjoyed? By suffering outwardly. “Let this mind be in you”: not a mind to stand for its rights, not a mind to prove its point, not a mind to be justified today, but a mind to go down. The One who supremely had a right to be obeyed became obedient; the One who had a right to be setting forth His own qualities came into a condition where He expressed this mind: “I am in the midst of you as the one that serves”, Luke 22: 27. What an answer to the ambition and aspirations of those around Him! He took water and washed their feet; that was the bent of His mind. So Paul says let that be in you. He is writing here to a company that was very far on in the light of the assembly,

we may say, a very happy company at Philippi. He says, "If then there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit", and, "Let this mind be in you". The glory of that heavenly Man and of that heavenly vessel that we have spoken of will be maintained as this mind, this attitude, is in us. Paul says, Let it be in you. The Lord has set it on; the Spirit is here to further it. As Peter says, He has left you a model, "that ye should follow in his steps", 1 Pet 2: 21. Think of what Peter says about the Lord: "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously", vv 22, 23. That was Peter's impression as he looked back on the pathway of Jesus: "when suffering, threatened not". Beloved, that is how the truth of the assembly is going to be worked out, that is how the joy of the assembly is going to be preserved in our localities, that there are persons who have this attitude of mind that would rather suffer than lose the enjoyment of divine things. So "let this mind be in you". The inference is that it is there in measure, but let it be displayed. There may be local exercises and we hardly know how they can be resolved: "Let this mind be in you", let this come to the front. O, you say, it is this or that principle that should come to the front. No, beloved, this is the principle that comes to the front in local difficulties: "Let this mind be in you". I think Mr Taylor said that if both go down the matter is settled. Even if one goes down the matter is almost settled; for you it is settled if you are prepared to go this way. It is how Jesus settled the great issue that stood out between God and men; He suffered. Those who addressed God in Acts 4 say twice "thy holy servant Jesus", vv 27, 30. There is an allusion to His sufferings there, the way He has capacity to absorb the sufferings. With us it begins with this mind being in us that was in Jesus. Think how often He could have delivered Himself, how often He could have taken another way, rightly so; but this mind was in Him. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". Maybe as a creature of God you think you have rights to many things; are you prepared to forego them? Many have, beloved. That is how the light of the assembly has come down to be

worked out in our day. Many who have gone before have been prepared to forego certain pleasures they could have rightly had, certain comforts they could even have had, so that the truth may come through at the true level of the glory of the assembly.

So He “emptied himself, taking a bondman’s form”; there is a way out, beloved; what a way out, to take a bondman’s form! Jesus went through the suffering; the One who was on the cross, as Mr Darby said, the Man who was there was God, but it was a Man that died. Had He asserted His deity then, the matter would never have been resolved, in one sense, but He “emptied himself, taking a bondman’s form”, He took a condition in which He could die voluntarily. We are in a condition to which death attaches to us that we can never get out of. But there was One who in the love of His soul took a condition so that He could die to resolve the issues that stood out against us; “emptied himself, taking a bondman’s form”. He upon whom death had no claim submitted Himself in a bondman’s form to death, “taking his place in the likeness of men”. So it says that “God highly exalted him”. The suffering time, beloved, is limited. God in His infinite wisdom has measured the suffering time. When it will cease I do not know, but the sufferings that anyone passes through are measured. He bore it in the way that no creature shall ever taste it, but the suffering time is going to give way to the glory. It is what happened in Jesus: “Wherefore also God highly exalted him” a fine word that! It is as if He found infinite delight in exalting a Man like that. His own voluntary movements led Him to death, “and that the death of the cross”, such a death, suffering in such a way. The answer was, “Wherefore also God highly exalted him”. Beloved, God is, I may say, bound to honour the sufferings of the saints. He has honoured the sufferings of Jesus like this. What a comfort! He “gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously”, 1 Pet 2: 23. The answer is that “God highly exalted him”. What could that seal of the Roman governor on the stone do? As Jesus lay in death, Satan’s power was shown up in tremendous weakness: “Wherefore also God highly exalted him”. Beloved, the

suffering is passing. It is past for Jesus, He is given a name that is above every name. What a name He has been given, what a name of excellence attaches to Him, the One who suffered, the One who died, the One who went that way. "Wherefore also God highly exalted him". That is how God is going to answer things. He answers things by His own glory as there is a preparedness to suffer.

Paul would encourage us in that; he says "momentary". What a word! He refers to what is passing in the way of suffering and says it is momentary. We are not now speaking of a divine Person, we are speaking of a man like ourselves. It is seen in its beauty and excellence in Jesus, but here is a man like ourselves speaking at an age that some in this room would be, and he looks back, he has just recounted some sufferings that we have never known, but he says it is momentary. In some of these things Paul must have thought, Will it ever pass? The sky was black at times, the waves restless, the very ship breaking up; he must have thought at times, Will we ever get this resolved, will this exercise ever pass? He says, it was momentary. He says elsewhere that some things took many days; here he says it was "momentary and light affliction". Beloved, this is what we say about things as we get a touch of the glory. Do not things take a different shape as we are together in assembly? Have you never felt the pressure of days, maybe even the pressure of assembly sorrows, and had a different view as we have been in assembly? Have you never had a different impression as the Lord comes in? These things vanish, beloved. Be it in your private exercises, or be it in assembly matters; as the Lord comes in, Mr Stoney says, the issue is settled. Once we have some sense of the Lord in the matter we can say, as Paul says, it is momentary and light affliction, but what it works is eternal. The suffering time will pass, the pressures of the way will soon be gone; what will remain will be an eternal weight of glory. Paul is conveying something that words can hardly define. Who could define an eternal weight of glory? How many pounds was it, how many tons was it? How long would it last? Those sufferings are all measured, beloved. Let us lay hold of that that the suffering

time is measured in days, a period of time, but what is worked out through the sufferings is immeasurable, an eternal weight of glory. "While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen". It is another privilege as in assembly to look at the things that are not seen. Some of us may find it a bit difficult in our private ways to look at things that are not seen. We can all do it in measure, we all have faith, but especially as together we get the benefit, I think, of looking at things that are not seen and they are eternal. These things help us to appreciate the company of the brethren, because in suffering, Peter says, there is a brotherhood (see 1 Pet 5: 9), there is an affinity, you are not alone in your sufferings. You may often have felt that nobody else had these burdens to bear. Not so, beloved, it is in the brotherhood, there are others going through them; at the same time the whole thing is working an eternal weight of glory. The weight of glory each shall bear, but the whole thing will be fused to be seen in a vessel that is described as the Lamb's wife.

Well, Paul would encourage these Corinthians. He says, I have been through all this. As they read it, they must have felt guilty, reigning as kings, and here was somebody suffering. Reigning as kings produced local difficulties, it produced exercises that were displeasing to God, and here was a man who was suffering. Paul, the great vessel of the testimony, the great administrator of the mystery; here he was suffering and they were reigning. What was the result? On the one hand there was a man who was enjoying the light, and the experience of the assembly, while all the time they were struggling with local difficulties.

Beloved, there is a way through in suffering. The assembly, the personnel of the assembly, has been given a capacity to suffer that no other family has. It is commensurate with the glory. These two things are balanced. Peter speaks about "the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these" 1 Pet 1: 11. In measure it is true of the assembly, that that family has a capacity to suffer. She does not cry for vengeance on her enemies: "when suffering, threatened not". In the Psalms we see Israelites crying for vengeance on their

enemies. It is not now the time for it, it is the time for suffering—and “threatened not”. It is the time for suffering making way for glory. May this attitude of mind lay hold of us more, may the preparedness to take it on in view of the eternal weight of glory attract us more. Paul had a right to speak like this. I feel how little I have a right to speak like this, but he says that it is momentary and light and it is working an eternal weight of glory. May we be helped to look at the things that are not seen; nobody has ever yet compassed them. We have great wealth of ministry but I do not think it has yet compassed the things that are not seen. He says again elsewhere “Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man’s heart, which God has prepared for them that love him”, 1 Cor 2: 9. Would you not like to explore those things? Would not that be one of the objects of our assembling together, that we might explore more the things that God has prepared for those that love Him? There is suffering in the outside position, there should not be suffering among the brethren; as we come together it is a time for exploring the things that God has prepared. The more we are prepared for the suffering the quicker we will get into the flow of what the Spirit is saying in the assembly.

I just refer to the man in John 9. Here is a man that found his way into the assembly. It was a broken day, when all the religious profession was against him. It says, “Jesus heard that they had cast him out”. I think that is an affecting expression—“Jesus heard”. This man, as we speak of it in our language, mentioned assembly principles and, as he walked in the light of the assembly, they started to accuse him, they started to bombard him with questions. He just says, I do not know. He is prepared to suffer in his family and in his circumstances; he says, I do not understand these things. The answer was that “Jesus heard that they had cast him out”. Who told the Lord? Beloved, we are connected with a wonderful system. I think the Father told Him that there was a man, a seeking soul, that had affection for Him and that the system had cast him out. The Lord made His way to where he was; it says, “having found him”. He did not find the Lord, the

Lord found him; “Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him”. I think this is the way we would come into assembly experience, if we are prepared to take our share in suffering, if we are prepared to let the light regulate us. We may not understand it all, but let the light come into our hearts; and, beloved, what a wealth there is of the light of the assembly in beloved Mr Taylor’s ministry. How much do we read it? How much do you give your time to read the ministry that has been given to us so fully, the light of the assembly? It is to be known in experience. If you read these books you get an impression of the light of the assembly and, as you seek to walk in it, Jesus will find you. The man did not have to ask anybody for directions; who was he going to ask? Many of our fathers came into the joy of the assembly this way, that Jesus found them; they were cast out, from their own relatives maybe; we know persons like that, but Jesus found them. Thank God for His activities in His searching love. Jesus found him and He says, “Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God?”.

Now there is one other thing I would like to remark on and that is the power of prayer. Suffering and prayer, I think, are two things that go alongside of the light of the assembly. They are two things that marked Jesus pre-eminently. You read Luke’s gospel and see Him there time after time in prayer. It says even in that chapter that speaks of His glory that “He went up into a mountain”; to be transfigured? No, “He went up into a mountain to pray”, Luke 9: 28. Peter in Acts 10 “went up ... to pray” (v 9) and he received the light of the assembly as a heavenly vessel. I think these two things in a pre-eminent way make way for the operations of the Spirit of God to work out in us and to bring us into the joy of the light of the assembly. So assembly features are worked out in this man. You say the assembly was not yet. “He said, I believe, Lord: and he did him homage”. If that is not the assembly formally it is the assembly in practice. In the very next chapter the Lord alludes to the assembly but He saw it, you may say, in that man cast out, a man prepared to suffer and to deny himself that he may come into the blessedness of the companionship of the Son of God. That is what these men in suffering in

Daniel experienced, was it not? They experienced the companionship of the Son of God.

Finally, in Revelation, it is not only that she is the bride but she is the Lamb's wife, a companion to that holy Sufferer. I think that Israel and every family will look admiringly on the bride, the lamb's wife. The bride is the side of beauty but the moral foundation of that beauty is the Lamb's wife. Glory does not rest on just anything; glory has a substantial background. In the types in Exodus what bore the gold was the acacia wood, that ark in its beauty outwardly, covered with gold within and without and with a border of gold. As you looked on that system you saw a great display of splendour. Beneath the gold was the wood, that capacity to endure. So here it is the Lamb's wife. She is not only the bride, she is the Lamb's wife. What impressed me in this section was that she has certain things. They are not only conferred. Glory in large measure is conferred; the glory that we will enjoy, from one point of view, is a conferred glory. That does not make it any less substantial because the one on whom it is conferred is worthy because she has suffered. So it says, "having"; he "shewed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God". It is her own glory worked out here in the suffering time. Then it says "Her shining"; she is shining. O, what an answer to the sufferings! There will be the shining—"her shining". Israel will shine, but here is a vessel that shines having suffered, and it says "Her shining was like a most precious stone", another allusion, I suppose, to the secret, formative work of the Spirit of God. May we be, beloved brethren, more pliable in His hand. As we suffer we will be so. We would like to escape it, but I think Mr Raven said there was something very insipid about a person that had not been through sufferings and discipline. The sufferings form features that are companionable, features that give us affinities in the brotherhood features that take on the glory. Her shining: it is not just the idea of the sun and the moon and reflection: it is her shining, as if the substantiality of this vessel is impressed upon John. Then it says, "having a great

and high wall". She has these things in the glory and dignity of her own person.

May we be encouraged, beloved, that these things can be worked out today, if we are prepared for the suffering. "The sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories" (plural) "the glories after these". The glory time is just ahead and in spirit it is even now as we are together. May we be watchful that our times of coming together in assembly are times when the Lord is free, when the brethren can be free. May we not be together in bondage, may we not be bringing things with us that would put one another in bondage, but may there be a preparedness for suffering on the outside that as we are together there is a quick, ready upsurge among the saints to answer to the heart of Christ. That is how she is described—"the bride", that is Ephesians; "the Lamb's wife", that is the thing worked out through local exercises. May we be set, dear brethren, that the Lamb's wife may be as precious to us as the idea of the bride. They are both together. John sees them both mentioned in the one sentence at the one time: "the bride the Lamb's wife". Then she has foundations, the wall of the city has foundations. What a history is going to come into display! These sufferings that you are enduring at the moment may be small, in one sense, but they are all going to find their answer in this city. There is nothing in the ways of God haphazard, it is all working out something that is going to find its climax in this city "having the glory of God". May this mind be in us; may we be set in our attitude to go this way so that the glory that is soon to be revealed, the glory that is soon to be substantially seen, is enjoyed in our hearts now. For His Name's sake.

LONDON

19th April 1975



THE GLORY OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Exodus 16: 9, 10; 36: 20, 31–34; 37: 1, 2

Hebrews 6: 18–20; 7: 23–28

I seek help to encourage our hearts, dear brethren, with the glory of the present time. We have been speaking of the inward side of things today and there is a glory about that, a glory that is going through, and is soon to be displayed. Many things that are working out in the saints today have a glory about them that is unique and very soon will be the admiration of myriads. These features, such as meekness, humility, long-suffering, and patience, may be despised in the world today, but they are going through. However much may seem to be against them, “the meekness and gentleness of the Christ” (2 Cor 10: 1), is going through in persons who will soon be clothed with glory.

Isaiah uses fine words when he gets a touch by the Spirit of heavenly things. He says, “I will beautify the house of my magnificence”, Isa 60: 7. I would like all of us, the young ones especially, to get some impression that we are connected with a system of glory. From the outside it may seem to be breakdown. As we read, as we should, church history we see what men have done. We see there has been sorrow, there has been conflict, there has been standing for the truth—all these things have been necessary. But there is also another side which I would like to attract you to—that there is a glory about the present time that is going through.

In Exodus 16 Israel had not long come out of Egypt. They were in a very difficult position. What could they get in the wilderness? What outlook was there? You may raise these questions yourself, you know, as going into employment. You cannot join this association, you cannot claim support from here, or from another source. What outlook is there? How can we get through? Well. God addresses these people who were just wondering how they would get through. Aaron calls the people together and what happens is that as they turned their view to the wilderness “the glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud”. Oh that something like that might come into your soul today, beloved! They did not then speak about how they would

get through. They did not then wonder how they would manage if they did not have this means of support, or that; "the glory ... appeared in the cloud".

I would appeal to you to come into a position where you can see the glory appear! It is there, you know! You may look at numbers elsewhere, you may look at one thing or another, but I would appeal to you to come into this divinely appointed position where the glory appears. What a view to have! In type another Man came to fill their gaze; that should have, and could have, stilled their murmurings for ever. They were longing for the kind of things they had in Egypt. God says, I will give you something that is infinitely superior. He gave them the manna. Was there ever a day when the manna failed? I ask you to go through these books of Moses. There were murmurings, there were conflicts, there were divisions, but, except on the sabbath, there was never a morning that the manna was not there to be gathered. Joshua and Caleb certainly gathered it. Two men went through. God established in two men what He would have liked to do with myriads, and the glory sustained them above all the breakdown.

Oh that I could convey some impression of the glory carrying things through at its own level. Turn your eyes, beloved, turn today! God is coming in like this. Think of His grace and His patience. He hears their murmurings, but He does not come in judicially. He might well have upbraided them for what they had done, but He comes in and He gives them an appearance of the glory. Where did it come from? Did it come from Egypt? It was God's own thoughts that came in, "The glory of Jehovah appeared in the cloud". And it did not cease. Time after time, in Exodus especially, the glory comes in to meet the situation. Think of God answering things with His glory; strife and complaint on their part, but what God brought in was the exceeding riches of His grace. The glory in Exodus is the riches of divine grace. It says He heard their murmurings and He comes down to those murmurings with His glory, not with a word of rebuke. God feels these exercises that you have. He feels as you do about not having the friends you used to have. The enemy would cause us to be

discouraged, but God eclipses the whole thing with a view of His glory, and the glory that He brought in here was that there was manna on the ground. The prophet prayed that the young man's eyes might be opened to see what there was for him—the whole mountain filled with horses and chariots, 2 Kings 6: 17. Things are not just what you see, beloved. What you see may be true, but it is not all the truth.

The breakdown and the sorrows of the testimony are not everything. God has come in with a display of His glory to quicken your affections and to establish your soul in His grace. That grace will never fail. As I said, whatever morning it was, however difficult the day before may have been, however long the night may have appeared to some of these Israelites wrestling with their sorrow, in the morning there was the manna. What a new start, as it were, Christ here in lowly circumstances. He went with His people. That is a fine word in Acts 13: 18 (KJV), "He suffered their manners". Despite these complaints that there were among the people, God went along with them. He has done that with us, beloved, He has suffered our manners. How bad they have been!—and the answer to it is a view of His glory, in another Man.

Well, this is the inauguration of a system that Paul speaks about. He says it was introduced with glory, but the system we have come into subsists in glory, 2 Cor 3: 11. It is not now a glory in a cloud—it is the glory in a Man, the Man Christ Jesus. I like that word in Timothy, "God has been manifested in flesh, has been justified in the Spirit, has appeared to angels, has been preached among the nations ... has been received up in glory", 1 Tim 3: 16. What an answer to the pathway of Jesus! That is our great Priest, beloved; that is how the system is going through. That is how things are going to be maintained. The system subsists in glory because of the place that Jesus has, because of the kind of Man that sustains the system. That is what comes out in Hebrews. It says He has gone in. He was here, went through those circumstances, and was "received up in glory". He is enthroned in glory and from that position is maintaining the testimony at its true level. Not only that, He is maintaining

us. It speaks in our scripture in Hebrews of “the hope set before us, which we have as anchor of the soul, both secure and firm”. It is a fine thing to have an anchor! What storms and exercises we may have known! Thank God our anchor will hold—it is fixed in Jesus. It says, “both secure and firm”. It has often been said that the anchor is no use in the ship. It is only of use as it is attached to the ship and is fixed in firm ground. So, beloved, our anchor is “both secure and firm”. Assembly sorrows never upset the position in heaven. God is affected by them in His feelings, but it is fine to enter His presence and get beyond your circumstances and mine, however oppressive they may be, to get into God’s presence where things are “both secure and firm”. Beloved, you have a place inside there. It says He has gone in; we can all understand Jesus going in in the right and glory and worth of His own Person, but I often marvel at the rest of that verse. It says, “Jesus is entered as forerunner for us”. It means that if He is there, you have a place there. We will soon be there eternally in that glory, and we shall see His face unveiled; we will contemplate His glories. But in the meantime you have a place in there that belongs to you. I think there is a need for us to accustom ourselves and get to know that there is a place there for us. You will have exercises; there are still sorrows in the path, but they do not overcome us as we have a sense that our true place is there.

In Hebrews 9: 24 we have that Christ has entered “into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us”. The Lord said to the disciples, “Rejoice that your names are written in the heavens”, Luke 10: 20. Not rejoice that you have been successful in your service, or that you have a good local meeting, or that you enjoy things, but “that your names are written in the heavens”. Beloved, they can never be obscured. Your place there does not depend on your state, your place in glory does not depend on how good you are. It depends on the One who has gone in as Forerunner for us. Oh blessed be His name that He maintains things when I break down! He maintains the saints before God in their true dignity when they go astray. Let us get a greater sense that everything depends

on Him. Some of us have said that all depended on men and that everything has broken down. If it depended on men all would have broken down long ago. But it depends on Christ, the Man who endured, and from this point of view it depends on Him alone. He has gone in. Other priests, as it says, had to change, but He “has the priesthood unchangeable. Whence also he is able to save completely those who approach by him to God”.

Whatever your burden, “He is able to save completely”. That is not only your sins, not only those acts and offences that you have committed, the guilt of the sinner away from God. He is surely able to save you from that. But I think it refers as well to the sorrows of the testimony. I think it refers to the need for encouragement that there may be. It means He is able to change you. He is able to convert you again. Conversion is just like what we read of in Exodus; they turned away from Egypt. It says, “they turned toward the wilderness”. Now conversion is just like that, and we need it so often—we have to turn—turn from our own way of thinking; turn from our habits; turn even from the ideals we may have, turn to see God’s view, to see Christ installed in His own glory. In type, Joshua and Caleb proved that He was “able to save completely”. What exercises these two men must have known! Not a local meeting, but a whole nation against them, saying the very opposite to what they were saying. They proved that “He is able to save completely those who approach by him to God”.

O, beloved, as I have said, it depends on Christ, not on me. What a Man He is as installed there! It says, “Such a high priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become higher than the heavens”. It has often been said as to man’s affairs that the office confers something on the man, but here is a Man who has gone into the office and conferred a glory upon the office that it never had before. He has the priesthood unchangeable. What a range of glories He has given to it! He has proved Himself worthy of the office. It is not just an act of power, but He has proved Himself so as to win our hearts, to attract us so that we may trust Him. Well, if it all depends on Him, our joy depends on our trusting in

Him. For us to come through, for us to have these features of meekness, it depends on our having our anchor in Him. There is a chain that connects the ship to the anchor, and we are responsible to keep those links clear. We are responsible to enter in. It says, “those who approach”. How often do we approach? How often, alas, we may be content to labour at things ourselves, but let us approach. That is another word that Paul uses, “Let us approach”, Heb 10: 22. Let us draw near. Let us turn away from the scene of sorrow to have an impression of a scene of glory.

In Exodus 36 and 37 we find a material that bears the gold, not now a glory that comes in, as it did in Exodus 16, but here we have boards and an ark, both made of acacia wood, and they were overlaid with gold. What was underneath was the acacia wood—these moral features of beauty that God appreciates, and clothes with a glory that is suited to His holy presence—

Like Jesus! Grace supreme!
Like Him before Thy face;
Like Him, to know that glory beam
Unhindered, face to face! (Hymn 72)

These boards had become like that. You would not see in them the sorrows of the testimony; what was prominent at this time was no longer the ability to endure things, but the fact that here that same feature that endured can sustain glory. Think of the saints taking on glory! You know, heaven will be all the more interesting a place with the saints in it. It is full of interest indeed as we think that Jesus is there, but think of the saints also being there! Think of the number of saints there will be! What exercises they will have gone through in time. But they will all be seen in glory—all like Christ.

All like Thee, for Thy glory like Thee, Lord. (Hymn 249)

Let us be encouraged that, as the inward features of the truth are enjoyed and displayed by us, God can clothe with His glory that which is so delightful to His eye. As you went in, all around was glory. Whether it be a board standing on the west

or the north, or wherever it was, that board was covered with glory. Well, think of the brethren being covered with glory. The Lord says, “The glory which thou hast given me I have given them”, John 17: 22. Think of Jesus imparting that to suffering saints, to saints who have displayed, in measure, the Man who shines in heaven—acacia wood overlaid with gold.

When we come to the ark it is unique. It was overlaid with pure gold inside and outside. It speaks of Christ, unique as to character and in the glory and worth of His Person. Yet the saints take after His character—the boards are overlaid with gold. Well, beloved, it all makes much of Him. Think of this whole environment; all that is in heaven will be suited to Him. Everything there will be yielding its own tribute of glory and praise to the God who has done these things. May we be attracted to take it on. May we not think that this suffering time is the whole thing. Let us not think of our exercises as the end in view, but be weaned over to God’s side—to see that He is clothing the saints with glory now. We sing—

Where the saints in glory thronging. (Hymn 206)

Think of heaven being full of persons who have come through—a tribute to His own work. The gold had a certain weight about it that had to be borne, and what bears it suitably is the acacia wood.

Well, may we not be discouraged through the present time but may we be encouraged to turn our face to see what God is doing, what He is doing, not outside of us, but in the saints and with the saints. As I said, it will soon issue in a vessel that will be the wonder of the universe, but we are having part in it now; having part in it in our local companies, in our local exercises, household exercises, and daily personal exercises. We are having part in this kind of wood that is going to bear the gold, and is bearing the gold. May we take it on more, for His pleasure.

MALVERN

25th October 1975

“TO US AND NOT TO THE WORLD”

John 14: 21-23

Jude 20, 21

2 Corinthians 13: 14

It is an interesting question that Judas raises: “how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?”. Up to this time the Lord had been available to all, He had gone into their houses, He had sat at the well with the woman, many had seen Him; perhaps few had believed on Him, but He had been available anyway. There is a change coming that the Lord is speaking of, He is going away, things are going to be on a different footing, and what the Lord says causes Judas to raise the question: “how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?”. I believe it is a wholesome question. The Lord is bringing home to them that He is just as available, He is to be enjoyed just as freely, but there is to be exercise to find Him, concern that there are conditions so that the Lord can be known. The Lord in His own sovereign operations first moved in love toward us, when there was nothing that could be called a response. It says, “in the due time Christ died for the ungodly”, Rom 5: 6. There was not a spark of response to call out His affection toward us, indeed far otherwise, there was everything to repel Him; but it says, when we were without strength Christ died for the ungodly. Those are the initial movements of divine love, movements that divine Persons found a reason for in themselves, not in us. Think of God finding a reason in Himself to come and bless us when we were without strength! These sections that we are speaking of now contemplate persons who have some strength, who have known Jesus and who will be exercised to be in the area where divine things are known. So many people today say they are at a loss, that they do not know, yet they form judgments about things; but beloved, unless we are in the area where divine things are current, we will be wrong in our judgments, and we will not know. It is a solemn thing to think of persons not keeping the Supper, not remembering the Lord and yet being very strong in their opinion and judgments about things. I do

not think we have a right to form judgments unless we are in an area where divine things are known. The Lord spoke to the crowds in the gospels, but He also taught in the house. He took interested persons up a mountain and He took a man away from the crowds. The Lord took persons into an area where divine things were disclosed; and unless, dear brethren, we are in that area we shall be astray in judgments, and we will be at a loss as to how to move. So Judas' question brings out this word from the Lord: "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him". Persons who were once unlovable are becoming attractive to divine Persons and it is then that you get divine disclosures: "he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him". Divine things are not just general, they are specific; they are for all to walk in but certain persons get the gain of them through being in the area where they are known and enjoyed. So that in persons who have had touch with Jesus, who have had their sins forgiven, it is expected that the work of God will grow and we become lovable, not in the amiable features of the flesh but as having divine interests at heart: "If any one love me, he will keep my word". Think of some formation taking place in persons. It will soon be displayed in its entirety. What a display there will be when the work of God in its aggregate is finally seen! It will be said, "What hath God wrought", Num 23: 23. What a time of display there will be when that city comes down from God, when the earth is brought into reconciliation in fulness! But in the meantime, there is something worked out morally in persons that divine Persons love. God shows it with Abraham. He says "Shall I hide from Abraham ... ?" Gen 18: 17. He had a confidante in Abraham, one that He was able to disclose His mind to because he was in the way of obedience. It says "Abraham, being called, obeyed", Heb 11: 8. So there are certain well-proven principles that we must move on in order to come into the gain and experience of divine thoughts. Abraham obeyed and the effect of that is that God says, Shall I hide from him? He is spoken of as the friend of God. We may feel we are too young, that we cannot do much. We can obey, beloved, we can obey the expressions of love from Jesus. "If

any one love me”: that would touch a chord with every one whose sins are forgiven. He does not here speak exactly of maturity or how well developed that love may be; He says “if any one love me”. Would that not include every one in this room? What an appeal to the affections! What an answer to Judas’s question: “If any one love me”! The basis, beloved, of coming into divine things is that we love Him. There may be other questions to settle but I believe they could be resolved through this: “If any one love me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him”. Abraham could have raised many questions; it was a very difficult move to make, the odds would seem to be against him had he calculated in human reasoning. That may well be in a difficulty that you are experiencing now, beloved, things may seem against you. “If any one love me, he will keep my word”. It is a fine thing to get the Lord’s word about any matter and I do not think He is slow to give it. Can we be trusted with it? Are we in the way that we can be trusted with the Lord’s word about things? He trusts it to Abraham, His friend. God was about to do something that was affecting the earth, about to come in in His own way, and He said He would like Abraham His friend to know. God would keep us in the light of how He is moving. We feel very perplexed oftentimes about many things but the Lord here shows in answer to Judas’s question that there is a way of getting the divine mind, of knowing how the Lord is moving: “If any one love me, he will keep my word”. It can be tested; there is a need for us testing things, and we arrive at things through testing them. As to those disciples that we spoke about in John 21, what they saw on the shore, the overwhelming power of grace, captured their hearts. The Lord has His own way of showing us how He is moving in things if we make way for Him. It is my exercise at this time that in spite of the breakdown, in spite of what confusion there may be and so many held in it, divine things are going on and there is an area where they are to be enjoyed today. May we through grace and the Spirit’s help be encouraged to be in that area. He is not today manifesting Himself to the world; the Lord will soon make Himself known to the world in a different form, but He is making Himself known today to His lovers, to those who are moving under

exercise like those men in Matthew who came from the east. They had divine guidance because they had their eye and their hearts set on finding the King of the Jews. Something had arisen in the heavens that had awakened their interest and “it came and stood over the place where the little child was”, chap 2: 9. We need to have our interests aroused and exercise in our hearts that we may find how the Lord is moving today. Things were against these men; religious and political powers were set against them but they found a way, through dependence and guidance, to where the little Child was. May we be helped, dear brethren, to be in that area, to keep ourselves in it as Jude says: “keep yourselves in the love of God”. You would have thought as to that day of which Jude is writing that everything was breaking up, but he says “But ye, beloved ... keep yourselves in the love of God”. Some of us may dwell too long in the confusion and breakdown, humbling as it has been, but Jude’s word is “keep yourselves in the love of God”. What an area to keep in! Who will ever exhaust that area of the love of God? How full it is! It is His nature, how He expresses Himself; God is love, keep yourselves in the love of God. Jude is saying that many things are coming in to try the saints, what is rising up in the apostasy, but he says the way through it is to keep yourselves in the love of God, an area that is very fertile and full. The suggestion is that we may wander out of the enjoyment of it; it is always there but it may be that through a lack of dependence, a lack of exercise and faith, we are outside the area where the love of God is enjoyed. We enjoy it individually, we know its help in our circumstances, but I think this would be even more than that—“keep yourselves in the love of God”. It is something that is always fresh, not only what we have learnt about God and how we have proved Him in the past, but something that is always flowing, and Jude’s exhortation is to keep ourselves in it. It would preserve us from becoming bitter, from hardness, from being legal, from being loose, from many things that are apt to overtake us. It is the answer to all these exercises that may be around us—“keep yourselves in the love of God”. The way Jude is speaking here is that there is something being formed in the saints. There is something outside that is

building up with increasing momentum, but all the time there is an area that the breakdown can never penetrate—"keep yourselves in the love of God". Think of that verse that says "God commends *his* love to us". That is how He started, and that is how we first knew the love of God. What a commendation of His love to us in Jesus! Now He is saying, Do you have a taste for it? I think, beloved, we need help to have our senses exercised to have a taste for divine things. How hindered the people of Israel were through reminiscences of Egypt! They hardly had a taste for divine things. The manna was there and it says that they loathed it. So beloved divine things have come so near us but we are apt to regard them below their value. They reminisced about Egypt, they began to have wrong ideas about it and would have gone back; it was the opposite of keeping themselves in the love of God. All the time that manna was round about them. Was there ever a morning that it failed? They had just to go out and pick it up, there was never a morning but what God manifested His love and His patience toward them. "Keep yourselves in the love of God". Beloved it is all round about us. There are persons thinking that the day is one of poverty, complaining about all that has come in, when all around them is the love of God. The love of God is a real area, and those who have proved it and know it would encourage us all the more to be in it. May we be watchful, dear brethren, that things are not allowed that would hinder the flow of divine love among us: keep yourselves in it. It means that I am available, that I see to myself that there is no blockage in me, no hard spirit in me, no wrong thinking. As I keep myself in the love of God, and as you keep yourself in the love of God, we are joined together, feeding on the same food, thinking on the same things. There is nothing more formative than the love of God; so I repeat these words, *keep yourselves* in it, be watchful that other things do not spoil it. Abraham deflected for a moment and went into an area where things were held up. We get other instances with the children of Israel—they were overtaken by sin and the cloud did not move on certain days it stood stationary in one place. Beloved, that was not in the love of God. We have known in assembly history that things have been held up because we

have not kept ourselves in the love of God. So we should be exercised that nothing is holding us up.

Jude says, “building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God”. Every true believer has faith, and Jude gives that precious touch to it—“most holy faith”. In broken times divine things become all the more precious and real; it is not only “faith” but “most holy faith”. It is valued. Do we value what God has given us? He has given to each a measure of faith, and as the days are so broken, Jude says, Cherish it like this: “your most holy faith”. It is what you have. “But *ye*, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith”; that is the principle that things are built on, they are not built on sight or on complaint but on “your most holy faith” that God has given to each one of us in measure. He would have it to be in exercise and function so that we are built up. Then “praying in the Holy Spirit”; a thing that I feel is constantly testing; you feel the danger of being formal or casual in your prayers. We would all pray morning and evening and at other times too, and we have often cause to pray in extremity, but Jude says, “praying in the Holy Spirit”. It is some fine touch given to prayer, not exactly a cry of need. It is praying in the Holy Spirit, a divine Person that is here. It is not just praying to the Father who is in heaven; praying in the Holy Spirit means I think that the Spirit is here in charge of things and you are seeking not your own will but that you might be with Him in the working out of divine thoughts. The testimony, beloved, is carried through in the Spirit. Persons have deflected in times of breakdown and failure all along, but divine thoughts are carried through in and by the Holy Spirit of God. Think of a divine Person coming here, not to the world exactly but into the assembly, into the saints, to carry things through to the glory and satisfaction of Christ. It is no tribute to men that the testimony has gone through; we are thankful for men who have been used to spread the testimony and through whom the ministry has come, we are thankful for their example, but the testimony has been carried through in the power of and by the Spirit of God. So I think that praying in the Holy Spirit

would be that you have a divine ideal and divine interests in your prayers. “Praying in the Holy Spirit” is something we should be exercised about, not a formal prayer, not only a time of giving thanks, but something you would make definite time for and be exercised about that you would be with the Spirit in the working out of things today.

Then Jude adds that word I have spoken about already: “keep yourselves in the love of God”. I think it is a wonderful climax that such a thing is available today to Christians. It is not available to the world. O beloved, what an outlook we have! The rising tide of apostasy that Jude is writing about here is coming upon the world, but what believers can do at the present time is to keep themselves in the love of God. May it be our portion, may it be our joy as we are exercised to have the sense of it; as I have said, it is so near, just to hand. Jude says, Just keep yourselves in it. There is to be a watchfulness with us that divine things are not made common; they are to be well known but never in familiarity. O beloved, who can but be worshipful as we think of the love of God? It has come near us, met our needs, taken up our case and yet it is inexhaustible. The hymn writer puts it well –

Oh the love of God is boundless,
Perfect, causeless, full and free! (Hymn 212)

Causeless: there is nothing to draw it out as I have said, and yet as we keep ourselves in it we become formed so that we are attractive to divine Persons and persons whom divine Persons can trust. I wonder if we are all like that in our local places, in our homes—persons that the Lord can trust. I think He is looking for such persons. While others may be bemoaning the breakdown, the Lord is looking for persons who can be entrusted with His secrets, with His manifestations. “How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us?”. Beloved, that has never stopped, that has never been interrupted for some; it may have been interrupted for me but some persons by the Spirit have kept themselves in the love of God and the manifestation has never stopped. How is it? We do well to enquire about these things, and it may be if I search my soul,

I feel it is not happening with me. Jude would encourage us to build ourselves up on our most holy faith, to pray in the Holy Spirit and to keep ourselves in the love of God.

I just was impressed by the way Paul closes the two letters to Corinth: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all”. There had been much to speak of, much to exercise the saints, he had had to rebuke them, but he would not leave them without some impression of the resources that they have in the locality. He is not here speaking of some doctrine; he had spoken of doctrine and it is right that doctrine should have free course among us. Paul had had to get to the doctrine in the epistle, certain principles had to be in the lead because they were not acting rightly, but at the close it is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ he is speaking of. They could hardly have enjoyed it in chapter 5 of the first epistle if they had continued on that line. Some of them came together for the Supper and they hardly enjoyed the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the communion of the Spirit there because, he says, when you come together it is to take your own supper. But as he comes to the end he says, Let this be with you all. Well, beloved, what a close to two such epistles, where there has been so much correction! As they read through the epistles, I do not suppose things had been completed even at this time, maybe some were feeling that there was so much still to do. Well, Paul says, that may be, but “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all”. They had proved themselves that they were exercised. He did not say this to them in the first epistle or before they had put away the evil thing that was among them, but having done that, having moved in exercise, he says the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. O beloved, what a resource to have in local difficulties, what a resource to have in exercises that may well overwhelm us—the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. There may be severe matters, maybe matters that involve withdrawal, but the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit are still there. There is a very

fine word about David. He was a man of war and we sometimes think of him like that but he was always ready to sing. I think this verse would explain something of that. If difficulties have become so great that we cannot sing there is something wrong. David is called a man of God not because he was a fighter but because he was a singer. The only reference to David as a man of God is in Nehemiah; it speaks of “the musical instruments of David the man of God”, chap 12: 36. May we be known as persons who are on God’s side about issues, persons who are with God in seeking to provide an area where love is enjoyed. In doing things for God we will know the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit. I think it is a testing question, Can divine Persons be with me in what I am doing now? That is something to test ourselves by each day, in our individual life, in collective matters. I think the Corinthians would test themselves like that. There are things to do: is the grace of the Lord Jesus with me in doing it? Is the love of God with me in what I am doing? And do I know the communion of the Holy Spirit? Paul is saying as he closes the epistle, with many things still to be done I think, may this be with you and may you move in the conscious enjoyment of it. Well, may we be encouraged to move like that: broken, difficult, troublesome times, yet divine Persons to be known in the way they have displayed themselves. The grace of the Lord Jesus, who could overcome that? Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor. O beloved, the grace that met the difficulty of the situation, the grace that absorbed the difficulty, absorbed the debt, grace that paid the price, that did what was needed to be done! “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all”. May it be worked out with us in our various lives and various localities for His Name’s sake.

GILLINGHAM

22nd May 1976



CONFIDENCE IN THE SPIRIT

Romans 8: 1-15

1 Corinthians 12: 7-13

Ephesians 3: 14-19

RT I wondered if we could be helped together to have our confidence in the Spirit of God strengthened. I think it is something we constantly need, that we might be helped to be expanded in our appreciation of the Spirit of God. Being a divine Person that must be so. The scripture in Romans, as we know, is individual. I think the experiences that we have individually would strengthen our confidence in Him, so that the area He has in our hearts may be increased. It should not always be that there is conflict of a severe kind. There will always be these conflicting things, the flesh and the Spirit, but it would be normal that the Spirit is gaining ascendancy, that we do not always have to be feeling we have grieved Him, but that more settled peace may come into our lives and we may reach some sense of being led by Him. There is “the mind of the flesh”, but there is also in the chapter “the things of the Spirit” and “the mind of the Spirit”. I would like help to get to know those things better. In this chapter the Spirit gives us power for deliverance, power for life, power for sonship. There is a great realm that is in Him. There are many states of soul among us and I think we always need to be reminded that we are not debtors to live after the flesh. We do not need always to be sinning, but as we have confidence in the blessed Spirit we may be helped to trust Him and deny the flesh, that the experience of what is spiritual may be more real and more blessedly enjoyed by us. To be “led by the Spirit of God” suggests an undisturbed area where He has dominance. Many types will come into our conversation together: the widow in 2 Kings 4 would be one that would relate to this chapter. She did not appreciate what she had, typically the Spirit, as she should; but I would like help to come to what the prophet says to her: “live ... on the rest” (v 7).

Corinthians is collective. I just thought particularly of what it says: “we have all been baptised into one body ... and

have all been given to drink of one Spirit". As we come together may we have faith and learn to have confidence in the Spirit that what He has in mind may come into every occasion. For myself I would like help about the Spirit's place in the service of God. I think there is room, as we know Him better, to be expanded in our response to Him. I feel the need of expansion in what we say to the Spirit and how we worship Him and think of Him. These things will expand as we trust the Spirit for this reading.

ECB Is what you have in mind vital to us in the light of the fact that nothing we have in Christianity is made good to us without the Spirit?

RT I am sure that is right; and I do not know that we always remember that as we should. The kind of conditions we are in, the bodies we are in and the circumstances around us, cause us very often to fall back on some other influence or power. Christendom itself has in a sense shut the door to the Spirit, but I think in our experiences we should come to trust Him and to open that door more and more.

ECB If we consider, as Mr Raven taught, that we do not even substantially know that we have the forgiveness of sins without the Spirit (vol 13 p142), it would make us see the necessity of confidence in the Spirit in relation to everything that is ours; otherwise we are weak all over, are we not?

RT We are indeed. Romans is very experimental, and we often speak of the experience of Romans 7 which is very essential; but equally essential, I think is this chapter: "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus". We would all desire that there may be in us increasingly an area where the Spirit is free, and that the flesh is not dominant so that when things come into our lives we do not turn to ourselves or our own strength but to the Spirit; we have confidence in Him that He will see us through. He came for that very thing; He came at Pentecost and will be with us, as the Lord says, for ever. The Lord's words in John 14 to 16 would come into our time; He would impart to the disciples, as He was departing, confidence in another divine Person. He

says He will be “with you for ever” (John 14: 16) and “he shall guide you”, John 16: 13. He is to be trusted; the Lord imparted that to those disciples, that they were to trust the Spirit for everything.

AJEW The Lord refers to Him as “another Comforter” (John 14: 16); the meaning of the word ‘Comforter’ involves at once that He is perfectly to be trusted. It is significant that John should introduce the Spirit in such a setting as that, involving on our side the trust that you speak of.

RT I think that is very beautiful. What a void there would be in their affections as the Lord left them, but it was to be filled by another divine Person. I think we should remember that, having come so near us as to be in us, yet He is a divine Person and He has all the power with Him that we need. So as these disciples were to be left in a wicked world that had rejected the Saviour, they were to find a Comforter, One who was to bring all that was needed into every circumstance.

FCM The word ‘confidence’ you have used would come very close, would it not, to the word ‘law’ in verse 2? Is it that a new governing principle has come into view, replacing the principle of “the law of sin and of death”, this principle that relates us to the Holy Spirit Himself?

RT Yes, that is right. I think there is a need for teaching as to the Spirit. You remember that the disciples in Ephesus said they had not heard that He had come (see Acts 19: 2). There is a great deal of that abroad, a lack of distinct teaching as to the Spirit and the need for faith that we may apprehend Him, who He is and what He is here for. It is right that we should come into an area where the Spirit has liberty; it is not right that the flesh should always be winning and gaining the ground. It may be true early in our lives and oftentimes later on, but I think we need faith, and we need teaching to see that that should not continue but that the Spirit of God, because of who He is and the near place He has come into, should gain the ascendancy with us.

FCM Does not this second verse give the impression of a divinely-ordered sphere of control and life, which is established and subsists, and in which each of us is consciously to have part?

RT And the death of Jesus, the forgiveness of our sins, has brought us into that. "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus". That is something that should come into our lives and settle us however young we are. How many have been disturbed! They are in Christ Jesus, but the light and the joy of it has not permeated their lives.

CRB What would you say as to the way in which the Lord Jesus did things by the Spirit?

RT It brings out the beauty of His manhood; but you could say more.

CRB There was infinite complacency in Jesus as He did things by the Spirit both in His life here and in the forty days. That was how the disciples began to know the Spirit, was it not?

RT Yes, I think it is very beautiful to look at it in Jesus. The Spirit was there in complacency. There was nothing of the struggle that we experience, but we see in Jesus a Man who did everything in power. The elements of darkness receded, not only because of who He was, but because of the way He did things; they marvelled at the way He did things. It is striking in the gospels, the words of grace and power and the way that He did things. That would emphasise the Spirit and the right of way He had with Jesus.

EP So it is moving to understand that He was a sacrifice for sin so that it might be condemned. Do you think it is very instructive that it says "in order that" in verse 4? "in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit". What has been involved to set us free to take this up!

RT Yes, the activities of the Lord and His death. As we know in the types the water flowed from the smitten rock. He ended in His death a condition, and the Spirit has come that I

may come into the joy of another condition. That would be the exercise here, that we may be in faith and be helped to trust the Spirit, that the dominance of the flesh may recede in our lives and the dominance of the Spirit be more blessedly known.

CCI Is it of interest that following the smitten rock we get the conflict with Amalek?

RT Yes, and the prophecies of Balaam. That is a very interesting section of scripture. As you say, there is the conflict, and they win it. Like the conflict in this chapter, there is power to deal with things, so that the things of the Spirit become very real. Then there are the prophecies of Balaam; you may think they were a picture but they were not; they were true of persons who were in the power and triumph of the Spirit of God.

VHB Is it not a great need among us, to have faith? You cannot divorce faith from the Spirit, can you? Do you not think that we need to be as free to speak to the Spirit as we would to the Lord or the Father?

RT Yes, I am sure that is right. The importance of faith is who it is in—it is in a divine Person. So here we are helped to get on our feet; it says, “who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit”. That means that there is some triumph coming into our lives as we know a divine Person, the Spirit of God.

JCE Will you say more about the things of the Spirit and the mind of the Spirit.

RT I think there is something infinite about them. The mind of the flesh always seems to be going one way and it finishes in death, but the mind of the Spirit and the things of the Spirit is an area that would attract our affections. There is what He has under His hand, as we learn from Genesis 24; the things of the Spirit include response to Christ and response to the Father; they include the service of God, but they include, too, that we are here in joy, we are here as triumphant persons. I think there is room for the spread of these features, the things of the Spirit, among us.

DJH You cannot limit it in the light of what He says in John, can you? “All things that the Father has are mine”, John 16: 15. Then, “He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”, v 14.

RT Yes, and “shall guide you into all the truth”, v 13. What a thing to have a guide, is it not? We may feel very lost in the world, and in the condition we are in, and through the activities of the flesh. So what a thing it is to have One who guides “you into all the truth”! The things of Christ are things that the natural man is shut out from; we are guided into them and they are revealed to us by the Spirit.

ECM “The mind of the Spirit is life and peace”, it says. Is it linked with the priesthood? I was thinking of Levi: “My covenant with him was of life and peace” (Mal 2: 5), as though Jehovah would commit Himself to those that are walking in the Spirit.

RT Yes; that would substantiate what we said, that there is a need of teaching as to the Spirit, that the way He would go would be life and peace. He will never lead us in any other direction. So as to other things that come into our lives, we can quickly discern that they are not of the Spirit, they are of the flesh. Then we get power to turn to Him, and to come into these things—life and peace—so that there is some stability and formation. There was some formation with Levi, was there not? He was able to do things in the power of the Spirit.

SDKR You referred to Genesis 24. I was thinking of that committal, “I will go” with this man, v 58. Earlier she had said “There is ... room to lodge”, v 25. Is that important?

RT Yes. I think that typically she was possibly a bit ahead of much of this chapter. She did not seem to have the hesitation that I so often have, “I will go” was a very ready response. There were very strong natural appeals in that chapter, but typically she had confidence in the Spirit, she was attracted to the heavenly Man, because she said, “I will go”. I think that is what the Spirit would do, always attracting us to the heavenly Man. But I think in this chapter He brings

something into us that triumphs over the flesh. We cannot say often enough, and we need to grasp it in our youth, that the flesh should not always be gaining ground. I often think of the conflict between Saul and David. It says, “the house of Saul became continually weaker” (2 Sam 3: 1); “David became continually stronger”. That would be like the Spirit having ascendancy, that David becomes increasingly stronger.

GWB We learn things from Christ, and the Spirit would always bring Christ before us.

RT Yes, Christ is the objective; I think we learn things from the Spirit in an experimental way. These things are very experimental; the flesh brings grief, even causes us to wonder if we are on Christian ground; but then the Spirit brings life and peace. The Spirit is power for deliverance in the earlier part of the chapter; then He is power for more than that He is power for life. Life would mean that the normal things of God are finding expression and I am finding my delight in them.

JM Is that all in view of finding a settled state of things in our souls, a subject state, in which we can be led into the purpose side?

RT Yes. I think we learn how to do things the next time. Maybe one time we have failed and we have felt the grief; the next time we learn it is worthwhile to suffer so that the Spirit should bring to us life and peace. We feel the suffering as having to refuse the flesh, that is always a test, but I think experimentally we learn the joy of the things of the Spirit, so that it is less burden to suffer; we have experienced the liberty of the Spirit and would jealously guard that; so we are prepared to suffer in the flesh.

AAB In chapter 5 of this epistle we have the reference to the Holy Spirit shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts. Is that to help us to have confidence in the Spirit, in the One who loves us?

RT It is interesting to look into scripture and see how much love is connected with the Spirit. As you say, He has shed the love of God abroad in our hearts. I think He has made us

lovers. It speaks in 1 Corinthians 2: 9 of “them that love him”; it is connected there with the Spirit. He would develop suitable affections for Christ, and that would be specially seen in Genesis 24.

AAB We experience, too, the Father’s love and the love of Christ, but there is the love of the Spirit. It would all be embraced in the love of God “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us”.

RT Would that be an early experience?

AAB Yes, in order to engender confidence; is that your thought?

RT So lovers are brought on to other ground: “no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus”. What a lever to expand our affections that is!

RL So we would love the Spirit, and that would help us; you would not grieve One you love. He is a real Person. The Lord said “ye know him”, John 14: 17. It helps us to appreciate the Person, does it not?

RT Yes, I think there is room for our affections towards Him to be expanded. So it comes to a point; it says, “ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God’s Spirit dwell in you”. How near He has come! As Mr Bellamy said, He has come shedding the love of God abroad in our hearts; but here He has come to dwell in us. There never has been a dispensation when divine Persons have come so near, and we need to be exercised to appreciate what we have come to. It refers in Hebrews 12 to certain things we have come to, and this is one of the things we have come to, God’s Spirit dwelling in us.

DER Unless we have known a little of the soul experience of the preceding chapter, the Spirit will only be a doctrine to us, will He not?

RT Well if He is only a doctrine we will never come into the joy that He brings. I think this chapter is just as experimental as the previous one; we need them both. If we are in the tunnel all the time what despair it brings. But as in the tunnel

we have the light of this, that the Spirit is power to get us through; there is no condemnation and there is a divine Person dwelling in us so that the flesh does not have the ascendancy but we are walking and living and being led in the power of a divine Person.

DER As we prove the inability of the flesh to please God, we find that God has provided us a new power which is the Spirit Himself.

RT Yes, so the flesh never gives up and it will be with us all the time we are here, the same flesh; but we grow to trust a divine Person, and He has the dominance, the ascendancy, in our lives. That is not doctrine, that is experience.

DER So everything in our lives is determined then by whether it is pleasing the flesh or pleasing the Spirit.

RT As things test us we need help to have confidence, that supposing we do not see the way through an exercise, we have confidence in the Spirit of God and can trust Him to bring us through in triumph and joy.

ECM Is that confirmed by verse 13; “if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live”?

RT That is a very fine verse; it means that you learn something; you not only trust Him and have confidence in Him but you can always speak to Him and can appeal to Him. I think that would come into “if, by the Spirit”; it would mean that you appeal to Him in an exercise, and He gives you power to put to death the deeds of the body. It means that in that exercise you come through triumphant because of your confidence in the Spirit.

WJRB The woman touched the hem of His garment and was healed. That is perhaps an illustration; power came out of the Lord to heal her.

RT The hem of the garment would be what is nearest the earth, and that would be true of the Spirit. He has not come to the earth exactly, but He has come to dwell in the saints that they may be here in triumph, that what has governed us

before need not always govern us, what has reigned in my life up to now need not always reign. But maybe at this time we would be encouraged to have confidence in the Spirit that He may have right of way.

CRB Would you say something as to “the Spirit life on account of righteousness”?

RT I thought that brings us into an area where we can be in life. “The Spirit life on account of righteousness” would involve on the one hand what was met in Christ. But then it would also involve that there is righteousness pursued in my pathway that gives the Spirit room and liberty.

CRB Would it be the working out of verse 4: “the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us”? It is a wonderful matter that the Spirit can help us to do what is right, and as we make way for that help we shall be preserved in a sphere of life. But it can only be that way.

RT Yes, I think so. It brings home to us the sensitiveness of the Spirit of God; that is something we should think about, how sensitive He is! If I am overwhelmed, or engaged in things that are not right, I am shutting out the wealth and power of His service. That is where the need of teaching comes in, that I need to attend to practical things. I think there are illustrations about it in the Old Testament; in the wilderness they had commandments, and the law of Moses ruled. But then at the end of the wilderness the Spirit takes over. Would it be like that in our lives? There is commandment, there is regulation as to practical matters, there is what is right and what is wrong. As we do what is right we make room for an area where the Spirit can be free and can lead us into the things of God.

CRB It brings us into an area of life where He gives us the instincts and the feelings to know what is pleasing to God.

RT Very good; that is something that we should covet. We would grow in those instincts and feelings.

FMK Is that necessary to get a right appreciation of the Lord’s supper—the Spirit’s leading in the service?

RT Yes; maybe that would bear on the collective setting: “when ye come together in assembly”, 1 Cor 11: 18. I do not think we do that without the Spirit having ascendancy. If the Spirit has ascendancy in our lives, we come together to remember Christ.

JCE Do you think that one great feature of the service of the Spirit with us is that He always gives us an objective? He may have to lead us from one to another, but I was thinking of this matter of righteousness, that He would engage us with that; and then God leads many sons to glory, that would be by the leading of the Spirit here, I suppose, that the things of the Spirit would be brought before us largely by way of objectives that He enables us to reach.

RT Yes, I am sure that is right. Genesis 24 shows us how insistent and anxious He is to bring us to the objective. So these things would encourage us to attend to righteousness, to attend to things that would hinder the Spirit, that we may have greater liberty.

JCE And to proceed with that illustration, if His service to us should take a time, then that time is occupied with impressions of Christ Himself, as no doubt it was there; the servant on the journey had spoken to Rebecca as to Isaac to whom she was going.

RT Yes. There is a verse in that chapter that struck me; it says “Rebecca arose”, v 61. That would be like coming to the end of these exercises, that we rise up; we are empowered to leave these other elements. She arose, it says; that is where the journey towards Isaac commences. So these exercises here would help us to rise, help us to trust Him. She had nothing else to lean on; she had, as it were, cut off everything else and she goes forward in dependence and confidence in the servant, and how quickly she reaches Isaac!

JCE I feel the importance of it for all of us because we do tend to go on in an easy way. And where there is no vision the people perish. It is important for us to have objectives brought before us.

RT I do not think there would be any meeting without the Spirit bringing objectives to us; but He also brings with it the power to reach those objectives, and we learn that it is not in the flesh but it is in Him and in Him alone.

CCI Is an objective view of the Spirit a very important point that beloved Mr Taylor brought before us in view of addressing Him and worshipping Him? I believe he used the scripture in John 14: 17: “but ye know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you”. The word ‘know’ is objective knowledge. Do you think all this means that we are learning to rely more objectively on the Spirit’s great work alongside of us?

RT Yes, and His work in us, that He works something in us that has power. We always, as you say, regard Him as a divine Person; but how near He has come and how we should love Him because of that nearness and the power He has brought with Him so that we should be here as persons who are in life and who are led by Him.

ECB I was thinking of your reference to the types in the wilderness. In Isaiah 63: 10 it refers to their grieving the Holy Spirit. Then it says, “Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him, his glorious arm leading them by the right hand of Moses?” But then it says, “As cattle go down into the valley, the Spirit of Jehovah gave them rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name”. Do you think all that bears on what you are saying, that there is the power of the Spirit that leads us out, but with no intervening history. “The Spirit of Jehovah gave them rest” in order that God might be magnified.

RT Yes; that reference, going down into the valley, may be a guide for us. The going down into the valley would be a different way from the flesh. It would mean that the man that is always aspiring is not in the ascendancy there, but there is another Man in the ascendancy. “Go down into the valley” would bring us into an area where the Spirit of God can give us rest.

ECB Do you think that, not only in regard to having confidence in looking forward, we need to be able to look back with a positive view of what the Spirit has been to us?

RT That is what Pisgah was. It looked back over the surface of the waste (see Num 21: 20), but I do not think it looked back on the murmurings but on positive divine direction. Numbers 33 is a very beautiful chapter; it says that “they removed ... and encamped”. You get the impression there that there was a great daily movement; and this chapter is like that; there should be a daily movement in confidence in the Spirit so we come to be persons who are led by Him.

ECB Does Galatians 6 also bear on what you have in mind? “He that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life: but let us not lose heart in doing good”, vv 8, 9.

RT Yes, we might have read that scripture as to sowing to the Spirit. It is a deliberate, definite action, is it not?

ECB So it says “let us not lose heart”.

RT I think the experience of it would encourage your heart. Sowing to the Spirit brings us to reap a wonderful fruit, and as we taste it day by day it encourages us and strengthens our hearts so that the next time we are encouraged to sow more to Him and rely on Him, would you say?

ECB Yes. I do not want to go on more quickly than you do, but I wondered if you could expand your thoughts about the worshipping of the Spirit. It might help to point us to the resource we have in Him during the service of God, so that we are more fully furnished for the remainder of the week.

RT Well, say some more.

ECB I share your exercise as to expansion in response to the Spirit. And considering that the Spirit comes in the first chapter of the Scriptures and the last, we have immense scope in relation to Him, have we not?

RT Yes, and maybe the Lord would help us. We normally have one hymn and a thanksgiving, sometimes two hymns, but I feel there is need for expansion in what we say to Him.

We so often think of His lowly service, right as that is, because we would not touch anything without Him, but as you said, from the whole of Scripture we can be expanded in what we say to Him and how we think about Him.

ECB We tend to proceed in the service of God from reflecting on the Spirit's service and then acknowledging that He is God, but I think if we began with the sense that He is God and then came to His service we might be enlarged. It is rather on the line of Mr Raven's remarks as to Christ, that He could not be the Man He is if He was not God. Similarly the Spirit could not be the servant He is if He were not God.

RT That is something we need always to bear in mind in thinking of any divine Person, that They are never limited to the condition into which They have come. So even if the Spirit has come to dwell in me, He is never limited to that area. As Capt William Johnson again said so blessedly as to Christ: He never ceased to be who He was in what He became. That is true too of the Spirit. Though He has come into lowly surroundings what wealth He has brought into those surroundings, yet He remains ever who He is.

GWB A divine Person at once produces worship.

RT Yes, that is something to bear in mind in all our conversations; we should speak worshipfully. We are not speaking about a doctrine, we are speaking about One who is worthy of our homage and adoration. So these things would regulate us in what we say and how we think. He has come so near us, but He never ceases to be One who could hover over the face of the deep and from a scene of confusion bring in life, and He is One who is going to present the assembly to Christ, glorious. The end of Revelation refers to it: "the Spirit and the bride say, Come", v 17. What a product of the Spirit's activities that there is a vessel that will satisfy Christ eternally and there are sonship's affections produced that will rejoice the Father!

FCM The very fact that in this chapter He is spoken of as "the Spirit of Christ", "God's Spirit" and "the Spirit of God", though

this is a subjective chapter, would emphasise that though He so graciously serves us He is primarily serving in relation to glorious divine ends and objectives.

RT We need to bear that in mind, that the prime thing in the Spirit of God coming here was not to help us over the flesh, which was necessary, but to lead us to Christ. That is His mission, as Genesis 24 so beautifully shows. So in our meetings together we should make room for these kinds of things to take shape.

EP I was thinking of the word at the end of the second letter to the Corinthians: “the communion of the Holy Spirit”, v 14. Would that be to enjoy what Mr Mutton has referred to, the way the Spirit would have liberty to introduce us into what is ministering to the heart of God? Communion is something that bespeaks liberty, does it not?

RT A very beautiful verse that: “be with you all”. You say, the Corinthians? Yes, Paul closes his remarks to them in that way: “the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all”. We should gather in the light and faith of that. In 1 Corinthians 12 He is referred to as “the same Spirit”; and it says that you are “given to drink of one Spirit”. We should come together in confidence in the Spirit as satisfied persons. The passage of scripture before us in a reading may seem difficult, we may sometimes be in depression, and we may think the brethren seem difficult, but let us come together in faith in the Spirit, satisfied, drinking into Him and counting on Him that the meeting may proceed in the way of leading us to Christ, developing sonship’s affections in our hearts.

CRB Do you think the Lord would help us to be expanded in our worship of the Spirit?

RT Well, that is what I feel. Say what your thoughts are about it.

CRB If you think of our experience as following the Supper, it is as we are enjoying intimacy with Christ in nearness that we are conscious of our hearts being led out in worship to the Spirit. Are we not peculiarly shut up to the Lord as over the

whole matter, that we get right, enlarged, fresh impressions of the greatness of the Person of the Spirit of God Himself?

RT The joy of union would cause us to be expanded to the One who has led us there, the One who has brought it all about. We did not arrive there, there was never anything wrought in us that Christ could embrace, save as a divine Person wrought out those things that the Lord is satisfied with. Think of the Lord saying, “My dove, mine undefiled, is but one” (S of S 6: 9); that is the product of the Spirit’s work. The sense of that, as you say, would cause us to be expanded as to the One who has brought it all about.

CRB It would flow also, do you think, out of some fresh impression as to the wonder of what is in the love of God as it finds expression in the cup? The service of the Spirit must be involved in that; it is seen in its fulness in Jesus, and yet there is the love of the Spirit. So the joy of new covenant relations is all connected with the Spirit and His greatness, is it not?

RT That is a very interesting line of thought. As the Spirit has His way, other families are going to be brought in, but in the meantime He is occupied with the assembly, and He has brought divine feelings into the assembly, what is capable of response. Things are going to widen out, the new covenant is going to be made good with others, but in the meantime He has wrought out something in the saints that satisfies Christ.

RL John speaks in his first epistle of the Spirit bearing witness (see chap 5: 6), and there is in that chapter a wonderful blend of divine Persons. It confirms the objective before us, does it not?

RT Yes. He “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”, Rom 8: 16. It would strengthen us in our walk here; we are not lost, we are not orphans; the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we belong to a wonderful family.

ECB The assembly being the custodian of what God will have from every dispensation would leave us free in the service of God to gather up in response to the Spirit what He has been in the past dispensation—that is in relation to individuals

such as David and others—and in relation to what He will be in the millennium. So would you be free to bring all that in, if you could, in addressing the Spirit?

RT I think we could all grow as to what we can bring in. We tend to get narrowed, but I think there is a broad field to think of. In the beginning of Genesis He was there; He brought in something for God in Noah and in a renewed earth; He was active in Moses and Israel and David. But here in our time He is dwelling in us, He has taken up residence. How distinguished the assembly is, the Spirit having come! So, as you say, we can look back and see His operations, and we can look forward. Think of the Lord having confidence that He would guide the saints! We can have confidence, too, that He will sustain us in the service of God.

DJH He has the distinction of being personally identified and identifiable in the Old Testament, has He not, which would all bear on what Mr Burr says?

RT It was evident, was it not? Think of the times of the Judges, when men were doing what was right in their own eyes; it was evident at times that the Spirit acted in certain persons and brought in deliverance, brought in power, brought in something that was for God. We should always be thinking of that, that He is bringing in something for God. And He would enrich us in our response to Christ and to the Father. And as has been suggested, the Lord too would serve us that we are enriched in response to the Spirit.

DJH I wondered as to bringing in something for God, if it is not referring back to Romans 8: “those who love God”, v 28. We often refer to that scripture but perhaps do not relate it enough to the references to the Spirit that are so closely connected with it. Loving God would include that, would it not?

RT I am sure it would.

JW Would you say that the variety in the assembly, brought out in the scripture in Corinthians, is what the Spirit has brought in for God?

RT Yes; I think it means that as we come together we are not altogether at our own charges; we do not come together in ignorance, each of us has something that has been imparted by the Spirit. So this would apply to our meetings, whatever meeting it is; as we come together each of us has been endowed with something. And we can count on the Spirit as we come together that things may proceed; we are set together as persons who have been baptised in the power of one Spirit and we “have been given to drink of one Spirit”.

AAB Is what you are saying the filling out of your reference earlier to the type in Kings, “live thou and thy sons on the rest”? I was wondering if it does not bear on the local assembly and its personnel in their functioning Godward.

AJEW Do you think in fact that the whole service of Elisha brings out the force of the presence and activity of the Spirit, in the sense that there is no situation that cannot be met and cleared to the glory of God? Does not the whole ministry of Elisha quicken confidence in the Spirit in the widest sense?

RT That is very beautiful. He uses the most simple of household commodities; he is met with a crisis and brings in salt; he is met with another crisis and brings in meal; in another crisis he brings in oil; they are all things that are there: “What hast thou in the house?” Now as to the passage in Ephesians 3, I think “with power by his Spirit” would encourage us to lay ourselves open for the Spirit to have liberty with us that He might bring us, though creatures, into an area that creatures can never comprehend.

ECB Do you think we learn what it is to be strengthened in this way as we begin to walk in newness of life? He was raised from “the dead by the glory of the Father, so *we* also should walk in newness of life”, Rom 6: 4. It is the same glory, is it not, that raised Christ from the dead that according to chapter 1 of this epistle is towards us and now is in us? Is confidence in this strengthening by the power of the Spirit necessary to enable us to understand being filled to all God’s fulness?

RT I am sure it is, because how could we stand in such an area? How could you locate yourself? Breadth and length and depth and height: how could you find your place in such an area? It is only as you are strengthened with power by His Spirit. We may feel lost in these things, but I think we should give ourselves to the Spirit that we may be at home in them.

ECB The expression “ye may be filled ... to all the fulness of God” may baffle us somewhat, but if we are filled with the Spirit according to a later chapter of this epistle, and strengthened with His power, we would begin to understand it, would we not?

RT I am sure we would. Although we will never fully understand it we have all of us experienced something of it sometime. And experience should be to encourage us to make more room for it. We have experienced Romans 8, the triumph of the Spirit over the flesh; now we are come into this area; it is the same Spirit but He is at home, in normal surroundings you may say, strengthening us, the Father giving strengthening through His Spirit in the inner man. This is not the outward man, it is the inner man, something that is in us that is of God, that is pleasing to God, finding its home in an area that is creature but belongs to God.

JCE Do you think we need to identify the inner man as something that is complete with us? I was thinking of Paul’s desire that the “whole spirit, and soul, and body” should be preserved, 1 Thess 5: 23. I wondered whether we needed to see that that is what is in mind here, that there should be a complete surrendering, spirit, soul and body.

RT He takes over, does He not? Think of the Spirit of God having dominance. He has dominance in this area and is strengthening the saints that they “may be fully able to apprehend ... the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ”.

JCE What I meant was that it is not just something partial within us. We speak of the work of God in us, but I think this

word 'inner man' is intended to be the whole of the person held available for this.

RT It is something substantial. As we respond to the Spirit on the Lord's day we would think of this. What sonship's feelings He is going to promote in our affections! What sonship's joys He raises in our hearts that is causing delight to the Father!

SDKR It says in Ezekiel 43: 5, "the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court". Is that to be experienced on the Lord's day morning, the lifting up of the Spirit?

RT Yes; being in the Old Testament you might think there is something dramatic about it, and there was because of the dispensation I suppose. But we should think of this as something normal: "strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man". He would cause us to be at home in an area that, we may say, is banned to creatures after the flesh, an area that is exclusively for God and for the divine pleasure; we are there and not strangers in it because we are strengthened with power by His Spirit. We are very much at home.

GWB If we could go back for a moment, could you say what you think about being made to "drink of one Spirit"?

RT I just thought that we would be satisfied persons.

GWB I think Mr Taylor made some connection with drinking the cup. I wondered if divine love would come in as we drink; drinking is easy.

RT I am sure that would be right. As we think of the cup we would be satisfied persons, full of the sense of divine love. We "have all been given to drink" takes away any standing that may belong to us; it strengthens us in our inner man, in this area where the Spirit is holding us for the divine pleasure.

FCM Do you think this expression, "filled even to all the fulness of God", involves a certain spiritual capability? There was a glorious point in the Old Testament where the priests could not stand, but here you have a company who are standing and serving and there is glory to God in the assembly.

RT Well, as we have said, there have been experiences of this among us and I think we would count on the Spirit that they may be more sustained. Formation takes place in these experiences. We begin to realise that this is our portion, this is our home. We have to go back into normal everyday circumstances but we go back to them as coming from this area where we have been filled. Filled! We have had a touch of it and we carry something of that with us into everyday matters. We have to attend to them, but I think we will attend to them all the better as trusting the Spirit who strengthens us in these inner matters.

HPW Does the reference in Jude help us?—"building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit", v 20.

RT Yes, and "keep yourselves in the love of God". It would be a matter of faith, would it not? And I think it would strengthen us. He is writing about very difficult times but he is saying that divine Persons are set to see us through. So let us keep ourselves in the love of God. What an area to enjoy! I think these impressions that we have spoken of would cause us to be more responsive, more appreciative of this divine Person, the Spirit of God, who has come so near us. Yet the fact that He has come so near should not becloud who He is. The fact that He helps me to deal with the flesh should not becloud the glory of His service, and that is that I might be at home as a son in the Father's presence.

RL It is Jude who finishes by saying, "to him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory"; it is the divine pleasure in having us there, is it not.

RT That is a fine doxology; and there is room for doxology to the Spirit too. I think Romans 11: 33 is like a doxology to the Spirit; "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways!" It refers back to Isaiah where it would seem to be the operations of the Spirit. I think we need to be expanded that our affections go out to Him more who has

helped us in such lowly things. May He become an object for our affections more and more.

LONDON

15th January 1977

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PRESENT ENJOYMENT

John 3: 35,36

Hebrews 7: 24,25; 8: 1,2; 10: 19-25, 35-39

I often read passages of scripture such as we have in Isaiah and think there are wonderful times ahead. So there are. What a time it will be when things are put right, when the Lord has His place and famines cease, when peace is extended like a river (there are some beautiful expressions in that book) and you think what a time it will be. But I think, dear brethren, that time has come. We do ourselves a great disservice through putting things off; the most of what is to be enjoyed is to be enjoyed today because of the place that Jesus fills. There are wonderful blessings, joys, eternal things, to be enjoyed today because of the place that Jesus has. I sometimes think, as a Jew would think, that it would be a wonderful thing if Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David and Solomon were all alive at one time. What an administration it would have been! Think of all these men filling their offices at one time; the Jew would have some longing for that maybe. But it would be far short, beloved, of the administration that flows from Jesus. There was imperfection in all these men but in the administration that flows from Jesus in the place of glory that He fills, what eternal joys are to be known now. You may say, Today, with all the breakdown? Yes, whatever it is, whatever pressures press in on you, they are eternally met in Jesus, the One who loves us. It says He “loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood”, Rev 1: 5. What an incentive to have confidence in Jesus, that He took up your sinful history and mine. What an incentive to trust Him! Whatever state of soul you may be in, you are never worse than when you were in your sins, and He took up your case then and He will take it up now.

What a Man to have on your side! What a Person to trust about your path!—Jesus, a divine Person, come into manhood to be the object of our affections, to be the object of the Father’s affections. Think of a divine Person coming into manhood; He came, beloved: “Christ Jesus came into the world

to save sinners”, 1 Tim 1: 15. He came into the world; it was His own action, His own desire, you may say. He came into the world, the world of men, where men were pleasing themselves, where men were active in the pursuit of their own interests and their own sins, He came into that world “to save sinners”. Christ Jesus, that glorious Man, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”. O, beloved, what a Person to trust, that He would come into the world to save sinners. He could have spoken; he did for creation—“*he* spoke, and it was done; *he* commanded, and it stood fast”, Ps 33: 9—but He came into the world to save sinners. He came into manhood’s condition, came into the form and likeness of a man to save sinners. I trust that there are none here troubled about their sins. If there is we would long to continue on this theme, that He came into the world to save sinners. O, beloved, that meant all. That was what he embraced in His attitude in coming, that He would save all men. The gospel is preached to all, God’s attitude is proclaimed to all men, because Christ Jesus came to save sinners. O, what a mission, what a task to undertake, a divine Person coming so low! You may say, Surely a man in his sins was not to be touched, lepers were not to be touched; but here was One, a divine Person, who took up man’s case and came into the world to save sinners. I trust we all trust Him about the matter of our sins. One of the most glorious things of this dispensation is that our sins are met for all eternity. No one need ever be troubled about them again; they may trouble you—I trust you will get help about that as we proceed—but no one need ever be troubled again about their sins. He, beloved, has met that question to God’s glory, to God’s eternal satisfaction. As we sing sometimes—

My sins—O the bliss of this glorious thought –

My sins—not in part, but the whole -

Were borne on the cross, and are gone evermore

(Hymn 238)

O beloved what a fact! What a joy to have in our souls that they are gone evermore! Why? Because of the One who came in to take up our case, because of the One in whose hands the administration is, spoken of in this scripture here as the Son.

There is much reason for you to love Him; what reason there is to have confidence in Him, if He has taken up the matter of your sins and mine!

But here in this scripture it says the Father loves Him. You wonder at this verse coming in almost abruptly: "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", It is said early in the gospel; it brings out the perfection and beauty of His Person. You may have said it should have waited until He had made atonement, you may have understood it better had it come at the close of the gospel, but here it is early, the verse is almost interjected: "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand". The Father's confidence in Him brings out who He was, and He brought it out in manhood. That would be conveyed in the verse. Things, beloved, are sustained in this dispensation by Jesus, the Son. Think of things being sustained by the Son, superseding, as I said, every other dispensation, every other administration. "The Father loves the Son": we would all like to know more of the delight the Father found in Him. It certainly was not about the sin question; that must have entered into it but it was not only that. What delight that the heavens were opened upon Him! We do not get the mount of transfiguration in this gospel, but maybe it is here. You hardly need that incident in John, every page is full of it: "The Father loves the Son". It is commended to us all that our confidence too may be in Him. The Father has placed things in His hand. It is beautiful that the next chapter is concerning a woman, a person in her sins. It shows how the administration is working. As I said, He came into the world of men and here we have things given into His hand and the first thing He does is to adjust a woman's affections. I believe it would show us how the Son is working, the administration that He is operating; it is not yet putting things right publicly, causing the physical wilderness to break out and be fruitful, but He is working in persons, He is working in souls to bring them into life, to bring them from an area of despondency and despair into an area of life and joy and liberty. That is how the Son is working today, and He would seek to bring you, He would seek

to sustain you, in the joy of the place that He fills. Think of persons being given into the hands of the Son; think of yourself, beloved, subject of the work of God, placed in the care of the Son. That is what the Father has done. The Father has not left us to our own charges; the God who purposed to bless us before time began has, in time, placed us in the care of the Son, for He “has given all things to be in his hand”. That includes believers. Would you like your affairs anywhere else? I know we often take them elsewhere, we often think we can deal with our affairs better ourselves to our sorrow and grief; but think of your affairs, think of you, being placed in the hands of the Son. His attitude toward you never changes:

Lord, on the throne Thy love's the same
As once upon Thy cross of shame (Hymn 15)

There is always something to revert back to in your soul history as you think about Jesus. Whatever has come into our lives, there is always something to revert back to and that is your transaction with the Saviour about your sins. And He is to be trusted about that, He is to be trusted about everything. He remains the same, He remains unchanged in His love toward you. Indeed He has gone into heaven, it says in Hebrews 9: 24, “to appear before the face of God for us”. The Lord in His movements would seek to transfer our interests from earth to heaven. That is where He has gone, “into heaven itself, now” (a fine word that) “to appear before the face of God for us”. It shows that things are to be enjoyed today. That word ‘today’ comes into Hebrews as well, this day when there is breakdown and sorrow. It says, “Today if ye will hear his voice”, chap 3: 7.

Well, beloved, things are placed in the hands of the Son. There is an idea of stability about that. I was thinking of that verse in Isaiah 33: 6; “he shall be the stability of thy times”. I think that has arrived for the believer. Stability is to come into our movements, our outlook, and the way we live here. There is certainly nothing stable around us, the world is more unstable than ever. But it says, “he shall be the stability of thy times”—not a thing, not a company, not anything else, but

He, a Person, is to be the stability of our times. It is because He cannot break down, because the work that He has done stands for eternity, and the One who did the work remains in His blessedness and in His glory. He can never break down, “he shall be the stability of thy times”.

Well, in Hebrews it shows us how that works out, how things are sustained in Him where He is. It says, “he, because of his continuing for ever”. Think of that, that your blessing and mine depends on Him and His continuing for ever. How unstable things were before; if there was a good priest some life was injected into the system; but it says “he, because of his continuing for ever”. Beloved, there is never a moment when He is not alive to hear your cry, ready to hear your voice. He, because of his continuing for ever, has the priesthood unchangeable. “Whence also he is able to save completely those who approach by him to God”. That covers the matter of your initial sins, it covers all your life here, that “he is able to save completely”. What a Saviour that He is able! Moses was willing, Paul was willing, but here is the only One that is able and willing. O, what a Man for our trust! May we be helped to see that there is no other to be trusted. I think lessons in our lifetime have taught us that there is no other to be trusted like Him: “he is able to save completely”. You say, you do not know my case. He does, He knows it better than you. We make life very complex, at least I do, but “he is able to save completely”. Would that I believed more the simple words of Scripture. It does not say except such and such a case: “he is able to save completely those who approach by him to God”. Maybe you have not approached with your problem. Sometimes it is the last thing we do because of lack of confidence in Him. To revert again to that matter when your sins so pressed upon you, there was no one else to help you. Are you as anxious to turn to Him today about life’s problems? Maybe you have felt you are able to deal with your problems yourself; He is the only One who is able, “able to save completely those who approach by him to God”.

It is priesthood that would deliver us from anything that might ensnare us, that we might be serviceable to God. In

chapter 8 it says, “We have such a one ... who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens”. He is the first one able to go in and sit down. Look through the Scriptures and see if ever a priest was able to go in and sit down. He was far too busy, there was so much to do in so little a time, he might have died very soon; but here is One who is able, He has gone in and He has sat down. Beloved, He has plenty of time for you. I would just like to convey that simple impression from the verse. Having sat down He has plenty of time to hear you if you will approach. It means that you may have to leave certain things; you may have to leave the company of your family and go into your own room and shut the door. Do it, approach. I think approach involves that you rise up and leave certain things, you shut the door on certain matters and draw near and you find that there is One in there who has sat down and He is ready today, at this very moment, to hear your case: “he is able to save completely”—able. Do not put it off to another day, do not wait till the glory, as we use that expression, but go in now, approach any time, leave certain things and draw near, and you will find He is ready to save you completely. A person who is saved completely is set up in triumph. What you find as you go in is that He has your name on His breast. What a thing to go in and find you have a place inside! You are troubled about all these things in the world, about all the circumstances in your path; then you go inside and see your name on His breast. What a change! Asaph was troubled but he went in and what a view he had!—see Ps 73. I think we all need a change of view. We are seeing breakdown and feeling sorrow, and we should feel these things, but you will never bear them rightly unless you go inside and see your name on His breast. The names are on His shoulder too but they are also on His breast—your name. A place is there that belongs to you; it will soon be actually enjoyed, but as you go in you get some foretaste of the actuality of it, you get the enjoyment of it now. The actuality of it will be in another body I know, but I think the foretaste of it is enjoyed as you go in. “We have such a one high priest”—“such a one”—One who is able to deal with

everything; He has gone in and sat down and is ready to hear you as you draw near.

Well, as I have said, what a thing to go in and see your name! Have you ever done it? It is a practical thing, nothing fanciful; it is something that is real to the believer, to go in and find you have a place inside. It changes your ambition about the things of the world, it changes your desires about things here, as you find you have a place inside that belongs to you alone. Your name is always there, day or night, whether you are feeling happy or sad. The Lord said to the disciples “Rejoice that your names are written in the heavens”, Luke 10: 20. Think of it always being there. It is because there is such a One there that is able to bear them. You say, Me in my sorrow, me in my state? Yes, there is such a One able to bear you up as you should be, He is able to bear you up as God has thought about you. That is how much the Father loved you that He put you in the care of Jesus. He did not in this sense put you under the protection of the British government, or anyone else, He put you under the care of Jesus—into the hands of His Son. And there you find that your name is on His breast. As you face exercises through the week, the disappointments at work or whatever it may be, what a thing to revert to, that your name is there, sustained on His breast and never to be removed. We need to go in and enjoy it. Asaph saw something there that changed his whole life. I ask you again, Have you ever done it? It is nothing fanciful, it is blessedly known by those who have.

I would encourage you to draw near. “Let us approach”: Paul uses that expression. He says we have boldness to enter in; because of the place that we have in there we have a title to be there. It says, “boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus”. There is boldness because of what He has done, and there is liberty because our names are written on His breast and on His shoulder. “Let us approach with a true heart, in full assurance of faith”. It means that you draw near in the worth of Jesus. Whatever you may feel about yourself, it is not the Spirit that would make you feel bad; He would make you feel what Jesus has done for you, He would

point you to what the Saviour has accomplished in shedding His blood for your sins and He would point you to the place you have in glory, your name written, indelibly inscribed on His breast. So it says, "Let us approach", washed and sprinkled; that was all that anyone ever needed. He is taking up the other system and he says you can go right in past the laver, past all that was needed, the burnt-offering altar: all these things the Jew would understand, but for us it means that there is a Man in there with my name on His breast, therefore I have a right to go in at any time. I think someone said that, that he liked to go in at any time. It is open, beloved, because of the One who sustains things.

I am saying these things that we may not put them off to a day that is yet to come. The actuality will then be, but I think, as I said, we do ourselves a disservice by putting things off into too distant a time. They are for now. The Father has given things into the hands of the Son now, and Paul is saying that we should approach now, and what we find inside is that there is a place there that belongs to us. We have to come out, but as we come out we have to hold fast: "Let us hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering". You do not need to come out to put everything right, He has done that for you; as you have been in there and seen your name on His breast things are settled for you. O, what a day it is, beloved, to be in today, when things are settled! Until this dispensation sin was never a settled matter, but in this dispensation things are settled because things are placed in the hands of the Son. That woman in John 4 became settled. She had been very unsettled, but before the Lord left her she was a very settled person; she says, "Come, see a man". That is how persons would come out: they invite persons to come in. What a service to do to one another, as one and another gets down, to invite one another to come in! "Come, see a man". You say, But my problems! Leave them, beloved, shut the door for the moment, come inside and see what Christ is sustaining, and you are included in what He is sustaining for the Father's eternal joy. May it be your joy, too.

So he says, "Let us hold fast"; it is all you have to do. As you come out problems may beset you; "Let us hold fast". To what? Hold fast to what you have seen inside. You get your own impressions, beloved; cultivate them, do not let them be easily taken away. I would encourage all to get impressed inside and do not let it be easily blown away. How ready the enemy is to snatch and to becloud them, but let these impressions remain in your heart; have confidence in the Spirit that he will sustain those impressions you have received of Jesus with your name inside, that you belong there where He is. Count on the Spirit that you might hold fast to that impression. "Let us hold fast", it says, "unwavering". You say, How can I do that? Well, I am thankful for these words in brackets: "he is faithful who has promised". That scene where Jesus has gone for me is unassailable. Here I am assailed by many things, but "he is faithful who has promised". Let us believe Him, beloved. Let us have confidence in the Spirit here to enable us to hold fast; let us trust Him in these matters and exercises. Jesus on high sustains us there with our names on His breast; another divine Person equal in Godhead glory is here that we might hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering. Let us trust Him, let us have no longer confidence in the flesh. Paul says in that beautiful verse: "we are the circumcision ... do not trust in flesh"; we "worship by the Spirit of God", Phil 3: 3. What a description of a believer! May it be true increasingly of us, that we boast in Christ Jesus, have no confidence in flesh, and worship by the Spirit of God.

Then in verse 35 it says, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense". Do not treat things lightly, beloved. We mourn over some who seem to have cast away their confidence, some who have endured, as these earlier verses speak of, some who have borne much suffering. I can think of many who endured and were more faithful than I, stood out against trade unions, stood out about many things, suffered persecutions, and where are they? It may be in some measure they have cast away their confidence, been diverted as to their view. "Let us hold fast". It reminds me of that shipwreck in Acts 27. They were not asked to build

another boat, they just held on to whatever they could; some on bits of wood, some on one thing and another, they came safely to land. They held fast to some impression, some lifesaving word, and they came safe to land, not to build another boat, but to rejoice in the love that brought them all safe to land. “Cast not away”: it means that it is possible that divine things do not have the taste or the appeal for me they used to have. “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense”. Maybe divine things are not as appealing to me as they used to be, my confidence in the Spirit is not as great as it might be, I have trusted myself, maybe I have trusted other things. The world is full of other things to trust, means to work out things, but as we have said, the only One that is able is—Jesus, “able to save completely”. If we think of any of the world’s arrangements, they are all very narrow, they cater for one section or one thing or another, but “he is able to save completely”. O, what a Saviour He is! what a Man He is in glory, bearing you up at this very moment, bearing you there in the glory that is really yours. So he says, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense. For ye have need of endurance”; he is writing to saints that were upset about many things like many of us, but “ye have need of endurance”.

Well, beloved, may we be helped not to cast away our confidence, but may the result of our speaking together be that our confidence is increased in the right Person, our confidence be in Him. It says here, “For yet a very little while he that comes will come, and will not delay”. Is that part of your confidence? Is that part of your hope, that “he that comes will come, and will not delay”? What a time it will be, as we have said, but let us not delay it. In the meantime things are secured in Him; they are to be enjoyed, they are to be known to faith and they are not to be cast away, but our confidence in Him is to be increased. Paul seems to emphasise it: “yet a very little while he that comes will come, and will not delay”. That is His attitude, beloved, the attitude of that One that we have been speaking about is that He is coming and will not delay, He will come to transfer us from enjoying things by the

Spirit and in faith, to transform us into bodies like to His own body, where things will be in actuality. But it says that in the meantime “the just shall live by faith”.

Well, may we be encouraged not to treat these things lightly. The tendency to draw back is in all our souls and there is a very solemn word as to persons who draw back; “my soul does not take pleasure in him”—a sobering note, beloved, applying to persons that treat these things we have been speaking of lightly. What is established for faith in Jesus is to be enjoyed now. What a realm it is! May we be among those who are going on, that are trusting in Him, and may our confidence in Him at this time be increased, for His Name’s sake.

LONDON

15th January 1977



THE ASSEMBLY CHRIST'S JOY

Esther 2: 15-17

Psalms 45: 13-17

Galatians 4: 6

Ephesians 2: 8-22

RT I had a fresh impression this morning as to the way the assembly was enriched and adorned in view of Christ's joy. I wondered if we could be helped to be freshly impressed by and take on that adornment. As you think of the Spirit's movements, what beauty and fine features He is producing. "By his Spirit the heavens are adorned", it says, Job 26: 13. It is the idea of what is beautiful and attractive in what the Spirit does. There was a tremendous beauty in the wilderness and the system that was there. From one point of view, it looked dull, the badgers' skins as a covering, but underneath that adornment there was blue and gold, and even on the hems of their garments there were tassels of blue, something very beautiful, something that caught the eye. There was something in the tassels that was to attract their attention: from one to the other, they saw that tassel of blue; something beautiful about the saints. I think it catches Christ's eye too, what He wrought, what the Spirit has wrought that satisfies Him.

There is a background of orphanage in these scriptures in Esther and the Psalm, and in Ephesians too the background was that they were strangers, disqualified. I think the sense of that would help us to take on more quickly the features the Spirit would impart. That is our position too: publicly we are disowned. There is nothing that we can claim. The sense of mercy can deepen with us, and it makes room for divine activities. Esther must have had it, and God's people in Esther must have had it. I think it has been remarked that in Esther there is no ark, there is no priest, there is no Levite: there is none of that kind of feature. The background is one of orphanage, but there is something there that makes room for the Spirit and as we rely on it what comes in is beauty which the king appreciates. There is movement in these scriptures:

she went in. That is what we experience as together, that we are going in, but we go in adorned and embroidered; there is something that catches and satisfies Christ's eye. As we speak together we will be helped to take on those features and to think of the need of taking them on, and be with the Spirit to take them on.

Genesis 24 would always come into our minds as we speak of the Spirit, and in going into the country it says, "all the treasure of his master was under his hand", v 10. The Spirit has come from a glorified Jesus and has brought the wealth of heaven with Him to adorn us with it. We would be exercised that there is with us the impressionable state that can take on these fine features that are for the divine pleasure.

ECB Are these spiritual adornments going to be displayed materially in the city? No doubt the city in the world to come is itself a spiritual idea, but it is presented to us in a great detail of material things, which rather suggests that as it were the spiritual adornment has been made good.

RT Yes, there is going to be a wonderful display of it; but in the meantime we touch something of the inside idea, that Christ is satisfied with the beauty and attractiveness He sees in the assembly.

DJH I was thinking of that this morning. It comes out in display, as Mr Burr says, in the city that comes down, but it is there all the time; and though that relates to one particular aspect, yet it is there; it is there, as you say, inside for Christ, and it is there as the vessel of God's praise. That beauty that is displayed is there all the time, is it not?

RT It is the time now for taking it on. Esther, as going in, said she "required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women, appointed". We may tend to turn to other things, but this would be something of what we were speaking of yesterday, she would have confidence in him, that she required nothing but what he appointed. There is nothing else will satisfy the divine eye but what the Spirit has furnished us with.

AJEW The things that the servant brought forth for Rebecca had a certain weight of gold, and the 45th Psalm brings in the wrought gold. It is a touch of divine glory, not seen so much in the divine Persons Themselves but seen in what Their labours (speaking simply) have yielded. Is that the point?

RT Yes, I think that is very beautiful. It says too that they gave her clothing. Do you think that, having accepted what the Spirit had brought, Rebecca had to move? What the Spirit brought to her was for another country, it was for another Man. And what the Spirit has brought to us in the ministry creates movement. What He has brought is wealth from heaven, and as we taste those features and take them on it creates movement that brings us into the joy of union with Christ.

JCE It is good to see that these things are given to us 'for keeps'. They are not just for a time or for any particular moment of service, but they belong to us. I was thinking of the sons being heirs (see Gal 4: 7); they have everything but they have it rightly, and they have it as sons.

RT Yes, they are given us to make us at home in the divine presence, and that we have a sense of divine pleasure in the saints. "Because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts". That is a touch to make us at home in that area. But to think of a divine Person coming into a position that He might adorn the saints! It would have our eyes and our affections expanded toward Him, that we may readily take on, and take on nothing else but what He imparts.

ECB It would be in thought here that Esther knew that she would satisfy the king, because the extra things given to them were what they desired and she desired nothing. Is that something that we ought to have impressions of, that the assembly knows that she satisfies Christ?

RT Yes, I think we get a sense of that. I felt a sense of it this morning, that He was satisfied with what the Spirit had wrought in the saints. It is nothing that we have brought, but it would connect with what we were saying yesterday as to

confidence in the Spirit, and making room for the impressions He would impart and the embroidering He would do, and the sense of Christ's satisfaction in what the Spirit has wrought.

ECB It brings out how unnecessary all that is ecclesiastical is for Christ.

RT In the kind of conditions we are in, what is around us (when we are younger we may turn to some of these things), what a system has developed: music and architecture, and all these things. They have displaced the Spirit of God. Here you get an impression of something very simple about Esther; you think of her as a plain kind of person (I use the word 'plain' in a right sense) something like what Peter speaks about: "the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" (1 Pet 3: 4), something that is spiritually and divinely wrought that satisfies Christ. I think as we go on we get a sense of what Christ really appreciates.

CRB It says that the king loved her above all the women. There is only one that is suitable to Christ, is there not? He presents her to Himself glorious (see Eph 5: 27): is that the thought? There is only one that is suitable to Him, and the Spirit's operations enter into it.

RT What a thing it is that there is a creature vessel that has taken on divine work and is suited to be at home in the presence of divine Persons.

GAP Would the king's chamberlain be fully aware of what was suited to the king? And also, as keeper of the women, Esther would have been aware of his service in that way, do you think?

RT Yes. The Spirit only operates in the area of what has come out of the death of Christ. Esther would suggest that: she is cast out, she is an orphan, she has no title at all; and that is our position, there is something wrought in us through the work of Christ that creates suitable material, a suitable area for the Spirit to work in, and what He produces is something that He can love. He loved her. It is a very fine thing to get a sense of that.

WEE Would you say that there should be a right state on our side if this adornment is to take place? I was noticing that she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins, suggesting virgin affection for Christ; and in the previous chapter we get the idea of purification coming in.

RT Yes; I thought that the exercises we mentioned yesterday would make us impressionable material: “fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Cor 3: 3), impressionable material that could take on the adornment that the Spirit is so ready to impart. We were remarking yesterday that we may detain the Spirit so long on the other side, but I thought this was the normal movement of the Spirit, that He comes to something that is impressionable, something that can be adorned, something that takes shape, you may say, that is entirely suitable to be at home in the divine presence.

BWW You have referred to Genesis 24; would the servant have full knowledge of the Father’s desires as well as the excellencies of the Son?

RT Yes, he went out charged, did he not? We say that respectfully, that he went out charged, she was to be a woman of Abraham’s own lineage, his own order; he did not create her exactly. Something existed that has come out of the death of Christ that can be wrought upon and can take on divine impressions, and as such is suited to be brought in. I was impressed with that in these scriptures, that we are brought in, and as brought in there is joy and love at home. That she obtained grace and favour in his sight would emphasise what we have been saying, there is a sense of Christ’s satisfaction. It is a wonderful thing to think of a glorified Man being satisfied with a creature vessel, but a creature vessel that has taken on divine impress, a vessel that is a product of divine workmanship; and there is nothing more, it is a touch of finality in a sense. He loved her, and more than all the virgins, set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen; she is installed. It is almost a touch of a final position reached that she is entirely able for.

CRB Would you say something more about being brought out of the death of Christ.

RT I heard Mr Taylor once and it left an impression on me. He said that the Spirit had not come to the world; it is not right to say the Spirit had come to the earth, He has come into the assembly. There are certain areas that we may get into in which we could not expect the Spirit, but He has come to the assembly, He has come into an area that is the product of Christ's sufferings, do you think? Esther may represent something like that; she is not a worldly person, but she is a person that is publicly disowned, you may say, but there is something of the right origin about her.

CRB Would you connect it particularly with the presentation of the death of Christ according to John? "Not of the world", John 17: 16. It is related, is it not, to the love that took Christ into death? It is not the side of the clearance of sin, indispensable as that is; it is more the side of love as entering into death. Is that what you have in mind?

RT I think that is very good; and the Lord says too, "if my kingdom were of this world, my servants had fought", John 18: 36. So it is not worldly ideas that govern us but we are of the family. In John's line we are of the family, and as of the family the Spirit would impart family features, family feelings and family joys into our affections that make us entirely suitable to be at home in the divine presence.

WTA In Acts the apostle speaks of "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own", chap 20: 28. That is the cost to which God has gone, would you say, in relation to the assembly, which is for His joy?

RT Yes; "the assembly of God" would allude to the dignity of it, that it belongs to Him, it is His assembly. It would be seen, and is to be seen, in the public order of things. What we were thinking of in Esther is the joy that the Lord has in it, the counterpart—

Thy like, Thy counterpart!

(Hymn 134)

- we sometimes sing. The Spirit has produced something that is entirely suitable in every way to rejoice His heart, and do we not get a sense sometimes of the Lord's joy? "Who is this?", SofS 3: 6. These expressions in the Song, such as "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes" (chap 4: 9), give some sense of the joy and satisfaction that the Lord has in what the Spirit has wrought in the assembly.

AJEW In the type in Genesis 2 there is no question of Eve being adorned; you might say she is constitutionally suited to the man. I wondered whether that underlies what we are saying as to the assembly; and yet as we come into the full glory of the economy of love the idea of adornment is added as if there is something that God delights to work on in this great matter of the assembly for Christ. Would that enter into the adorning?

RT Do you think that as we take on a sense of the adorning we realise it is for another country; like the tassels of blue in the wilderness; they showed that they really belonged to another country. As the Spirit brings these glories to us and weaves them into the structure of the assembly, woven in and made part of the assembly, does it show that we belong somewhere else and to Someone else? They are for another eye, are they not?

EP Does that mean that the work of the Spirit is to come into substantial expression? It is not something that is hidden up, although it may be to the world.

RT Yes, I think we should be conscious of it, conscious of dignity. In years gone by, we become very undignified about certain things, but I think that as having to do with the Spirit we would be conscious of dignity and of something that is royal—clothing of wrought gold, raiment of embroidery, brought in with joy and gladness. It would give us a sense that it is not worldly features; Vashti took things and put them all on herself, and it brought in pride. The sense of mercy would be in our spirits, particularly in the days we are in, so that these things would be taken on but they are for Christ's eye and His pleasure.

GAP In Genesis 24 it says, “the servant told Isaac all things that he had done”, v 66. Would that be in keeping with what you are saying, there is something that has been effected for Isaac, the heavenly man?

RT You would have liked to have heard that conversation, would you not? I think he would tell him, too, what grace he had found in Rebecca, the way that she so willingly drew water and how ready she was to take on other features. Our readiness to take on these finer features is something we should be exercised about.

ECB Is it necessary that we should have a better understanding than we perhaps have of the origins of the assembly? Much of what we say would suggest that we think that the assembly is something that has been discovered out of the ruin, but it has its origin, as you said, in Christ’s death, and then in the Spirit coming. Having its origin there it can only be perfect, and it is what is perfect that is adorned.

RT It also has its origin in the purpose of God. Say something about that please.

ECB I think that bears on what has been said earlier, indeed in regard to what Mr Abbott said, that divine affections are involved in bringing the assembly to Christ. Even in the formation there is the feeling of God for man; but then for that particular Man, that is the Man Christ Jesus, that He should have the assembly. It is very interesting how the idea of the counterpart comes into these scriptures. In Psalm 45 it is “forget ... thy father’s house” (v 10), and that is what Joseph said: “God has made me forget ... all my father’s house”, Gen 41: 51. She is his counterpart in that. And “Ye ... shall leave me alone” (John 16: 32); these scriptures, as you said, have the idea of orphanage. There is the sense in which the assembly is His counterpart in all these things.

RT Yes. It is fine to get beyond the moral question. It is something that we need to think about. We love Him because of what He has done, glorious Saviour! but there is something more than that: the vessel, the assembly, fruit of His work, but

thought of in divine purpose; sonship too, brought to light through His death indeed, but conceived in divine purpose. Think of loving Christ because of His own beauty, not only on account of what He did for us. I think there is something of that in the royal apartment, loving Him because of His own precious worth. We come to it because of what He has done and the way He has gone, but we come to appreciate the One who did those things.

ECB Does “having long spoken until daybreak” in Acts 20 (v 11) bear on that side of things; that is, it is conversation in relation to things beyond the moral issue? Paul spoke till midnight, but then they conversed till daybreak and is that not beyond the moral questions? It involves the unfolding of the truth that he so fully sets out in his speaking to the elders of Ephesus—as if it was freshly in his mind.

RT That is very suggestive. I had always thought of Acts 20 as correcting a state, but yes, the conversation, as you say, is very instructive, so that that is the higher level. There is room for us to think; you referred in the meetings here in October to the need for thinking, and there is; we get into grooves so readily. I do not want to speak against the moral idea; it is a wonderful thing, the Saviour we have; but think of who He is; and within the royal apartments His own preciousness would absorb our attention.

CRB Our experience as following the Supper is not what we experience with Jesus as here upon earth; it is what we enter into with Him in His own sphere, is it not, where every moral question has been eternally resolved?

RT Yes, and it is what it will be eternally. The eternal idea will not be the moral thing exactly; it is what has come out of it, but it is the intrinsic worth of Christ and the intrinsic worth, you may say, of the assembly.

CRB What we experience at the Supper will be pretty much the same at the rapture, will it not? There will not be much difference.

RT Yes; then it will be sustained. It is an outstanding feature of our times that we touch something that is eternal. There are other things to take place, other prophetic things to be fulfilled, but this family can touch, after the Supper, something that is to be our eternal portion. The question is, Do I have an appetite for that kind of thing? Do I have desires or longings that the Spirit can create and embroider, so that we take these things on more quickly?

WTA In Revelation it says that the city comes down “having the glory of God”, chap 21: 10. Do you mean that it is possible to know something of that now?

RT Oh, surely. Our experience is “from glory to glory”—“transformed ... from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit”, 2 Cor 3: 18. That should be formative, something embroidered into persons; and it is there all the time. So she is brought in to the king. “With joy and gladness shall they be brought”. What a scene of jubilation we come into!

EO Mr Taylor made a remark that might bear on what we are saying, and that is in relation to John 13: 32: “God also shall glorify him in himself, and shall glorify him immediately”. He said that would be in relation to the assembly, and added that Christ has had that every day since, see vol 80 p161. Do you think we need to be on that line of reality and seeing that there is this substantial answer in us?

RT Yes, we need to be in faith about that, that the Spirit has come to see that Christ has the assembly and through grace I have been brought to have part in it. So am I taking on assembly features? We sometimes think of that in the outward side of things but what we are speaking of today is, Are we taking on assembly features that rejoice the heart of Christ? “With joy and gladness shall they be brought”. A sense of triumph that we touch in our spirits on Lord’s day, as was said, will be our eternal portion.

JCE There is no sense of question or wonder whether persons will be suitable, or whether the queen will be suitable. We had a sense of that this morning, that as the Lord came in

in His glory there was no incompatibility with us, because as having the Spirit we are glorified and suited to Him.

RT “All glorious”, it says, “is the king’s daughter within”.

Where every whit Thy glory tells (Hymn 237)

All the scene expresses divine workmanship, and a creature vessel is at home there.

AEB What is the thought in the reference to ‘companions’ in verse 14?

RT “Her companions, shall be brought in unto thee”: the dominant thought is that she “shall be brought unto the king in raiment of embroidery; the virgins behind her, her companions, shall be brought in unto thee”. It suggests that there are other families, maybe other features, but they only enhance the ‘she’ at the beginning of the verse.

ECB Is it to accentuate the feminine side in its purity? Esther was given virgins also. It is a matter of that thought being extended; and what Paul says to the Corinthians about espousing them as “a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor 11: 2) would help us to see in a sense how wide that thought is.

RT Yes. I was thinking too of what you have remarked before, that the whole scene will be spiritual, that Israel will become spiritual.

ECB I think Mr Taylor said that, that after the world to come the whole sphere in eternity is spiritual, because “flesh and blood cannot inherit God’s kingdom”, 1 Cor 15: 50. Israel will have its portion on the earth in the millennium, but in the final condition everything is spiritual, and everything then is of God who is a Spirit.

RT So it is fine to be taking that on now. There is something taken on now that does not have its origin in flesh and blood. It is being worked out in that condition, but what is being worked out is spiritual and is suitable to be at home eternally in the divine presence. I think if we have a sense of Christ’s joy in what the Spirit has wrought in the assembly it would encourage us to be more with the Spirit, to take on more

those features that He alone can furnish us with that rejoice Christ's heart.

EP It is significant that it is included in the service of God. I mean, this is a psalm, and it says in the heading that it is a song. Do you think that the appreciation of this finds a real response (in the Spirit's power, but a real response) in the hearts of the saints as gathered in the light of the assembly?

RT Yes. In verse 6 it is Christ: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever", and in the verses we are reading it is someone that is made suitable to be with Him in that scene of glory. So there is in the psalm Christ in His own uniqueness and beauty and then there is brought in a counterpart who can be with Him and for Him.

CRB Whilst other things may have to come in during the week on other occasions, do you think something of this experience should be preserved in our spirits through every other occasion?

RT Well, if other things come in, we turn aside. That remark has been made, and I think it is good to remember, that if we deal with other things we turn aside, and we only turn aside because it is to guard what is precious to Christ. Is that right?

CRB Yes, I am sure that is important. We do not work through to this during the week; this is the way we would be preserved normally. As you say, we may have to turn aside to deal with other things, but that would be unusual.

RT I think, because of the kind of persons we are we try too much to work up to things; but it is wonderful grace that in Christianity we work out from the inside—"because ye are sons". I remember being helped by a remark of Mr Hammond's. He said, No state could warrant the divine pleasure. You could never work up to or create a state that would warrant the divine pleasure. I think our state is affected through grace and through the touches of divine love that become imparted to us. Do you think that?

CRB Yes. The great matter is to be occupied with divine Persons and divine thoughts, and the Spirit helps us to be in accord with that.

RT I think there is a need to think positively all the time, and that applies throughout life, but specially so in these things because the Spirit of God is going on to positive things. We may detain Him, but that is to our loss. He came in at Pentecost and is carrying things through to the rapture. I think we should be exercised to be with Him today in what He is doing, and that is sustaining things suitable to Christ. He is doing it in some small localities, with brethren, ones and twos, meeting in isolation week after week. What is there? you may say. The Spirit of God is there to sustain something that cheers the heart of Christ in these isolated parts.

Now what is said in Galatians is that He has sent “the Spirit of his Son into our hearts”. It brings something of sonship’s feelings, sonship’s affections, into us so that we respond intelligently; we are there in dignity and in full conscious intelligence of what is suitable to the Father. I think “the Spirit of his Son” would suggest that.

DJH We begin with that, do we not? One of the first things the son in Luke 15 hears is “this my son was dead and has come to life, was lost and has been found”, v 24. Should “this my son” stay with us?

RT Yes, it is what you are. It is striking how much Paul emphasises it to these Galatians: “because ye are sons”. There is divine purpose, there are divine thoughts. We have too, in Ephesians, strangers and foreigners; that is what the outward position is, but the divine idea is that we are sons. Now to fill out that place in fulness, that it should not be an empty thing, He has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.

ECB That ends the orphan condition, does it not?

RT Yes, it has gone for ever; we are owned here. It is a fine thing to get a sense of that. As we are out there we have a sense of the orphan condition, and we should feel it, should

we not? But a sense of this ends it, as you say, and it sustains us when we have to touch earthly surroundings.

AJEW This cry is very brief: “Abba, Father”; yet how concentrated and wealthy it is! There is something peculiarly potent about the brief touches of the Spirit.

RT That is very good, and it would encourage us to say just what the Spirit may give us to say. Some of us sometimes sit on our seat and think there is not enough to say. These thoughts come into younger minds, there is not enough to say, and we have only a few words, but I think this would encourage us to say them. What you find is, once you say those words, other words come into your mouth. It is the Spirit of His Son, is it not?

AJEW It gives emphasis to the precious and holy relationship itself. There is much that can be added as to the detail of it, but does it not help us just to think of the preciousness of this relationship in what it means to God?

RT I think that is very fine. Think of the Father, what He finds in hearing this from His sons.

EC Could you open up a little the thought of being heirs also. We often arrive at sonship; we do not say very much about being heirs and about enjoying the inheritance.

RT I think this is to fill out heirship. Heirship would be the title to it. “The Spirit of his Son” is more than title, it gives you power to fill out the title; the title is not empty. Mr Evershed, you had some thought about heirship.

JCE It was just that we are, as you say, not only given the position of sons but there is the means to keep it up, and to have the permanent enjoyment of these things as our own. I have always felt that there is a great sense of urgency in this section, because “God sent forth his Son” and “has sent out the Spirit of his Son”, and the Spirit cries this brief cry, as if it is all very urgent.

RT Well, we are in this now; “when the fulness of the time was come”. Things have been partial and there has been

something different before, but we are now in the fulness of time and the only thing that is in the divine mind now is sonship. It is for all believers.

JCE I would like to enquire why he goes into the individual: “thou art no longer bondman, but son; but if son, heir also”.

RT I think he is trying to encourage the Galatians. They were falling back to something below the dignity of sonship. As we so often do, they were tending to be governed by another principle. So I think that in that verse, “thou art no longer bondman”, he is saying, You are acting as if you were a bondman but you are not that in God’s sight. He is coming down to try to lift them up from these other principles.

WTA It says in the note, ‘God himself has made us heirs’. What do we come into?

RT “Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard and which have not come into man’s heart, which God has prepared for them that love him”, 1 Cor 2: 9. I could not define what we come into, but we come into something that is divine. We are still creature, never out of those limitations, but we come into an area where everything is for God, the sons are for God.

GAP So does the Spirit give us the consciousness of that and the ability to respond?

RT Yes, He has come to fill out what is for the Father’s pleasure: “the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father”. It means that we are made to feel at home in the divine presence.

ECB The Spirit fully understands heirship, does He not? He would make it good to us as sent forth into our hearts. The servant in Genesis 24 says of Isaac, “Unto him has he given all that he has”, v 36. The Spirit would teach us what heirship involves, would He not?

RT Yes, and He would impress on us that it is for another land; we are not heirs for something here. He would bring to

us a sense that it is another land, and He would create desires and longings to go in for it in another country.

ECB That leads us to say, “Give me this mountain” (Josh 14: 12), does it not?

RT Yes, that is very good.

EC Must it not be that it is God’s desire for us to enjoy all that is His with Him?

RT Well, we would be lost without the Spirit. A divine Person, the Spirit of God, has come that we may not be lost but be perfectly at home in an area that is sustained for God. It says “we have access”.

CRB “Crying, Abba, Father” involves that we are just taken up with the Person, not exactly with all He has done and all He is going to do, and all He is going to give us and all He is giving us; we are just taken up with the Person Himself, do you think?

RT ‘Absorbed in favour all divine’ (Hymn 116). You get some impression that David had that when he went in and sat before Jehovah; he had a sense of how large God’s thoughts were compared with his thoughts: “thou hast spoken of thy servant’s house for a great while to come”, 1 Chron 17: 17. I think what you say is good, that we become absorbed with the Person and we find that He has thought about us before time began and has destined us for glory, and to be held in glory in suited relationship with Himself.

DAB It has been remarked as to the scripture in Ephesians, “the earnest of our inheritance” (chap 1: 14), that the Earnest we have is greater than the inheritance itself. I wondered if that showed that while the inheritance might relate from our side to the sphere of bliss into which we are brought, the Spirit gives us title to sonship, which is something for God and is in answer to God’s desires.

RT Yes, I think that is full of interest, that we have that now. As remarked already, what we touch in the service of God is linked on with the rapture. There are eternal things

tasted to create an appetite in us, to give us to be what we have said, absorbed with divine Persons. What an occupation! to be there at home, absorbed with the Father, absorbed with Christ.

DAB The greatest things we have are what we are for God.

RT Indeed, that is the Spirit's mission; it is what He has come to do, to create affections that are suitable to God but to bring in persons. "We have access ... to the Father". The idea of access is like coming into a new country, surveying that vista in all its glory and splendour. It fills us with a sense of divine majesty, and yet we are held sustained in divine power to be at home in it.

ECB We should understand that remark just quoted because the basis of it is that a divine Person is always greater than any inheritance, and it is the Spirit who is the Earnest.

RT So that it connects with what we have come to—to Jesus, to God: we have come to divine Persons, see Heb 12: 23, 24. The inheritance is the area in which we know them, but what we know is the Persons themselves. We have access to the Father.

ECB What Mr Byng said is parallel to that. You cry, Abba, Father. You are just engaged with the Father for what He is in Himself, greater than any inheritance.

RT Yes, that develops sonship's feelings in us, does it not? We are absorbed with the Father. Think of being absorbed with Him! We think of our blessings, and when we are younger they loom large; how wonderful spiritual blessings are! but they only serve as an area in which we are brought to know divine Persons. We have access to the Father, a Person, a Person well-known in grace. We sometimes sing

Well known in Jesus' love (Hymn 72)

- but we are brought to be before Him suitably, and sustained before Him in the Spirit's power. These things would help us as to what we remarked yesterday, they would enrich us in our worship to the Spirit.

CRB Several of the doxologies refer to ‘only God’,—“the only wise God” (Rom 16: 27), “only Ruler”, 1 Tim 6: 15. Does that connect with what we are saying?

RT Well, say some more.

CRB You are just so taken up with divine Persons, God Himself, that you are conscious that there is no-one else to be occupied with, you might say. I say that reverently. He is the only God.

RT That is very fine; it will be our eternal occupation to be occupied with God. Well, the Spirit of His Son in our hearts, having access by one Spirit: think of a divine Person being on our side, to use that expression, that we are not lost but are held at home as occupied with God.

EP Would “the Spirit of his Son” bring in intelligence in relation to that love, and sensitiveness too?

RT Yes, you cannot think of any disparity there, any weakness or failure or short-coming. The response, it has been remarked, will be equal to the revelation. What has been revealed is treasured in the Spirit. What shone out in Christ in His manhood is treasured by the Spirit and wrought out in the saints so that it is held in relation to the divine pleasure and will be eternally. These things should quicken our affections.

I think that the Spirit is specially occupied in quickening our affections and that produces formation with us.

LONDON

16th January 1977

List of initials (all local except R.Taylor)

W.T.Abbott; D.A.Burr; E.C.Burr; A.E.Butt; C.R.Byng; E.Croot; J.C.Evershed; W.E.Ellis; D.J.Hutson; E.Oliver; E.Palmer; G.A.Palmer; R.Taylor, Barnet; B.W.Ward; A.J.E.Welch

“THE DEATH OF THE LORD”

1 Corinthians 11: 26

John 10: 17,18 (to “from me”); 20: 16-18; 21: 7

We each take part on the first day of the week in the Lord's supper; it is something that we regularly have our part in, and yet we need to be preserved in the distinctiveness and the uniqueness of the occasion. Paul is speaking of it here and I want to refer to this word that he uses: “the death of the Lord”. Such a One, dear brethren, did not need to die. That would be well known, but the reality of it needs to be constantly before us, that such a One did not need to die. “Ye announce the death of the Lord”: that is the One to whom supreme rights and authority belong, and that is the One who died. He is the One of whom it says that without Him was not one thing made that was made (see John 1:3). The Lord who died is the One who calmed the storm, saying “Peace be still” (Mark 4: 39 KJV), and the One who raised the dead. I only refer to these things because they bring out the fact that such a One had no need to die, death did not attach to Him. It is a common thing for men to die, but the death of the Lord was something unique, something outstanding. I feel the need of understanding it better, for there are depths in it that would be well worth pondering. It meant the end of many things; we see that with Mary, what it meant for her that the Lord had died. It was not just her parents or her brother; it meant everything to her that the Lord had died. It means many things to us too, dear brethren. It means that God is no longer looking at men in responsibility, that what we are after the flesh is ended; there is a new beginning, an ending of one order of things and a new start because the Lord has died. It has meant a clearance, it has meant stable ground being established. Because of who He was death could not hold Him.

The passages we have had today, specially those in early Acts, speak of the fragrance and the sweetness of who it was that died. Peter, in that preaching we were reading of, says it was not possible that He should be held by death's power. O beloved, death was invaded, the grave was invaded

in the death of the Lord. Whatever bands they may have set about Him—His body bound and placed in a rock, a great stone set on the tomb—they did not apprehend who it was that was there in death: it was the Lord. We sing so simply in that hymn and yet so meaningfully—

Death had to bow

(Hymn 152)

Death had to bow because of who was there. So Paul says “ye announce the death of the Lord, until he come”. We need to give ourselves to think of who it was. It was not just that men took Him—that is one side, that men took Him and crucified Him, having said they would not have this Man to reign over them, a side we may dwell on often—but what impresses me here is who it was who was there and that death could not hold Him. The cross, the nails, Pilate, the Roman soldiers: all were powerless in the presence of the death of the Lord. It brings home to us how much He loved us, dear brethren. If He had no need to die, why did He die? It was to express His love for His saints. It was to establish ground for God and men. The relationship was disrupted, so broken in upon by sin, and He died that the ground and communion of that relationship might be established in a solid way. I say again He had no need to die, but He died as an expression of His love for His saints. That is what we remember as we come together each first day of the week, that there is One who died and that One was the Lord, the One to whom all authority, all power, all might and majesty belongs; voluntarily He went into death.

Does it not endear Him to our affections, the One who we have been speaking of, that He went this way? As He says about Himself: “No one has greater love than this, that one should lay down his life for his friends”, John 15: 13. Beloved, what an incentive to be occupied with Him, that He went this way as an expression of His love for us! The emblems, the loaf and cup, as we see them week after week, are simple things in themselves but they bring home to us who it was that died, who it was that lay in the grave, who it was that rose again because it was not possible that He, such a One as the Lord, could be held by the power of death. What results have been

secured! He has laid a ground by going that way, as I have said, for God to have new relations with men; God is looking at men now in grace. If God was taking up men in their responsibility it would be in judgment, but because of the death of the Lord there is blessing. Paul speaks here of the cup of blessing which we bless. What blessing there is, beloved, flowing so freely because the Lord has died.

Then, as I have said, it has ended for ever an order of things after the flesh; the death of the Lord lies upon all that we are in the flesh. In His death He has ended the order of man that was so obnoxious to God that there may come into expression another order of man, another kind of man. Then it says as often: "as often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye announce the death of the Lord, until he come". As we are impressed each first day of the week in a special way with His love, with who it was that went this way, we are also reminded that there is nothing to hinder Him coming; it says "until he come". Oh there is nothing to hinder Him! Paul says about Him that He has been placed above every principality and authority and power and every name named (see Eph 1: 21); that is the place that He fills today. So it is "until He come". Do we feel that? Do we feel it every day of the week? We feel it especially on the first day of the week, that the earth is so unresponsive, men are so unmoved by the death of the Lord. Well, if earth is silent the saints announce it. Think of a few in one place or another gathering together; there is an announcement in that that the Lord has died. Why would persons leave their homes, why would persons leave many things, to assemble, in small outward conditions it may be? It is because they are remembering their Lord, the Lord, the only One. No other person can fill the place that He fills, and there is no other man to be announced; what is announced is the death of the Lord. You can well imagine the conditions if some one well known, some one who ruled a certain area, for whom all the residents perhaps worked, owed their bread and butter to, died. What a scene of calamity there would be! Outwardly, dear brethren, that is our position, that the One to whom we owe everything has died here but we know Him as alive from

the dead. We know that death could not hold Him, but He died to the order of things here, and we gather together announcing His death until He come. It may be soon, we announce it in hope, we announce it in the expectation that there is nothing that can stop Him coming again.

What results were secured in that death of His! It is not only an expression of His love to His saints but there is a sense of the Father's pleasure in that He laid down His life of Himself. He says "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again"—as if there is an added reason for the Father's appreciation of Jesus. We have been speaking today of the need for contemplating; what an area to think about, the reason for the Father's delight in Jesus! It is not only that there was a Man here upon whom the heavens could open, not only that there was One here that went about doing good, but there was One here who could lay down His life and take it again. What results, beloved, that has secured for the Father! What results for us! Salvation is preached because He laid down His life and took it again. There is hope for all humanity: there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, the name of a glorified Saviour. There is hope for all humanity, confidence about everything in Him. But here in this verse there is a sense given of the Father's added pleasure, that Jesus laid down His life and took it again. That has opened the door, beloved, for the Father to be known; it has opened the door that man in sin and sins could be relieved of his load; it has opened the door for the Father in His blessing and love to embrace the sinner. Oh, no wonder at the Father's delight! It reminds us of Luke 15, the father's delight in receiving a returning one. It is all because "I lay down my life that I may take it again".

We need to be constantly reminded, I believe, of the ground on which we stand; it is the finished work of Jesus, the ground of our blessing, the ground of our hope. I like the words of that hymn where the writer says—

I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand.

Anne R Cousin (1824-1906)

Our position in glory, our place at home in the Father's house, has its foundation in the finished work of Jesus. "On this account the Father loves me". The Father had thoughts about men before time began; the Father purposed and chose to have men before Him in sonship before time began, but what gave effect to those thoughts and purposes was that one divine Person, our Lord, laid down His life and took it again. What a basis to pin our hope on! But what a basis to construct our lives, our future, on! So many things come into our path and cause us despair, cause us exercise; the flesh in its activities causes us sorrow. We have always to get back to the finished work of Jesus. "On this account the Father loves me". What has come out of that death beloved! What results have accrued to the Father from the death of the Lord! It has meant that atonement has been made, something that never happened before. In the old economy a man could never enjoy forgiveness in an absolute way, but because the Lord has laid down His life there is forgiveness and blessing for all. There is a certain width come into expression in this dispensation that was in no other, because the Lord has died and risen again. He says "I lay down my life that I may take it again". Our hope, beloved, is founded on what He has done, but it is also in Him where He is—"take it again". That emphasises again what we sang—

Death could not Thee enslave,
Death had to bow!'(Hymn 152)

He went through death in the majesty and glory of His own Person. It reminds us of the Jordan driven back, the water was not even in sight. It reminds us of the ark in the house of Dagon; they went in that morning and Dagon had fallen on his face. They went in the next morning and it was broken in pieces. It was the majesty and glory of who was there, represented in the ark. The whole world's-system has been set aside, it has been spoiled; indeed the power of death was

broken because He, the Lord, laid down His life that He might take it again. Death had reigned, its power had laid claim to every other man, but there the law of death had to bow. He is risen, He took it again; He has set aside the might of that system, He has set aside the one who had the might and the power of death. He has not only set aside death but He has set aside the one who had the might and the power of it. The whole thing is broken for those that believe on Him, for those that have Him as their hope.

What a future is opened up! Is it our future? Is our future bounded by things here? So often it is. So many of our disappointments are because our hopes have been short of the fact that the Lord has died. Many things we put our confidence in; we can each think of our own lives, our own sorrows, maybe even our present exercises, things have not worked out the way we thought they would. It may be that we have not been near enough to the death of the Lord; maybe we have been trying to find our interests, our life, in a system to which He has died. That verse that we read this afternoon, “in that he lives, he lives to God”, means, I think, the whole system that He is active in, and He would have us with Him in it; because He has taken His life again, He has made way for us. What words of comfort! He says to the disciples in chapter 14, “because I live ye also shall live”, v 19. Think of that beloved, having an outlook, having a hope, having a future before us that depends on Him, the Lord, the One who died and the One who lives again. I referred to this to bring out something of the Father’s pleasure, that the Father is now unburdened in His affections because Jesus has laid down His life and taken it again. What a doorway is open for communion between the Father and His children! What a doorway of blessing and joy between the Father and His sons! It is not founded, beloved, on how you feel; we are so often upset because of how we feel; these are real matters in our lives, that we do not feel up to things, we feel depressed, we feel out of things, many feelings creep into the human heart and give Satan an advantage to bind us. Beloved, our hope, our standing is in Him; “because I live ye shall live also”. The Lord who died is in a position

where no power on earth, no authority can overcome Him. He has spoiled every principality and authority, Paul says, making a show of them publicly. The whole system of ordinances has been set aside and broken, these things that you may feel make you unworthy, which may be of Satan to rob you of your joy. The Lord has died to bring you into an area where joy is unspoiled because it depends on Him, the One who we remember each first day of the week, the One that has died and lives again that He may rule over us.

With Mary I just thought that there may be some indication of how we come into something of the Father's joy and the blessing that there is for those who appreciate and announce the death of the Lord. I do not think the announcement is just in one action; it would be a characteristic thing that we announce the death of the Lord. How we do our work, how we live in our homes, how we are at school, whatever area of responsibility each of us may be in, there is room for us to fill out that responsibility announcing the death of the Lord. Why is it these questions arise in our hearts so often? Why is it that certain persons go to places to which we do not go? Why is it that people would be in things that we are not in?—because the Lord has died. The system around us, beloved, has rejected the Lord. Things are going on in the world which disregard that the Lord has died. He has died in relation to those things, He has died because there was no room for Him, He was disowned, “the stone which they that builded rejected”, Luke 20: 17. But He died—what grace! It is love for that Man that is the reason I do not go to certain places. It is because He has died, and that system or that thing sets aside the fact that He died. Could you have found Mary in any of the systems of the world at this moment? Why was Mary here a lonely woman? There would have been dozens of reasons for Mary not to have been here. The one reason why she was here was that the Lord had died. Is that why you are where you are, beloved? It may be that you are in very trying situations oftentimes, feeling the bereavement of loved ones or the lack of company of persons whom you used to know. That sorrow is known to the Lord and it is because

He has died. That is why Mary was here, because the Lord had died, but she was not left long with her sorrow and neither will you be. As we move in simplicity in relation to the death of the Lord we will not be left long in our sorrow. There was a man earlier in this book of whom it says, "they cast him out" (chap 9: 34), but Jesus found him. It is very like the position of many; if we are true to the death of the Lord the Lord will find us because He is outside that system, He is outside that place you may have been invited to. But He found Mary, and what a message He had! He was ready to say, "go to my brethren". I read this passage because there was something here that had its beginnings in the death of the Lord—"my brethren". They were that because He had died to remove every stain that was upon them. They were not exactly His brethren in this sense before. Peter and the others loved Him and had been with Him, but they were now His brethren because He had removed every stain that attached to them. They are looked at here as on new ground and able to receive a message. As we are true and appreciate and think about the death of the Lord we come into a system where He can call us "my brethren" and can say "my Father and your Father ... my God and your God". What a message to a woman who was true to the death of the Lord! We prove it ourselves in some measure as we announce the death of the Lord until He come. Do we not experience in some measure the sweetness of being His brethren and of His word "my Father and your Father"? These are things that are known in the experience of the soul and they give strength and stability to us in our lives as we are true to the death of the Lord. Mary comes with the message; the Lord does not expand on it, He just leaves the kernel of these choicest things with her, and she comes and says she has seen the Lord. The Lord - there is no one wondering who it is; she says she had seen the Lord. At that moment Peter and some of them may have been under other influences. Luke shows us that some of them were disappointed, full of grief; Mary comes and says she had seen the Lord. Everything is back on a sound basis now she has seen the Lord. He is going on with them; He came in in these chapters and went out. You might have thought that everything was finished;

Peter had denied Him, the rest had gone to their homes; would He go on just with Mary? No, He goes on with them. It says that she had seen the Lord and that He said these things to her, and that fact rallies the brethren.

May we be rallied, beloved, more and more in relation to the death of the Lord. In one sense the reason for our gathering here is because the Lord has died. It is the reason we have to leave other things. Mary had to leave even loved ones and we have to leave them so as to announce the death of the Lord. It meant that there was nothing in Mary that was out of keeping with her Lord who had died but now was risen. Think of the Lord here with a message looking for someone to listen to it. He would fain have told it to Peter I am sure; He would fain have told it to Thomas. As the chapter goes on, Thomas comes into it, Peter comes into it, they all come into it. But here is a woman who gets the message because she felt the death of the Lord. May we be helped, dear brethren, to feel it more. These men in the next chapter went off somewhat; they were overcome through their own thoughts but there comes a point when someone says "It is the Lord". Maybe it has been the experience of some of us, that we have felt the coldness of the night, we have felt the labour and toil of circumstances, until we have come to see that the Lord was some-where else. Maybe we have been toiling in an area that the Lord was not in, maybe it has been hard going, maybe you have felt like giving up. Do not give up, beloved, but turn to the Lord; He is still active, He is still available, He is still in control. These men here were soon revived to their freshness - "Come and dine". Oh what the Lord has! "In that he lives, he lives to God". He is going on with a system of things where there is no breakdown, where there is no failure. He invites you today to come and dine. May we be helped to discern Him. John had no difficulty in saying who it was because of what he saw. Oh the effects of grace! Who else could it have been? When I have been off on my own way, my own will maybe leading me in a path that was away from the Lord, who else would provide this haul of fishes? Who else would draw me back?—No one but the Lord. He is still in control, He never

loses His grip on the believer. Those who once put their trust in Him are His for ever. They may get away but the Lord holds the reins and He is in control; and He would be saying this word perhaps to some of us today, giving us an expression afresh of His grace which is still flowing in its sweetness. They cast the net and could no longer draw it for the multitude of fishes. As they saw this haul the disciple says, "It is the Lord". May we be helped, dear brethren, to discern Him, to discern His features. The bride in the Song of Songs was slow, but what she found on the handles of the lock showed that her beloved had been there and left some impression. I believe that the Lord would leave that among us, some impression of Himself that would quickly turn us to be where He is—"in that he lives, he lives to God". May we be helped to be with Him as He is moving on, for His Name's sake.

MAIDSTONE

8th April 1977

At three-day meetings with Mr A John E Welch



“I AM COMING TO YOU”

John 14: 15-24; 21: 14

Acts 1: 3, 4

1 Corinthians 15: 3-8

Genesis 29: 32-35

RT I wondered if these scriptures might provide a basis to speak together of the Lord's personal service to us. Often, when we think of the Lord's service, we think of His service on high as Priest bearing the saints on His shoulder and on His breast, which is very blessed, but I was also thinking of this verse in John's gospel: "I am coming to you". It is something that we may enquire, and be expectant, about. He says, "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you". The other scriptures show how He came. John says it was the third time. In Acts he tarried here forty days; later on in the chapter it says that He came in and went out among them, as if He would accustom their minds to the fact that, while He was not going to be with them in the circumstances that He had been, He was still going to be in contact with them—He came in and He went out; He left something. I think what He would leave would maintain us in freshness. It is a very remarkable thing that the testimony has continued in freshness right down until today, a tribute to the Lord's movements in grace. He comes and He leaves what would sustain us. All around there is a tendency to going back and to decline. In order to try to maintain things they bring in prayer-books, music and so on, but we are maintained, as the Lord comes in, in the freshness and vitality that is to mark the dispensation.

In Corinthians there was what was distinctive as to the apostles, but then it says, "to above five hundred brethren at once". What a deposit must have been left on that occasion! I only suggest these things that we might accustom our minds to think of the Lord leaving something among us. Leah would possibly bring that out. It says of Jacob that he served for a wife, Hos 12: 12. With Isaac it is the father's consideration for the son that secures Rebecca, but with Jacob it is his own personal service that secures his wife. In Leah there is a

secret line going on that produces fruitfulness and praise and union. These things would be the result among us as the Lord comes in. You do not read much about the detail of it in Jacob and Leah but there is positive evidence that he has been there in fruit appearing. I would like to see that in our localities. There is no outward sign, a few coming together in one place and another, yet there is freshness and joy maintained, the Lord having been among us.

Well, He is leaving those disciples and I think this word must have been very precious to them: "I am coming to you". His appearing later on encouraged them to come together; they thought things were declining so they went back to something they knew, they went back to fishing, but the Lord rallies them as He comes in, and I think after that they do not go back. They expected Him to come; He had come those three times, and then in Acts, He came in and went out. I think we should move in the expectancy that He is coming in with something and He is going to leave what will maintain us in freshness to be here in vitality for His pleasure.

RL We need to be governed by faith, do we not? I was impressed the other day in reading that we are prone even in meetings like this to be governed by sight. The Lord said to Thomas: "blessed they who have not seen and have believed", John 20: 29.

RT Yes; it is fine to come together and expect Him. I do not think He will disappoint us. All around they come together with everything laid out as to how the occasion is going to proceed. If we come together to expect Him, we do not know how the occasion will go, but what He brings in would be our guide, and what He leaves would be our stay. I think what you say is right; we come together not counting on some individual (we would miss anyone who is not there) but counting on the Lord—"I am coming to you". He may be shut out many times through the lack of faith; we may revert to counting on other things, we may look for other props, but I think the attitude of mind should be stimulated among us that we come together and we expect Him. "I am coming to you".

FGM Would the incident in chapter 12 bear on what you are saying, where Jesus came to Bethany? The persons there were prepared to receive Him, prepared for Him.

RT Yes, what a fine occasion it was! Someone there came with something. She may not have known how she was going to use it, but as the Lord came in she knew what to do, and the odour filled the house. It was there just as ointment, but used as the Lord came in there was an odour that filled the house. I think we have had some experiences like that in our time, we have had a sense that the Lord has given a touch, and I think we should be exercised that we know that touch oftener, and that the odour permeates us and remains with us in the way of vitality and freshness.

FMK Would you expect that we have answered to the way He has begged the Father to send another Comforter, the Spirit of truth? Is way made for the Lord to come as we are in the blessing of that?

RT Yes, I think the intimacy with the Spirit makes way for it. That is seen in Genesis 24; the intimacy between Rebecca and the servant made way for Isaac to take her and she became his wife. So the Spirit is with us for ever, He is there all the time, to be turned to, to be known in our individual exercises. There is something special, I think, in this "I am coming to you". The Spirit would be in it in a very marked way. But the Lord came in in those forty days as if to accustom them to the fact that while He was not to be seen with them every day, He would accustom them to expect Him to come in and go out. So in faith we would come together like that, that the Lord may come among us and leave something definite that would maintain us.

JCE Would one thing that the Lord deposited here be some fresh impression of the Father, not only the knowledge of the Father but the way the Father would act? He says He would not leave them orphans.

RT Yes, what a comfort! I think as the Lord comes in He would always meet the state that is there. As we are expecting

Him and as we are ready He will go beyond that, He will leave something additional. As you say, here it is in relation to the Father. He opens up a whole new area to them, so it is not only what we know as we come together, but I think as the Lord comes He gives a touch that is fresh and living and it would maintain us.

JCE In chapter 21 He had to regulate them by bringing in a touch as to His lordship, did He not?

RT Yes, He would always meet the state that is there, but as we are in faith about it, He would give us something fresh. Even as to scriptures which we have read so often, the attitude of mind should be with us that the Lord would give a fresh touch, and that is to remain with us and maintain us in the vitality that is needed in our day.

EP Why do you think that in the latter part of the section you read in John 14 the Lord goes on to what is individual: "He that has my commandments and keeps them", v 21? We expect the Lord when we assemble, and I wondered why from verse 21 it is so individual.

RT I think He comes down to that. Here the Lord is looking down the dispensation; so it is not only when we are together but it is a question, as it says, of "he it is that loves me", "he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him". It is as if the Lord cannot stay away, that there are persons who are precious to Him and He says, "and I will love him and will manifest myself to him". If there is affection for Him, He will never leave you without guidance. I think that experiencing this would cause us to be gathered with the brethren, do you?

EP Yes, I do. You spoke about state, He comes to the state that exists. I wondered whether that state is found in the aggregate of the exercises of the brethren. So that I am responsible to contribute to it.

RT Yes, that side is always there; and there is another side to it which John 20 shows, that the Lord makes the most of the state that is there. If you are in a better state than I am,

as together I may get the advantage of your state. The Lord appeared to Mary, the rest of them had gone home, but what He finds with Mary He accredits to the whole when He says, “go to my brethren”. So it would encourage us that as we come together we expect Him; the state changes as He comes in.

CRB Were the forty days a pattern for normal Christianity?

RT Say something about them please.

CRB Does the way in which the reality of Jesus living is stressed in connection with them show that as living He would give us some fresh entrance into the whole sphere of life of which He is the centre?

RT Yes, “to whom also he presented himself living, after he had suffered, with many proofs”. He has died, He has been into the grave, these things affect us, but He presented Himself with many proofs. I think these proofs remain in the history of the testimony and they are to stimulate us, encourage us to come together; and, as you say, it would be normal Christianity. During those days He came in and He went out; so they came together not for a social event but because it had been established that He came in, and they looked forward to that. Would you say that?

CRB Yes, and can you just enlarge on that a little as to how we experience it?

RT I think it is something to be experienced. In our gatherings when we are reading a book, we go through the chapters and there is certain doctrine in each chapter that should always be in our minds—the doctrine is always there—but the Lord may turn the whole thing through some touch that comes in. Would you say that?

CRB Yes, and the Spirit would keep us expectant as to it, that even while we are speaking about a scripture, we are looking for the way the Lord will give a touch which perhaps will make some particular verse stand out as it were in letters of gold, do you think?

RT Yes, and it is that that matters in a meeting. It is not what we may have in our own minds; what matters is a touch that the Lord may impart. I only suggest these things so that an attitude of mind like this might be promoted among us and that we are ready to follow the touch that He may bring in.

RL He says to some, as to searching the Scriptures that they might have eternal life, “ye will not come to me that ye might have life”, John 5: 40. Is that necessary for coming into the living character of what we have?

RT Yes, I think it is vital otherwise we decline and fall back on something else to keep things going, but the centre of all is that we come together and we expect Him and He comes, and He leaves something that we are prepared to give ourselves to, and follow up too.

CCI It is characteristic of the whole dispensation. I was wondering whether the Lord does not give an impression of His direct relations with the assemblies in the seven churches in the Revelation, giving to each some distinctive personal impression of Himself. So that at the present moment there are overcomers that result from His direct relations in manifestations among us, do you think?

RT Yes; as we said earlier, He speaks there as to the state, but He leaves a promise that would help the overcomer to be freshly committed to the way He was going.

SDKR Do you get some thought of it in the Song of Songs? It says, “My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door; and my bowels yearned for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; And my hands dropped with myrrh, And my fingers with liquid myrrh, Upon the handles of the lock”, chap 5: 4, 5. Is that something left by the touch?

RT Yes; she was a bit slow in getting it, was she not? That scripture would bring home to us that He is far more ready to leave an impression with us than we are to receive it. But as she went to the lock of the door, as you say, she found he had been there and had left something that quickly restored her. There would be a touch like that with Thomas in John 20: he

thought, what is the use of going, he thought things were finished, but he is like what you refer to, the Lord left something and it came to him eventually. So the next time he says, "My Lord and my God", v 28. What you say would encourage us that the Lord is far more ready to impart than we are to expect Him.

FMK Is there something affecting about what Luke says: "to whom also he presented himself living, after he had suffered", Acts 1: 3? That affected Thomas, did it not?

RT Yes, "after he had suffered": what a presentation of Himself this must have been as He came in and showed them His hands and His side and says, "Peace be to you". He meets the anxiety that is there to make way for something else, He is ready to go further. So here He presented Himself living. He would confirm them that they were in touch with a living glorious Personage and these proofs would remain among them; and they remain among us, the proofs remain among us in the history of the testimony to encourage us to proceed with meetings like these.

RL Does it raise the challenge as to whether we are really longing for His presence? You have spoken of Mary; she was not happy without Him. Is it a question whether we are finding our whole joy and life in relation to His presence?

RT Yes. Well, these things test us today. We may be content with what is past. The disciples went to their own homes, perhaps saying, Well, we have had some years with Him, we have something, our sins are forgiven, we can look back on happier times; but that was not going to do for Mary. She wanted a living Person and she found Him. He says to her, "Mary". She turns round and had all that she wanted and far more. So it would be a word for us today, that we are not just content to look back on things and feel that the present day is only breakdown. Mary had affections which would not be satisfied without Him. I think the Lord will minister to those affections.

FCM Would that link with verse 18, “I will not leave you orphans”? The Lord seems to count on His own being in the conditions and longing of orphans here.

RT Yes, that is right; from this point of view we should feel orphanage. To Esther and Ruth orphanage was a very real thing, and it speaks in the Psalm of forgetting thy father’s house. That is felt, is it not, that we are without public support? We are very liable to fall back on doctrine that we know, but what is going to maintain us is the faith in our souls that “I am coming to you”; “I will not leave you orphans”. The Lord feels the breakdown more than we do, and He knows that we are exposed, but He rewards it with a touch, a visit from Himself.

ECM Would what the Lord said to Paul, “what I shall appear to thee in” (Acts 26: 16), have a bearing on it?

RT Yes, that scripture was in mind as to what was going to continue through the dispensation. As was said, those appearances would be a pattern of how things were going to continue. So it was not only that He appeared to Paul on the Damascus road, but it says, “and of what I shall appear to thee in”. So things develop through these coming-ins, do they not? There should be growth with us. What would you say?

ECM Yes, I thought that. When he refers to it first he says, “have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”, 1 Cor 9: 1. I take it that he saw the Lord in the condition in which He was in after He suffered and was glorified.

RT What assurance to have in our souls that the Lord came in and went out! Who can shake that? There may be many things come into your life that you have doubts about, but it is as real as conversion, that the Lord came in and left something, and who can shake it? The Lord means us, I think, to be regulated by these comings in and goings out.

EHW So that there are living conditions. He says, “because I live ye also shall live”. Would that bring in the growth you have just spoken of?

RT Yes, it emphasises that we are not left to our own resources, we are orphans but we are not left to that side of things only: “because I live ye also shall live”. The continuance of the local position being maintained in freshness is because He is living.

EHW And would you say that the Lord has His own joy in coming to us from time to time?

RT Yes. Why did He remain for forty days? He must have had His joy in coming in and going out. He was not seen by all, but the Lord had joy, as you say, in coming in and finding them together. It is as if He says, They are expecting Me. And what He was ready to unfold to them!

EHW Would you say that, together with what we are saying, we need to see what there is for the Lord Himself in it?

RT Yes, that is something that we should think about, what there is for the Lord in our comings together, but that will flow out of this experience, that as we come together and as He leaves something, I think it will result in something for Him. As was said about Thomas, it promotes a note of worship: “My Lord and my God”.

BWW In relation to Thomas, his reaction to what the disciples tell him was seemingly very negative; “I will not believe”, but he is there the next time. Would that be an encouragement not only to enjoy what we have but to speak of it to others even if the reception is seemingly negative?

RT Yes, we do not want to be discouraged through first reactions; we all may have times of being down and feeling that things are not as they should be. Thomas felt that—you can have a lot of sympathy with him in a sense—but the Spirit is there to encourage us to move. The Lord does not come in and say, Thomas, you said this or that, but the Lord comes in with a presentation of Himself, and for Thomas the whole ground is covered; he says, “My Lord and my God”.

AAB So the word, “I am coming to you”, carries the thought of the Lord coming when conditions are normal amongst the brethren, and also would you say when they are sub-normal?

RT I think it is the Lord's attitude throughout the whole dispensation; whether normal or abnormal, His attitude remains the same.

AAB Yes, but in particular the coming when things are normal seems to involve that He comes to where love is: "If ye love me keep my commandments ... He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me", and, "If any one love me, he will keep my word". Is there a moral side to our experiencing the blessedness of the Lord's coming?

RT There is, and I think we should think of what is normal rather than what is abnormal. Abnormal means that it does not happen very often; the normal thing is that these persons love Him and, as you say, that encourages the Lord to come in and He comes to where He is loved. He is shut out in some places, and yet sovereignly He can make an entrance, He can do things, but here He comes to where He is loved and the response is very quick, would you say, as He comes in?

AAB Yes; it is a great comfort though that He comes when things are subnormal, otherwise all would be gone, would it not? That is, as you say, He comes sovereignly. Even to Ephesus He expresses these same words: "I am coming to thee", Rev 2: 5.

RT Yes, but then if He comes to what is abnormal His desire would be to leave it normal. Thomas would show us that, He does not say to Thomas, Why were you not here last week? A presentation of the Lord Himself appeals to the work of God in the soul, and that gains the ascendancy and it becomes normal. So there is a note of worship immediately that covers all the history.

RL In Mark 16 He reproaches them all with their unbelief, but He adjusts things. When coming into what is not normal, He adjusts things, does He not?

RT The Lord does not expect, and we should not expect, what is abnormal to continue. If it is abnormal, it should be very short-lived; it should not continue. The Lord coming in

would be that the scene is changed and the brethren are united in response to Him.

CRB If there is anything needing adjustment, does the Lord not do that by the presentation of Himself without necessarily a word being said about the adjustment?

RT Yes, I thought that came into this. The Lord is pin-pointing that as to Thomas, and the mount of transfiguration I always think shows that. Peter was going to build three tabernacles but is adjusted through the Father's voice: "This is my beloved Son", Matt. 17: 5. So we should not expect what is abnormal to remain throughout the meeting. As the Lord comes in He is capable of appealing to His own work in any soul and that would result in a change immediately and there would be normal conditions in the meeting, would you think?

CRB Yes, I think that is our experience. Do you think we get a touch of that in the Revelation? In the very midst of the salutations in chapter 1 there seems to be a divine speaking suddenly introduced: "I am ... the Almighty" (v 8), and that is really the manifestation that governs the seven assemblies, is it not? The Lord just gives a special touch which remains. That is to be the character of every meeting, is it not?

RT Yes, and His word to Laodicea in chapter 3—If you open the door I will come in. Maybe you only open it a little bit, but He says, "if any one ... open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me", v 20. The whole Laodicean state is changed there. I think these things would encourage us to expect the change, and a quick change, to what is normal and what is vital and what is living in response to Him.

GAP Is that seen in verse 20: "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you"? Would that involve the affections?

RT Yes, I think in what we are saying there is an underlying tribute to the Spirit's service to maintain normal living affections for Christ that make way for Him as He comes in. "In that day" would be the Spirit's day. In the exercises that we have to go through the Spirit would be with us so that there

is what is vital for Christ maintained through His gracious service.

FMK Should we make way for any subject-minded person thus to be found with us to experience something of this?

RT Well, we would welcome anyone who loves the Lord, especially any interested person. It says, “if ye love me”; that is a vital link in the soul. We would desire every lover to be present, would we not?

RL He has a word personally for each one. Is that not what we need to feel? You have spoken of meetings like this, but we want to feel the word personally, this word in adjusting things. To Peter it was “Follow thou me”. There is to be a response with me.

RT Yes, the Lord comes down to that and He would speak to us all. So none of us should say we are young, we are old, or sick, none of us should feel these things hindering us in the assembly. The Lord comes in and He appeals to what is of Himself in us and He has the ability to quicken that and help us to rise above what may have hindered us when we came.

DJH What would you say as to the mutual side in Acts 10 where Peter says, “*us* who have eaten and drunk with him after he arose from among the dead”, v 41?

RT That is a very fine expression. It refers to the establishment of things. He appeared to all the apostles. Each of the apostles had his own distinctive appearing. So the dispensation was set up with abundant witness and testimony, and as you say, there was the mutual side, that the Lord enjoyed their company as much as they enjoyed His.

DJH Yes. It was not that He was eating and drinking with them but they were eating and drinking with Him; they were sharing what He was enjoying as out of death after having suffered.

RT It brings out the distinctive place that the assembly has, that there is an easy flow between Christ and the assembly. What ground we are brought into, still in bodies of flesh and

blood! We are still in circumstances where we get depressed, but as we touch assembly ground, in the occasions of gathering together, there is a mutual easy flow of things. It brings home to us how near this vessel is to Christ.

FMK Is the apostle labouring for this in Corinth in anticipation of one coming in and falling on his face? Is that power to be seen there despite what conditions there might be?

RT What you say brings to mind that the apostle introduced the Supper there. You might say, was there a state for it? Well, I think the apostle introduced the Supper there to meet the state in a sense. They were reigning as kings, Paul even was shut out at Corinth, but he introduces the Supper as though those emblems would have an appeal to the affections of the brethren that would provide an atmosphere for the Lord to come in in a normal way and relationship be enjoyed.

CRB Do the appearances in Corinthians show how the experiences of the forty days are to be continued? Most if not all those appearances would have been from the glory, would they not?

RT Yes, I was thinking of that in reading it. We might have said that those appearances during the forty days were inaugural, but then, in Corinthians 15, you have the Lord glorified. Some of the appearances were very distinctive which would be peculiar to the apostles but I thought that: "Then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the most remain until now" would possibly encourage us in our day, would you say?

CRB Yes, I would think so, and they were not the twelve, were they? It says that He appeared to the twelve during the forty days. Above five hundred brethren: I think someone said that Paul would have made it his business to seek them out to get an impression from each as to what the Lord had said and what the Lord had done as He appeared to them.

RT Yes, that is very fine. As coming into a place, you think, what has the Lord deposited here, what has the Lord left in

one locality and another? He has left something. In each place where the saints are—it may be few, outwardly small and despised—the Lord has left something and, as you say, it would be fine to get in touch with it, to identify yourself along with it and know what the Lord has left there. I think those appearances as He comes amongst us are cumulative. You could look back on Abraham's history and Jacob's history and see that the Lord came in and that the next time it was cumulative. It was circumcision one time and there was a gap, and He comes in again and there is a movement, there is a gap; He comes in again and there is a movement. These things would be pattern for us, that the Lord coming in making Himself known is cumulative and there should be something additional left which grows in the locality.

CRB After many of the appearances that you refer to in Genesis men built an altar, and that is to be the effect in every locality is it not, that as the Lord appears an altar is to be built? There is something that remains that is rock-like in relation to the service of God.

RT I think that is good. We should think of that; do we build an altar or do we just say it was a fine meeting? Building an altar would consolidate what the Lord has left among us. If the Lord has left something in your soul and you have built an altar you cannot go back, the thing remains there, you can only go forward. You may stay stationary for a bit but there is something there the Lord has left in your soul and He means you to go forward from that.

CAB Would you say that He has left the Supper with us, with the assembly, and that that garrisons us, rallies our affections?

RT Yes, that I think is why you get it referred to in Corinth where there was much to keep the Lord away. It kept Paul away to a certain extent, but the presentation of the emblems there is to rally every true lover. There must be something wrong if a person is not remembering the Lord and claims to be a lover. So the emblems are calculated to be an appeal to us and I think that appeal would change our state. It would

link with what was said as to loving Him and keeping His commandments, that there is already easy access for normal relations.

AAB I have been impressed recently with John's word in the epistle: "let us not love with word, nor with tongue, but in deed and in truth", 1 John 3: 18. What the Lord is looking for, do you think, is proven love, underlying the keeping of His word and having His commandments and keeping them?

RT It stands out as all the more real in the background of profession, and would it not be right that a person's love for Christ would manifest itself in remembering Him and working out the truth?

AAB Yes; I think that as soon as we get the sense of His liability to come on any occasion, we would not miss it. "I am coming" involves His liability to come, does it not?

RT Yes, He is more ready to come than we are to expect Him. As was said earlier, in referring to the Song of Songs, what a rebuke it must have been to her soul and yet how graciously administered; when she touched the lock it was dropping with liquid myrrh. I think these things are very close to us and have been in our experience, but then as here He is able for five hundred brethren at once. Not one of them went away without some fresh impression of the Lord and, as has been said, it would be fine to seek it out and to get the gain of it from one and another.

ECM There was something distinctive in Paul receiving from the Lord and delivering to the saints. Could you say a word about that: "I received from the Lord"?

RT Well, it is in line with what we are saying about Corinthians 15, it was from the glory. It brings into relief the distinctive place that Paul has in relation to assembly light, that the Lord from the glory appeared to him and He continued to appear to him. He gave him this light as to the Supper, showing the living Person that we are linked with while we gather together in His absence.

ECM I just thought it would show the distinctive place that the Supper should have in relation to the assembly, that Paul puts it like a jewel in its right setting.

RT Yes. We speak carefully, but we expect lovers to be remembering the Lord.

AAB When you speak of the Lord leaving something, it may not be the setting out of things in terms (which, of course, it is in certain instances) but it may be by way of an inkling of something—"Why persecutest thou me?", Acts 22: 7. The Lord left that in the soul of Paul, did He not? The truth of the mystery was in it.

RT What you say is my feeling, that it is generally an inkling of something—"Was not our heart burning in us as he spoke to us on the way?", Luke 24: 32. He had interpreted in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. A lot depends, as you said earlier, on our state; the Lord is ready to go further sometimes than we are—"he made as though he would go farther". Our faith is not just up to things at times, and the Lord graciously leaves an inkling. I think persons who are concerned would follow that up so that there is something more deposited, and if you follow it up and I do not, the next time we get the benefit of someone following it up, and the Lord would add to that. Would you think that that is how it works?

AAB Yes, indeed.

SDKR Would you think that the reading following the Supper is an opportunity to follow it up?

RT Yes, without making it too hard and fast; that is something we should think about, but we should not leave it there, it should still be prayed about, and it should still come into the ministry meeting and be in our daily exercises. The word used, 'an inkling', is good; it is not the whole thing but there is a germ left there that the spiritual and exercised would follow up.

CRB So that whatever book is being read, whether on Lord's day or during the week, the Spirit would keep us alert as to

how the Lord would enlarge the impression or experience He may have already given, do you think?

RT Yes, we should leave the door open for that—"I am coming to you". We read a book and most of us may have an outline of the doctrine of the chapter, but what we are looking for is the Lord to give a touch and that is what remains with us.

CRB Does the very word 'appearing' seem to involve what is sudden? It seems to be what Paul emphasises in Corinthians—He appeared. Do you think it would keep us alert at any time as to how the Lord is going to appear? If we are not watchful we may miss it.

RT Yes, I think that is good: it is He appeared to. It was not like something mysterious or miraculous coming in and creating something, but He appeared to; there was an atmosphere there which made the appearing easy.

AAB "Let me now turn aside and see this great sight", Exod 3: 3. It gives us liberty to be turned aside under the stress of an appearing, the spiritual stress which is created by the Lord appearing at the Supper; I do not mean in the sense of tension or anything of that kind, but how that word would work out what He says in John, "because I live ye also shall live".

RT So that helps to unite the saints; it gives us another view of difficulties. The problems will still have to be settled, but if we could get a view like this a lot of things would disappear quickly.

AT Mary, when the Lord appeared to her in John 20 gets this inkling from Him; so when she goes to the disciples, she does not at first say what He said to her, she says "that she had seen the Lord". It is something to see the Lord first and she can then say what He said, but then is there not immediate action by all in shutting the doors for fear of the Jews?

RT Yes. Nobody questioned her; Peter did not say, What you Mary, you have seen the Lord? They all believed it. It shows the marked effect upon her that the appearing had. They were all set aglow when she said she had seen the Lord.

It brings out the substantiality of what the Lord may leave in a soul and how it is credited and spreads into the whole locality.

RL Would it be a question whether I really received something? Where you began reading in chapter 15 Paul says, “For I delivered to you, in the first place, what also I had received”. Is it a question of our consciously receiving something?

RT Yes, that brings home to us the substantiality of what the Lord may leave among us; it is not something that is unreal. Peter says, we have not followed cunningly imagined fables, see 2 Pet 1: 16. But as you say, he received from the Lord, it is something that is left and deposited there, and it is to be followed up and it is to be rock in the soul.

AHM You have mentioned much about the Lord leaving something: why does He do it, please?

RT In grace He leaves something to improve our state, to confirm us if there are doubts, as with the two on the way to Emmaüs. There are many instances where the Lord comes down to the state to meet that side of things. Then there is also the other side; “I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”. I think the Lord does it all in view of what He says in John 13: “part with me”. What are your own thoughts about it?

AHM Well, we become so occupied with Him that we cannot do without Him.

RT That is right. We were speaking about Mary, she is just an example of that, she could not do without Him. The Lord does it to bring us on to His ground, and then if we have to go to administer certain things we will administer from the ground that He has brought us on to. So He breathes into them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them”, John 20: 22. They do that because they are on new ground; and administration would flow from that line of things, that we are doing it as drawing on our experience of being with Him.

CCI Would you allow 2 Corinthians 3 to enter into this matter of appearing? It says, "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed", v 18. Would that imply that the Lord has His own distinctive way of manifesting Himself?

RT Yes, I think so. That scripture would bring out our expectancy: "we all looking". Leah was looking, was she not? Leah was very desirous of Jacob, and what comes in from the looking is that something comes in for God—Reuben (sonship) and Levi (united). These things come in and they remain in the way of positive fruit that the Lord has been there. With Jacob there is a secret line of things which bears lasting fruit.

GWE And it results in praise: is that not the divine end in all these visitations?

RT Yes, what the Lord leaves is not for us to spread ourselves here but to accustom us to a spiritual realm where everything is for God.

AT Pressure comes in but the praise flows. Leah was hated but the pressure does not hinder her from praising, does it? Is it like the apostle in prison with Silas?

RT There is a secret line there that you cannot destroy and we are to know that, know that in the local company. Authorities may not grant us rooms and there may be restrictions about certain things, but there is a certain line of things there that nobody can stop, and it is evident in fruit. Now that fruit is to be seen in our localities.

JCE Is there some kind of obligation on us to share what the Lord deposits with us? The working out of it may require wisdom but this apostolic line of receiving and conveying, delivering, seems a very determinate kind of thing. It may not be the same extent with us but I wondered if the principle still remained.

RT I am sure it does. As was said, what was left in those five hundred would be in circulation, and you get a touch of it at the end of Luke, He appeared to Simon and He appeared to the two on the way to Emmaüs. There were those distinctive

touches but they all seemed to flow together, they are put in circulation and they make way for the Lord to open up more.

JCE I thought perhaps that was one reason why the mother named the children here in Genesis. There is that which she is able to identify and others get the benefit of it.

RT That is good and she named them well, did she not?

JCE Yes, every time their name was mentioned the thought behind it was prominent.

RT Very good, so that there is something left that is trustworthy, something left that can maintain things in the Lord's absence until He comes again, and there is something fresh.

CRB Why does Leah refer to Jehovah or God in connection with all her sons except Levi?

RT I do not know; you say something about it please.

CRB I thought perhaps you had some impression of how it linked with having to do with divine Persons directly in relation to these matters. A name is something definite, is it not, not just some vague sort of impression in the air?

RT Yes; so that she says, "for now my husband will love me". She does not draw her resources from any other place; there is something there that is of the husband, that is of Christ; and as was said, every time it is named it would draw attention to something. There is a secret line maintained all the time that supports us at a spiritual and true level, would you say?

CRB Yes. it is a great matter to be conscious that Jehovah has looked and Jehovah has heard, praising Jehovah, and then with the later sons God is brought into the matter. There seems to be something by way of enrichment of what is for God.

RT Yes, that is good. So that orphan feeling that we began with would cause us to be dependent. Leah had nothing from one point of view, she was not so attractive as Rachel, she had

nothing publicly to command interest; that would be our position, dependent on God for support. So she says, "Jehovah has looked upon my affliction".

EHW There is not only something left with Leah but it comes out, it was expressed. Do you think that should be normal with us, that if something is left with us, even today, it should be expressed, we should know what it is and be able to speak about it?

RT Yes, and we should know the secret of how it has come in. What she said is interesting: "Jehovah has looked upon my affliction", "Jehovah has heard I am hated". She knew the reason for it. She was not boasting that she had some ability that others did not have, but she knew a line of things in looking to God and how fully it was answered. It would be like a secret to us here of how the testimony is going through, as we are dependent upon God.

FMK Has it in mind building for God—"which two did build the house of Israel", Ruth 4: 11? Is what is given to us for building up assembly features?

RT Yes. We cannot claim anything; from our own side we are very weak and unattractive, we have a history, a great deal of history, that may depress us, but here someone gets beyond all the history and says, Jehovah has looked and Jehovah has heard. She knew how to get in touch with God; and how readily He comes in and, as you say, expands to building the whole house of Israel. It would encourage us to commit ourselves in dependence to look for the Lord and He will not fail us.

ECM Would you extend the secret service, the personal service of Jacob? I am thinking of your earlier reference to Hosea: "Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep", chap 12: 12. The sheep were not the objective but the wife. Would that be the fruit of the secret service, the personal service?

RT I thought that Jacob emphasised that side of things, that it was not the Father or the Spirit exactly bringing the

assembly in but the Lord's own personal service to her. He went through those things to have her, and now, as glorified, the same service is going on that there might be a maintenance of freshness and vitality and living fruitful conditions, do you think?

ECM Yes, I go with that fully.

RL The way things have come to us would affect us; He became poor that we might become enriched.

RT It would indeed. I think the Lord would just encourage us at this time that, as He comes in, things change. As we have said about Thomas, as He comes in all is changed. We need to think like that, there can be a quick change-over, and as has been said about Leah, we are looking to God for it to come in. So we pray at the beginning of our meetings; it is not just to be a formal thing. We sing a hymn and we pray, we are looking to God that the scripture read, or the impressions that come in, may expand into fruitfulness, and that a touch may be left among us that will cause an altar to be built, that will cause something to be left substantially in the locality for the divine pleasure.

MAIDSTONE

26th August 1978

List of initials

A.A.Bellamy, Buckhurst Hill; C.A.Beale, London; C.R.Byng, London; G.W.Easton, Redbridge; J.C.Evershed, London; D.J.Hutson, London; C.C.Ikin, Southend; F.M.Knappett Maidstone; R.Lawrence, Maidstone; A.H.Martin: Redbridge; F.G.May, Maidstone; E.C.Muggleton, Croydon; F.C.Mutton, Redbnidge; E.Palmer, London; G.A.Palmer, London; S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon; R.Taylor, Barnet; A.Thomas, Gillingham; B.W.Ward, London; E.H.Wakefield, Sunbury



SMALLNESS

Isaiah 1: 9

Proverbs 30: 24

Hebrews 11: 16

I had in mind to speak about the need for us to appreciate what is small. It is the very condition into which our Lord came. He came not only into manhood's condition but He came in the form of a Babe; what compression! That is what I would like to encourage our hearts about, dear brethren, that what is small does not mean that it is feeble; what is small does not mean that it is weak; but the acceptance of smallness makes room for us to prove the power of God. They were too big at Corinth, you know. Paul had difficulty in getting in at Corinth. They were too big; he said that; they had been reigning, 1 Cor 4: 8. I think there is a need for us to be small in our own eyes. One man in the Old Testament had a time when he was like that and God looked on him, and God had something in him, I believe; it says, "when thou wast little in thine eyes", 1 Sam 15: 17. It is an attitude that we need to keep, of being small, and yet in that smallness we have in mind the whole scope of divine things.

The verse in Isaiah speaks of a residue or a remnant and we have been taught that a remnant has all the features of the whole, save in the quantity of it. So in those small conditions there are all the features of the assembly. Two in a place, gathering together, small outward conditions, yet there are all the features of the assembly. Let us have a right view of what is small. It is not that we are so small that we are careless; it is not that we have become small and things do not matter. So if it is only two or three in a place, they are together in the light of the whole, and what regulates the assembly of God would regulate a few together in smallness in a place.

I believe we need to be helped, as I have said; though it be a remnant it is a small piece of the whole with all the characteristics of the whole, the same quality. The quality is not any less because it is the end piece; the warmth, the substantiality of what is there is just the same. So may we be

helped as we come together in smallness. There may be just two or three in a place, yet what is there has the characteristics of the assembly of God in that place; so they gather together to pray, they gather together for the Lord's supper. As together, if we have this attitude, we have a sense that we are a part of the whole. The whole assembly is not there, the whole is not to be seen in two or three persons, but the characteristics of the whole are there in a few gathered together "unto my name", Matt 18: 20. So let us not despise the smallness, or be discouraged by it either, because I think if there is the right attitude with us as we come together the Lord and the Spirit would quickly give us a touch that we belong to Christ, we are part of His heavenly bride.

In Isaiah I only wanted to touch on God's sovereignty experienced in small conditions; it says, "Unless Jehovah of hosts had left us a very small residue". We may even boast, you know, in smallness; maybe we could boast that we are among those who have stood for things; I do not think we shall get the Lord's help on that line. It says, "Unless Jehovah of hosts ..."; He has been sovereign in the way He has helped us through. It is God's own distinct operation that He has preserved a remnant that is left. What a company to be in, the remnant that is left! They are going to be awakened; how encouraging Isaiah is in the later chapters—"Arise, shine! for thy light is come" (Isa 60: 1)—what a word to the remnant! What a word to a few in a place—"Arise, shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee". Well, God's sovereignty enters into all that. As we fall back on what God has done in His own sovereign operations, ways that we could not trace, we see there are other persons who have been more faithful perhaps than ourselves, more devoted, and yet they may not be remembering the Lord today. Well, "Unless Jehovah of hosts had left us a very small residue, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah". But God in His own sovereign way has preserved us. May we appreciate His ways in sovereign mercy. Paul appreciated them, and as He appreciated them he said, "How unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways!", Rom

11: 55. Well, I think that is one thing that a sense of smallness would cause us to appreciate—God’s own ways in sovereign mercy.

Another thing that is connected with smallness is wisdom, as we would see in Proverbs. I think the Corinthians, as I said, were too big to be wise, they were wise in their own eyes. Solomon says there are four things little upon the earth and they are exceeding wise. This attitude that I have spoken of makes room for divine wisdom. If there are a few of us in a place in the light of the whole assembly, who else than Christ can we turn to for direction? Who else can give us help to work out right principles? Certainly not anyone that is near by us who is walking in a path of self-will, not even persons who may have helped us in former years. I think the sense of littleness would cause us to be cast on divine wisdom. It is one of the things that Christ has been made to us; “who has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption”, 1 Cor 1: 30. He has been “made to us”; that would be the small people; He has been made to us wisdom from God. Well, there is a need for wisdom among us, I think any right-minded person would feel that, and here Solomon sees some things little upon the earth and they are exceeding wise. Where did they learn it? There could not have been room in the systems of men for these things, the ants, the rock-badgers, the locusts, and the lizard; there could not have been room in the systems of men to educate these. They would be characteristic of persons, and yet they were exceeding wise.

Where was their wisdom? Our wisdom is in falling back on the God who has sovereignly chosen us, as Jacob did on “the God that shepherded me all my life long”, Gen 48: 15. Jacob was some time coming to it but he became an exceedingly wise man. He could bless the greatest monarch of the time; he was a man who had journeyed on his own way at one time, but he became dependent, he had his name changed, and became exceeding wise. Paul is another; Paul proved wisdom; he learned it through being lowered through a wall in a basket. What a humiliating experience for a learned man of the world! But you see the learning of the world would not

have saved him when the gates of the city were being watched day and night and they were ready to slay him; what saved him was “another way”.

I thought of that passage in Matthew, “take to thee the little child and his mother” (Matt 2: 13), as “another way”. As we embrace divine things there is a whole system of heavenly administration available that we might be exceeding wise. Herod was set for the destruction of the child Jesus; all the resources of the world were set against Christ; but there was “another way” as Joseph listened to wisdom. He was small enough to do as he was told; that was wisdom—the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom—and he was small enough to do it. He might well have reasoned a lot of things in those early chapters in Matthew. I think Joseph represents to us a man who was small in his own eyes, and he was exceeding wise. Think of all the resources that Herod had being thwarted as they sought the child Jesus; there was “another way”; the magi departed “another way”, Matt 2: 12. Those men were exceeding wise, but small, little upon the earth. May that attitude mark us increasingly, that we make way for divine wisdom, divine resources.

As I have said, in Corinth it was hard, it took a long time; Paul said, “there is not a wise person among you, not even one” (1 Cor 6: 5); they were too big. There was a lot of man’s wisdom, and it comes in among us; it is very near to us; we are very apt to fall back on it; maybe if isolated from our brethren we are very apt to fall back on the wisdom of the world and bring disaster and sorrow and distress. But if we are small enough, dear brethren, in our own eyes the God who has redeemed us will see us through, and we shall come in for the resources of wisdom. It reminds us of Daniel; the wisdom of that man, who fed on pulse and water, was far greater than all the learning of the day; he was exceeding wise. He was content to be little, he was content not to have a name here but to draw his resources from someone else; he knew the companionship of the Son of God. “Go thy way until the end; and thou shalt ... stand in thy lot at the end of the days”, Dan 12: 13. There is a man who was little upon the earth and he was exceeding

wise. He saw one king go and another come. God is going to see us through, dear brethren.

That is why I read in Hebrews that there is a line that He is seeing through; it says, “for he has prepared for them a city”. God is going to house His own work in His own environment, in His own arrangement. Well we may feel put out oft-times; we may feel that the small line is not gaining any ground; but God is going to see it through. These persons in this chapter—the apostle says time would fail to speak of them—God saw them through; He not only saw them through but He is going to house them; it says, “he has prepared for them a city”. What a city, it will be, dear brethren. Abraham will be there, all these persons in this chapter will be there. What a valuation God has of these persons, small upon the earth, despised among the nations; as they sought to be true to the God who had chosen them, they would be set at nought by men; but God has prepared for them a city. Oh may we appreciate the God who comforts us in these small circumstances; the God who comes down to these small details and exercises of our pathway; He has prepared for us a city. These small conditions are preparing us for the city, preparing us to learn wisdom, because in that city you are meant to function, you know; there will be no suburban dwellers in that city, every one in that city will be functioning as having learned divine wisdom and appreciated divine sovereignty.

May we grow in the appreciation of these things, so that, as we come to appreciate what God has done, in that day we shall fill out our place; “he has prepared for them a city”. In that city, as I said, each will function in his own formation, formation that is taking place now in small conditions; but may I say in closing that in the present small conditions there is to be a representation of the whole in its true character, for His Name’s sake.

EDINBURGH

30th December 1978

THE LESSONS OF JACOB'S LIFE

Genesis 25: 27; 28: 16-22; 32: 24-32; 35: 9-12; 45: 26-28

The Holy Spirit seems to take a particular delight in the Scriptures in showing us the lives of certain persons, to bring home to us the character of the life of Jesus. Before He came there was exemplified in men a life here that was different. For example, the Spirit goes over long chapters to give us the life of David, a man who lived under hardships and afflictions, but who portrayed another spirit. He also takes up extensively the life of Jacob, not so much to bring before us a type of Christ, but to show us, I think, a pattern of ourselves, how God would bring us through. He was a man who, outstandingly, finished well. You might say a lot about Jacob, but his last words are very fine. It says, "By faith Jacob when dying blessed each of the sons of Joseph", Heb 11: 21. He was a man who went out with a blessing. Maybe you have another impression of Jacob, but he was a man who finished blessing the greatest monarch of his time. He fulfilled the course and we would all like to finish well.

Each of us here would have some link with Christ, with God, even if we could not define it very well. The first scripture we read speaks of two boys who grew. Both had the same advantages and both had the same position. I think it brings out the sovereignty of the God who is calling. I think we should appreciate this, that God has taken you up. God in His infinite love has chosen you. Jacob came to appreciate that. Maybe had you looked on those two boys Esau would have appealed to you better. He was a man of the world. He was a man who appealed to other persons in his circle of friends as he went the social round. But there was another man in that same household whom God had chosen. Maybe you feel at a disadvantage in many ways, especially the younger ones here. We feel we are not part of this group or the other group. Maybe you feel shut out from one thing or another. Let it come home to our souls today—God in His own sovereignty has called you. What a privilege!—the privilege of coming into this family that is called of God. In His own sovereign ways He has taken you

up. You could not explain it. It was not because of any advantage about you. Paul says, "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Let us appreciate it that He has taken us up. Having taken you up He will never let you go.

I will tell you something else too. You are spoiled for the world. If God has put in His claim, if God has chosen you in His own sovereign way, you will never, as I hope to show in Jacob, find happiness until you know the place where God is. You may spend years seeking your own advantages and your own way, but you will come to it, God will see to it that His end is reached in you, as it was with Jacob. Jacob very early had an impression of God. He was brought up in a godly home, and as he went out from that home, he carried with him several impressions of God, certain right sensibilities. Maybe he had been trying to get away from home, I do not know. In any case, he is away from home here. The psalmist says—

If I take the wings of the dawn and dwell in the
uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there shall thy hand lead me,

Ps 139: 9, 10

Beloved, let it come into your heart today that God has set Himself upon having you, and have you He will. He will have you for His system. Man may be trying to have you for his system, but God in His love has chosen you to have part in His system, and I believe He would use the time today to help you, to help us all, to encourage us all, that we may find our happiness in being where He would have us.

So Jacob went on his way. No doubt thoughts were in his mind as to leaving home and seeking out a new career. God interrupts all this. He comes to this night when he was asleep. Maybe there had not been much time earlier to think about God. I am sure he was very much taken up with anxiety about his own affairs. So when he was asleep God comes in and shows him that he belongs to Him. Jacob was full at this moment of what he was going to do. God interrupts him and says what *He* is going to do. He says, "I am with thee". Now

Jacob had his career before him. Was he not a man who could make his own way? Maybe he envied Esau in his prosperity. Maybe we see around us others who can carve their way in the world better than we can. We think that belonging to the pathway of God may be a disadvantage. If we look back on our lives we may see the material disadvantage of belonging to the pathway of God. We could possibly have used our abilities better, have made a way for ourselves, made a career for ourselves, in a different way. Now Jacob, I think, had some of these thoughts in his mind. He says, 'This is a dreadful place', and yet he did not give up God.

God's name was there. Jacob set up a stone for a pillar before God. He fell back on his beginnings; I think, using Christian language, he had been converted; he knew the Lord as his Saviour. He said, 'Well, if God brings me back, I will commit myself to the Supper'. That is really what he was saying. 'If God looks after me, if He comes in and helps me, then I will think about being with God'.

Well, God in grace comes down. Wonderful grace! The God who took you up, you know, the God who chose you when there was nothing lovable in you. He comes down to these very reasonings, and the great thing is, that God is faithful. Jacob took a long, long time to come back to Bethel, but God's eye was over him. He had been through severe exercises on the road, but God remained faithful and that is the last impression that Jacob would have, as looking back on this incident, that He abides faithful. I think in our own soul history we have all made these bargains. They were not the height of intelligence exactly, but I think most of us have made them, and God has been faithful. He virtually said to Jacob, 'I have better things in mind for you, but if that is the way you are thinking at the moment, I will take you up. I will be with you'. Jeremiah 48: 11 speaks of being emptied from vessel to vessel. That was going on with Jacob. All the time there was a weakening of the line of the flesh, and a strengthening of the line of the Spirit.

What I want to speak of in this history is the change taking place in this beloved man Jacob. Whereas at this

juncture he was all set to make his own way, God interrupts. Then Jacob goes on his way. He spends a long time in his own circumstances, making money and raising a family. These cares, you know, they are all in God's ways, and they may overwhelm us. They may hinder us from being in the place where God would have us. A good deal of sorrow and disappointment comes into Jacob's way, but God is faithful. The sovereignty of God is still there, and the faithfulness of God, and God keeps him in movement. I am sure Jacob thought he had found his place as he settled down with Rachel. There was disappointment in his family life. Certain disappointments come in but God remains faithful, and in these very disappointments He would teach us the God He is. He would teach us that this is not our home, that He has far better things in mind for us than ever we could envisage for ourselves. So in His ways He stirred Jacob up and He sets him in movement again. Jacob comes back to Bethel. He is on the way there when God again meets him.

An exercise comes into his mind in Genesis 32 as to how he is going to meet his brother Esau. Well, Jacob proposes to meet him in his own fleshly reasoning. Jacob thinks that as he has acquired some substance, he can meet his brother on his own ground. But God is going to teach him something different; He will teach him dependence. Not only is God faithful but He would have us be dependent on Him. Jacob thought he could appease Esau while certain questions remained unsettled; Jacob thought he would gloss it over. God teaches him something else, that if Jacob is going to be in power it is going to be in the Spirit and not in the flesh. God teaches him here that, however much he thought he could do in his own strength, he is powerless. But he acquired power by depending on the God who had promised. He falls back on God. Oh what a God to fall back on, beloved! He did not take us up to leave us in confusion or disappointment, but He took us up that, as depending on Him, we might be here in power.

When Jacob arises here—one of the highlights of his life—it says, "The sun rose upon him; and he limped upon his hip". It was not very attractive to the world; Esau might not

find much in him, but he was an object of heaven's attention, "The sun rose upon him". God shows His interest in a man who is learning to limp. Jacob proceeds in some power from this point. He gets distracted again, but you can see that some power was in him. I think that God in His ways with us, through the disappointments of life, perhaps through seeing that we are not able to do what we intended to do, would teach us to be dependent. That is something that Jesus never needed to learn. He was the perfect Man in dependence. Psalm 22: 10 says He was cast upon God from the womb—the dependence of Jesus. How beautiful! How attractive He was as Man here. Tempted of the devil, He showed the beauty of a dependent Man. In those temptations in the gospels He showed the beauty of dependence. Now Jacob, in principle, is learning to be a dependent man. He does not give up. He has this impediment—"Well, I am not the man I thought I was". Is it all finished? No! He went on his way, limping as he went, but he is treading now in a path of faith, a path of dependence.

Under these ways he moves in Genesis 35 to Bethel, the house of God. Certain exercises have to be faced about his associations, and about the company that he is in. But he is helped to face these things. God says in Genesis 32 that Israel will be his name, but not until chapter 35 does God really reach His end. Jacob had to learn that whatever *his* standard of things might be, what must govern him is *God's* standards. God had His eye on having Jacob as a prince in the house of God. That is where God wants you. Have you found your place there? He has found you a place amongst those who call upon the name of God. Have you found your place in the service of God? Jacob is coming home here, coming home to find his place in the service of God. But there was need of certain exercises. He may have thought that everything was right in his house, but there were certain things there that were not in keeping with the house of God. So he had to adjust his standards, he had to adjust his way of doing things. God brings him to this place, Bethel. It says, "God went up from him in the place where he had talked with him", Gen 35: 13.

The next verse speaks of Jacob putting up a pillar again. It says this time that he poured on it a drink offering, and poured oil on it. He has some appreciation of God, the God who had called him sovereignly, the God who had been faithful to him all the way that he had gone, the God upon whom he had learnt to depend. He comes to find his place where God's name is honoured—Bethel. God calls him. It says, "He called his name Israel". God shows him how much He would do for him as He has him in this place. We need to encourage our hearts that we might be led on, that we may be helped to be where God would have us, finding our place in His house, where everything speaks of His glory, where everything is arranged in accordance with His mind.

Now this exercise comes in again. Jacob thinks he has reached the end. You know, beloved, there will be exercises as long as we are here. God will keep us in movement all the time we are here. We may think we have reached the end of these things and settle down. God brings in exercises again to stir him up. What finally happens with Jacob is that he comes to see that Joseph is alive. What a day in his life! a time of reviving. This is something that we all need, to be revived. We have found our place in the house of God. We have come, through wonderful grace, into the light of the assembly. Who of us has not needed to be revived as to it? And the revival was typically that Christ was enthroned in glory. What a revival! There is a change here, you might almost say a final change in Jacob, a change from glory to glory. He says, "Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him". What a revival comes into his life; what a change of view, beloved!—from looking at our own part in the breakdown to seeing that God's thoughts are centred in Christ in glory. All the time, you know, that Jacob had been bemoaning and looking back mournfully on his life, Joseph was reigning in glory.

Perhaps we have been missing something. Maybe we have been moping; maybe we have had the light of the assembly, but little of the enjoyment. But all the time, you know, God has been going on with His thoughts. It says, "The spirit of Jacob ... revived". What a revival God would bring into

our hearts today, to see that things are not centred in you or in me, but that everything centres in Christ glorified, Christ in glory. It may take us a long time to come to it; we tend so much to think of ourselves; but we have to come to see that the centre of everything from God's point of view is Christ, crowned with glory and honour. That, beloved, can never break down. It is a fine thing to be settled in our lives, a fine thing to be settled in our affections, that things no longer depend on me, but depend on Christ enthroned in glory. How worthy He is to be crowned in glory! As we remarked in the reading, there is One upon whom everything hangs, and it is not you or me; it is Christ in glory. Things hang upon Him, and as hanging upon Him they must go through, beloved.

What reviving this brings to Jacob! An old man, crippled, near the end of his days, what does he say? "I will go and see him". Take a journey, beloved; rise from those circumstances and take the journey. Jacob would tell you, when he had done it, that it was well worthwhile. There are many in the pathway would tell you the same—that the journey was well worth it. Exercise was needed. He was a crippled man, quite aged, very difficult to be uprooted from those surroundings, but he would tell you it was well worth it. Who would have thought he was crippled as he left Pharaoh? Who would have thought he had had these exercises as he blessed the sons of Joseph, as he speaks there of "the God that shepherded me all my life long"? Can you look back like that, beloved? After you went away in early life, perhaps, can you look back and say, 'The God that shepherded me all my life long'—a God who is well known? I raise these matters as to these experiences that they may issue in some substance. Think of that time when he went away from home; that time when he was with Laban, making his money; that time when he came back to face Esau: now he says, "The God that shepherded me all my life long". I believe it brings out to us the value of being dependent. It brings out, too, the value of trusting in the God who has taken us up in His own sovereign ways, and that He will see us through.

Genesis 46 begins, “And Israel took his journey with all that he had”. Pharaoh says to him, “Let not your eye regret your stuff”. Maybe it matters to me, but God says, ‘I will make it well worth your while’. What a company to live in! Typically it is the life of Christ. What a way to go up! What a way for Jacob to finish his pathway here—in type he saw Christ enthroned in glory, a Sun that can never be dimmed, a path that is going on and brightening until the day be fully come, Prov 4: 18. So at the end it says that Jacob worshipped—still dependent—on the top of his staff, Heb 11: 21. He had to be strengthened to the end of his days, but he went on worshipping the God who shepherded him all his life long. So may we be encouraged to go through, and to see that the God who has taken us up, despite our histories, in spite of our waywardness, is going to see us through. I believe we can help things along here. Jacob took a long time; he held things up. But God has no intention that things should be held up; He would have us early to commit ourselves to Himself, and thus He will bring us into this area where Christ is in His glory. May it be so.

CARDIFF

24th February 1979



REDEMPTION AND THE SERVICE OF GOD

Isaiah 44: 6-8

Exodus 15: 13, 17

1 Chronicles 17: 21, 22

RT These scriptures may help us to a deeper understanding of the place that redemption may have in the service of God. We speak of it in the gospel, rightly so, but there are two sides to the matter; we are not only redeemed from, as would be prominent in the gospel, but we are also redeemed to. Redemption does not leave us where it finds us but has in view, as the scripture in Exodus shows, the abode of God's holiness. As redemption applied to the people, they had to get out of Egypt; redeemed people could not remain in Egypt.

The end in redemption is that we may be a habitation of God. We use the expression 'the glory of redemption' and it is something that will swell the praises in every family. The redeemed are a selective company; Isaiah uses the expression very freely—"the redeemed of Jehovah". It does not exactly apply to all men; the value of it is available for all men but the personnel who are redeemed are a select company. Isaiah uses some very fine expressions about them, such as "the redeemed shall walk there", chap 35: 9. I think the sense of redemption coming into our souls involves movement and would find some expression in the service of God.

In the first scripture we see who the Redeemer is: "Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts". It is God expressing His love by acting as a redeemer. It would bring into our souls some sense of what we are to God. You find in this section of scripture that as the idea of redemption dawns on the people they brighten up, they begin to move and to be responsive. I think the spirit of that could be carried with us in the service of God. As I say, this first scripture brings home to us who the Redeemer is. I thought in the second we see that we are redeemed in view of His abode. The wilderness is covered very quickly in that song; we are redeemed in view of being a dwelling-place for God. And

David in Chronicles uses it too in what we can speak of as the service of God, that God has redeemed a people to Himself; “the one nation ... that God went to redeem”. I thought there was possibly something to be gleaned in an enquiry like that, to swell our praises in the service of God.

ECB Do the references in verses 22 and 23 of Isaiah 44 help what you have in mind? “Return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, ye heavens; for Jehovah hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, the forest, and every tree therein! For Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel”. I wondered if that bore on your thought and whether it might help us in the service of God.

RT I was impressed, in thinking of this, how much redemption finds expression in song in Scripture. Exodus 15 shows that, and in Revelation 5 there is the idea of song and liberty. I think if we had some sense that we were the redeemed of Jehovah it would bring us into the liberty of sons, to function in perhaps a less restricted way than we may at times.

ECB I think there is need for that amongst us, that there should be more unrestricted sense of response. We had a word on Tuesday night about spontaneity. The very word ‘redeemer’ has in mind the One who redeems, has it not? The prime thing is that He has His own interest before Him. I wondered if we sufficiently have in view God’s side of redemption when we are so occupied with our own.

RT Yes, it is redemption to Himself, He has His rest in view. The boards in the tabernacle were able to stand up because they were founded in sockets of silver. I think redemption sets us together. We may come into it individually but it is a collective idea—the redeemed of Jehovah, they walk there, and the redeemed shall sing. The sense of it brings God’s love in a fresh way into our hearts, that He loved us and He expressed His love in a way like this, that He redeemed us, took away every encumbrance, so that we should be in the liberty and joy of being sons in His presence.

CGH Do you think that in verse 6 of Isaiah 44 there are perhaps references to two of the divine Persons? I am just wondering to whom 'his' would refer. "Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer": is 'his' there Israel?

RT 'His' would be the same as we have in Colossians and Ephesians; "in whom we have redemption".

CGH It would refer more to Christ personally.

RT Yes, I think so. I am glad you bring that up because we have read Old Testament scriptures but they were looking on to our day; so it is identified for us in the New Testament: "in whom". It says, "taken us into favour in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption", Eph 1: 6. In Colossians as well (chap 1: 14), we have it in a Person, and that Person has made Himself well-known in the way He has moved in redeeming love.

HAH Do the references in Leviticus and Ruth to the right of redemption help? God has rights in creation by virtue of His power in creating for His pleasure. His rights in redemption have been established in virtue of His own activities in love, as you say, in that one of the Persons of the Godhead has come into that position on God's behalf.

RT I thought this scripture in Isaiah brought that idea in, that God exercised the right He had. He might not have done it; there is an idea of sovereignty in redemption. He had the right and, as in the book of Ruth, He exercised that right when we were encumbered. But in the exercising of that right He has freed us from every encumbrance so that we can be in His presence in holy liberty.

DJH I wondered as to sovereignty and even supremacy, which seems to be suggested in these references in verse 6. Does redemption and His rights in it show evidence of His supremacy acting in love.

RT When God comes in as a redeemer there is none that can stand, and that is very beautiful in this latter half of Isaiah. Nations and everything must give way so that God can have His people freed from every hindrance to be in the liberty

of being in His presence. I think the sense of these things would broaden our response.

ECB Perhaps you would say a word as to the blood in this connection, because redemption is connected with His blood in the New Testament.

RT It brings home to us the cost, does it not? Redemption is not without cost; how much God thought about us that there was such blood shed on our account, shed that righteousness may be met shed that the basis may be laid so that He could exercise His rights as a Redeemer. But you would have more to say about it.

ECB Some of these thoughts are important for us because they are fundamental. The blood of bulls and goats does not have intrinsic value, but as has been said here recently the blood of Christ has, and that is why it is referred to in the New Testament as precious is it not—because it has intrinsic value?

RT I have often reflected on that verse: “but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world”, 1 Pet 1: 19, 20. It was no emergency measure. Think of God looking down the history of time and looking on to the blood of Christ! His purposes depended on that blood being shed, and His purposes depend on redemption’s rights being exercised so that we can be in the joy of those purposes now.

DJH Do you think the reference to “I am the first and I am the last” would connect with that? Would He being ‘the first’ be a question of His purpose flowing out and He being ‘the last’ His end being secured in redemption?

RT Yes, and the connection between the first and the last would be that He has come in as a Redeemer; and His purposes are all effectuated because He has exercised His rights in redemption. But as we said, the basis of that right being exercised was that such blood had been shed. He righteously moved, the price was fully paid and the redeemed should be before Him in the enjoyment of His purposes.

ECB That scripture in Peter brings out that redemption is by what is incorruptible, does it not? And is not the consequence of redemption that an incorruptible order of things has been established for God?

RT I thought that side should come into our minds, that we are not redeemed to go back again. If you are redeemed from a thing, you are away from it for ever. For the fulness of it we await a new body, but if God has brought the joy and light of redemption into our hearts it means that we are freed from a thing for ever, so that we can be for Him for ever, we can be in the liberty and joy that His love designed.

CGH Redemption implies previous ownership, does it not?

RT And it implies that the persons who were previously owned had become encumbered, the persons whom God had a right over. He had a right over all men, but He has exercised the right of redemption to free some of them, and that company is known as the redeemed. I think the sense of that would give us liberty and cause us to be, as has been said, more spontaneous in our response to Him.

HJT You said that this enters into the service of God. Would it specially affect us as we drink together of the cup, the cup of the new covenant in His blood?

RT Yes, I am sure it would; it would affect us throughout the service but, as you said, the blood brings home to us the price that the Redeemer paid. So we would be free; I think a sense of liberty comes in as we drink into the cup, that we are freed from every encumbrance to enter into His thoughts in purpose.

CRB Does the glory of the Redeemer here bring in the power of the love that would exclude everything else and everyone else, so that we are just occupied with God?

RT Yes, “who, as I, shall call ...?” The ‘I’ in this section is very fine; He says, “I know not any”. Redemption frees us from every other influence and every other object so that God is before us in this way, would you say?

CRB There is a wonderful majesty here, is there not? “Is there a God beside me? ... I know not any”. It is love that excludes every other influence, is it not?

RT Yes, and there is a sole object before our hearts. I think the ‘Is’ are very striking in this section; “I am the first, and I am the last ... And who, as I, shall call ... I appointed ... Have I not caused ...?” God’s majesty and greatness before whom nothing can stand comes into the soul.

VHB Do you think it is a good exercise to meditate upon what it cost God and what it cost the Son that we might be redeemed?

RT I think that would produce depth with us, that such a price was paid that we may come into the purposes of God.

VHB And we could never fathom the depths that were contained in those three hours of darkness.

RT So redemption was a work accomplished, but the Person who accomplished it comes before the soul; “Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer”. He often uses that title very feelingly and affectionately towards the people to revive them. You find as it comes in that there is response, a reviving among the people of God. I think it would produce movement with us.

DLS Is ‘the Redeemer’ the peculiar glory of the Lord Himself in relation to redemption? The glory of redemption is a wonderful thought, is it not?

RT We use those expressions, redemption’s glory, and the glory of redemption, frequently but do we think enough about it? Say something about it for us.

DLS It would be the spring from which praise would arise. We would be entitled to stand on that ground and become those who could worthily answer to it.

RT It is obvious that they become a very select company: “the redeemed shall walk there”; they have liberty to move about; there are no encumbrances; they are not hindered through conscience or sin or defects in any way, but they are

free to walk, and they live in Zion and they sing. I think the fact that God has exercised His rights in this way brings home to our souls how much He loves to have us before Him in His presence for His own pleasure.

CRB You referred to Colossians; it is related there to the kingdom of the Son of His love. Would you expand on that a little?

RT It just brings home to us that God would have things arranged to suit Himself. The kingdom of the Son of His love conveys an idea where God has everything as He would like to have it. There are no influences that would hinder, but the Son of His love predominates and the redeemed are there and at home there.

ECB In chapter 35 to which you have referred more than once it says, “they shall obtain gladness and joy”, v 10. I wondered if you had in mind the question whether we have obtained gladness and joy, the redeemed walking and the ransomed returning, everlasting joy on their heads and so on.

RT Yes, I think the sense of redemption would give us everlasting joy. If God has redeemed us, who can divert us? Why should we be diverted? But He redeemed us that He may have us entirely secured for His own pleasure. Another interesting thing is how much holiness is connected with redemption; it brings home to us how near we are to God.

CGH The thought referred to as to joy is an experience which really overcomes, or lies behind, what is sorrow. We may sorrow and yet there is that underlying joy; is that not so?

RT Yes, but I think the sorrows would be quickly overcome by the redeemed, because “If God be for us, who against us? He who, yea, has not spared his own Son” (Rom 8: 31, 32) gives the sense of redeeming love. I am sure if that filled our souls more we would not be overcome by the sorrows. The Redeemer and redemption has a note of victory and triumph about it.

CGH That is what I had in mind, because we may be affected physically at times, but underneath all that there is something that subsists in the way of satisfaction and joy.

RT Yes. I feel the need for increased liberty that redemption would give us. It says in that passage in chapter 35, “even fools,—shall not err therein”, v 8. I just speak to encourage us all to be more responsive. We often tend to sit on our seats and rehearse things perhaps a bit, but even fools shall not err.

SJK You have referred more than once to the soul. It says, “the redemption of their soul is costly”, Ps 49: 8. Would the soul be that part of us that could enter with joy into the service of praise?

RT Yes. I think it refers to the vital side of things, that God would have what is vital. “Sorrow and sighing shall flee away”, Isa 35: 10. We come into the liberty that God has in mind in His purpose, to be responsive there.

HCH Isaiah speaks several times about the Redeemer. In chapter 48 it says, “Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am Jehovah thy God, who teacheth thee for thy profit, who leadeth thee in the way that thou shouldest go”, v 17. He “teacheth thee for thy profit”.

RT Well, the enjoyment of redemption would make us very teachable. It keeps us from looking back, it keeps us from being encumbered even by our own histories, that the mighty power of God’s love expressed in redemption has secured us from all that we were and all that surrounded us; it has secured us from a scene of bondage that we may come into the abode of His holiness. Exodus 15 brings that home to us. The blood was shed before this, but it says, “Thou by thy mercy hast led forth the people that thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them by thy strength unto the abode of thy holiness”. Nothing can hinder God effectuating His purposes.

ECB So does Exodus 15 bring out that we are not redeemed in order to be in the wilderness?

RT I thought that; the land and God’s abode is immediately in mind. The wilderness was bringing out what kind of people they were, but God had in mind that redemption brought them into the place that He had purposed.

ECB Because redemption has to do with purpose and not with God's ways.

RT That is right, and it is something that needs to guide us more. In His ways there is much that has to be worked out, but they are working out His purpose.

ECB I wondered whether if we reflected more on the question, why did God redeem us? it might help us, because the answer to that must be that He redeemed us for His own sake. Our blessing and our being liberated were necessary if He was to enjoy what He had in view in redemption. God is the object of His own work in this regard, is He not?

RT From one point of view there is no answer to that question, Why did He redeem us? Who could answer that? There was certainly nothing in us. It brings out His sovereignty, that He moved like that in redemption. But then we come to see the reason for it was that He wanted to have us in the abode of His holiness. And the sense of redemption laying hold of us would help us to be more settled there.

DJH I think this helps us as to an enquiry raised during the week as to mercy in relation to the service of God. It comes in in this context, does it not? "Thou by thy mercy hast led forth the people that thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them". We were wondering as to how we would refer to mercy, glorifying God for mercy and yet without being occupied with our past history. It is not a question of past history here but is His mercy operating in redemption with a view to our entering into the abode of His holiness.

RT If we look at the Psalms, David uses mercy a lot in his response to God, and I think these things would help to broaden us in the expressions we use, because as we come into God's presence there is a wide range of things to engage us, glory upon glory that will evoke answering praises for all eternity. We may at times get restricted in the way we think. But these impressions would broaden us so that there is increased liberty and increased joy in the response to God.

CGH The experience we pass through now in the course of our responsible history, although relieved week by week on the Lord's day morning, is a kind of intermediate stage of our soul history, is it not? We have passed out of the world, we are free of Egypt, but we are in the wilderness which does not provide for our spiritual gain; we have to get that from heaven, do we not?

RT It says here, "Thou hast guided them by thy strength unto the abode of thy holiness". It does not speak about them going out from that. As you say, there is the wilderness to be gone through, but we go through it in the light of His purpose; if we do not, we will not be rightly in the wilderness.

PSW So in the other verse you referred to, "plant them in the mountain" is very specific and very stable, is it not?

RT Yes, it is very beautiful. There is the idea that you can have your roots there, you can take root in the mountain of His inheritance.

PSW It is not the scattering of the seed; it is something very definite in the way that each one is handled.

RT That is very fine, that there is a plant, something that is precious, something that is capable of being fruitful, and it is fruitful as it is planted in this kind of soil.

PSW Would it connect with the plants of the Father's planting, Matt 15: 13?

RT I think that is something to lay hold of, that we are planted in God's purpose. As we move out we move in the light of those purposes in our wilderness pathway.

CRB Would you say something as to what you had in mind as to verse 17 and verse 13 by some distinction.

RT I had not much in mind as to the distinction between them but just that the idea of redemption would produce movement. We are redeemed from one set of circumstances to be at home in another. In verse 13 they come into the abode of His holiness and in verse 17 there is the sanctuary. You have some impression about them.

CRB I was really enquiring, but verse 17 would seem to be the final consummation of God's purposes; there is a certain glory about finality, but does the abode of His holiness show how God arrives at that in the tabernacle, even in the wilderness conditions? There is a sense in which God is dwelling despite surrounding conditions, but it is all related to the land; the land is in view.

RT I think that is very fine, that God has His abode now; the ground has been cleared and God is free to have His abode in those wilderness circumstances. But then the sanctuary would be further in; it says, "The Sanctuary, Lord, that thy hands have prepared". It is inside. I think it would allude to the holiest.

GAP Would the service of the Holy Spirit be involved in, "Thou hast guided them by thy strength unto the abode of thy holiness"? I was thinking that a redeemed people would be available and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's operations.

RT Yes; and I think the section would bring home to us that, as in God's presence, we can look back and see the way that He moved, exercising His rights in mercy, exercising His rights in redemption. God exercised those rights. I think it enhances to us the kind of God He is and would deepen our response to such a God.

ECB Does the mercy-seat in the tabernacle speak of redemption as well as propitiation?

RT Yes, Romans would bring that out. Say some more.

ECB I was wondering whether in the mercy-seat there is not just propitiation, which is the side that we very much think of, but it reminds us all the time, as you have quoted already, of redemption's glory.

RT Propitiation would be wider than redemption, would it not?

ECB It is wider in its bearing, because it is available for all, but redemption raises the question of who is in the gain of it.

RT And I think it, as it were, saturates our hearts with His love, that He moved like this to have us in the joy and in the presence of His purposes.

CGH I suppose the reference just made to propitiation would indicate that God has a basis upon which He can clear the whole scene from sin and introduce a scene of righteousness according to His own glory.

RT Yes; redemption, to my mind, brings us more into His purposes. Propitiation is connected with sins, and redemption frees us from our sins, but it gives us a sense that we are in His presence, we are wanted there we are loved. And if we have the sense in our souls of being there as wanted, as David obviously had, I think it would give us a lot more liberty than perhaps we are accustomed to enjoy.

JMW Does the line of the hymn—

We should be part, through Jesus' blood (Hymn 88)

—involve what you are saying, our being for God's pleasure?

RT And you can sing that verse at the end of the meeting, can you not? Say more.

JMW It is the exclamation Mr Darby makes: 'O Love divine!' You were speaking about God's love being involved with His purpose, the side of redemption, and I thought it would cause us to be freer in our expressions.

RT That is exactly what I was thinking.

CGH That would help the younger brothers among us would it not? to feel free in the service, and although they might feel they could say very little, at any rate what little they could say they are free to say, are they not?

RT Yes, and if the older brothers gave a lead, the young ones would soon follow. I think that perhaps the older persons get more crystallised than the younger ones. David was an older man here but he is speaking about the one nation "that God went to redeem". He is looking back in a positive way and

seeing that in God's ways, in the exercise of His rights in mercy and redemption, He has endeared Himself to His saints.

FPAS You said earlier in the meeting that we might bring this matter in at any point in the service. Have you any more to say about that?

RT I think that is true about a good many things. We tend to put things in compartments, but I think there is room for expansion in our minds. We can count on what God has wrought in us to function responsively at its true level at any given time, would you say?

FPAS Yes; so you would not say that we could not have a reference to redemption in the marital setting, as we say. I wondered whether the Ruth scripture would justify that.

RT Yes. What did Jacob say? "the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day, the Angel that redeemed me from all evil", Gen 48: 15, 16. That is possibly a reference to the Spirit, that the Spirit has part in this kind of work, protecting us, guarding us, bringing home to us some impression of how precious we were to God. So these things only seem to stimulate enquiry and broaden our thinking.

FPAS Then in that connection I would like to enquire what is meant by "the acquired possession". The Holy Spirit comes in there. It says "who is"—that is the Person of the Spirit—"the earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession", Eph 1: 14.

RT The actuality of it will be future. It says "ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance to the redemption of the acquired possession". The footnote says 'up to'; it is more than 'till'. I think it means that the fulness and joy of the thing can be ours now in the Spirit, would you say?

FPAS Yes, I think that is very helpful.

RT So as we enjoy these things we would be less bound in our thoughts and enjoy increased liberty in serving God, because redemption really underlies sonship.

CGH Could you distinguish redemption and purchase?

RT Purchase is the way that redemption expressed itself; purchase involves money, but redemption is even more than purchase. If a thing is available to be purchased anybody can buy it; but only God could redeem. You may purchase a thing without having the right to redeem it. God alone had the right of redemption, but He expressed that right in that He purchased us.

ECB Does not redemption have in mind a previous existence? I wondered if that was behind the enquiry as to redemption being referred to in the marital setting as we speak, that the assembly had no previous existence prior to the death of Christ save in divine purpose. Therefore it may be that it is more accurate to speak of purchase in regard to the assembly, as Acts 20 does, than to speak of it being redeemed. Is that right?

FPAS I thought that, that the assembly is not redeemed.

RT I think that it is right to say that. Yet the glory that was exercised in redemption is something that the bride would understand and cherish, is it not?

ECB The idea of purchase implies a desire to possess; redemption implies the desire to liberate. Is that so?

RT Yes, to liberate from every encumbrance, so that it can function at its true dignity. We are not exhaustive in what we are saying, but I think these things would promote our enquiring and being stimulated that there may be a breadth in our response.

CRB "They shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God", Rev 21: 3. That is really the fruit of redemption, is it not?

RT Yes it is; I think that is very precious. And in the presence of God the sense that He moved like that would sweeten our praises, would it not? And no authority can lay claim to hinder us, we are there unencumbered, to praise Him alone.

CRB Is there not a wonder about the love that we can claim God as our God, that would free us from everything that relates to an order of things which is not in keeping with such a God?

RT That is very good. The sense that we are loved, and the sense of love, bring their own liberty.

VHB Do you think that mercy and sovereignty very much come together in Ephesians, chosen in Christ “before the world’s foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love”, chap 1: 4?

RT Yes, these things, mercy and redemption, have come in as the handmaids of His love to effectuate His purpose. So the way He has made Himself known would help us to praise Him better.

DJH I was thinking of that hymn of Mr Coates—

For Thou hast brought again to Him
More than by man He lost. (Hymn 431)

He has more from man by redemption than He ever had in man in creation simply in innocence, has He not? Is that the glory of redemption that we were enquiring about earlier?

RT Yes, and it seems to apply in a peculiar way to men. It gives man a certain status and a sense of how much God has men in His mind in His purposes.

ECB Does not our liberty in speaking to God—the Father, the Son, or the Spirit—really depend on our knowledge of God and how well we know Him? I wondered if the crystallisation process takes place when we have more knowledge of things than of divine Persons.

RT That is good, and it is the reason God says so often in Isaiah, I am thy Redeemer. It is a Person, a Person has exercised His rights and has moved like that. The Person that has done it is greater than all He ever did.

ECB It has often been remarked how free persons are with God in Genesis; they speak to God in almost uninhibited liberty. Then redemption comes in in Exodus and should

really improve that liberty, yet it may be that traces of the law and what belongs to it cling to us, so that we have not the liberty that we might have. But it is a great thing, is it not, to hear a brother ranging freely in the service of God?

RT I think we would all covet it; and, as you say, the more we know God, the more liberty we will have. Redemption came in in Exodus because the people were in Egypt; they could not sing in Egypt but redemption came in that they might be free from all that bondage and be dwelling in the abode of His holiness, might come into the sanctuary.

DJH The law had not yet come in here. This is very early in the history, as we would speak as applying it. Would that all bear on what you are saying?

RT The law was needed because they were in the flesh. In redemption you go beyond the law, you come into the abode where God has everything as He would have it arranged.

ECB In Isaiah 43 there is a reference to God as Redeemer which implies they are coming out of captivity, out of Babylon, which would bear on us too, do you think? It is not merely out of Egypt but it is out of Babylon.

RT Yes, and every trace of Babylon would be removed, would it not? Redemption not only brings the persons out but it removed every trace of anything that would be unsuitable to the abode of His holiness.

CGH What is the distinction between Egypt and Babylon?

ECB It has been said—just remembering some ministry—that Egypt is the state out of which the church is taken and Babylon is that into which she falls. But Babylon represents the world in its glitter and attractiveness and prosperity and all that kind of thing. The people are brought back out of that.

DAB In connection with what you said about having the right of redemption, one must also have the resources. I was thinking of Boaz. He said to the one who had the right of redemption, “If thou wilt redeem it, redeem”, Ruth 4: 4. And he said, “I cannot redeem it”, v 6. But in Ephesians it says,

“in whom we have redemption through his blood” (chap 1: 7) and in Acts 20 we are “purchased with the blood of his own”, v 28. So that God and the Redeemer have had the resources for the work that was done.

RT Yes, so that wherever we were, whether Babylon or Egypt, it only emphasised the resources of divine love. Whatever encumbrance we may have been under, the resources have been greater, and they have been exercised in love that we may be freed from the taint of these things. Peter speaks about the “vain conversation”; we are redeemed from the taint of all that has gone before that we may be in the liberty and joy of a people secured for God.

HCH In the Songs of Degrees it says, “with him is plenteous redemption”, Ps 130: 7. That is remarkable, is it not? Then it goes on to say, “And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities”.

RT Yes, the encumbrance has not been too great for God. We may think of how great the liabilities are, but it has only magnified the resources that God has in redemption.

CRB These thoughts come into David’s heart as he goes in and sits before Jehovah, when he had just been adjusted to find out that God’s thoughts were different and greater than his own thoughts. Is it something to seek help from the Spirit about, to be able to rest before God and seek grace to ponder over these things?

RT Yes it is, and the Spirit would help you to say more than you intended. You find that in ministry, and in the service of God, the Spirit helps you to say more than you thought about before. I think that is the liberty that redemption would bring about, God’s love so enjoyed that we are able to be led further in, able to come nearer to enjoy a little closer the love that has redeemed us. So as you say, David here is sitting, he is restful, he is not worried about what the next hymn will be. The enjoyment of redemption would free us from these things that are so near to us at times; the redeemed will say the right thing, they will function at the true level.

CGH So for the Spirit to lead you a little beyond what was first in mind in getting up to give thanks, or to express praise, would indicate that at the moment the Lord by the Spirit leads you beyond what was in your mind. And that is really quite an experience, is it not?

RT It is an experience. I think it is something to think about, that if that happens you should give some time to think about what the Spirit helped you to say. I remember saying to a brother, after an address, that I had enjoyed something he said, and he said, I had not thought about it before. Well, these are the best parts of any ministry, something that comes in that had not been thought about before. If that is our experience we should give time to ponder the things that come in.

ECB The reverse is true too, is it not, that you do not say the things you had intended to say?

RT That has often happened and the Spirit is in that, is He not? We may think we know best, but the Spirit knows best. It shows we are in a living system. Redemption brings us into, not a dead system, but a living system. Babylon would be a dead system where things can be written down, and so on, but redemption would bring us into a living system where we are caught in the flow. “The redeemed shall walk there” is a very beautiful expression. “And a highway shall be there and a way ... of holiness ... even fools,—shall not err therein”. The sons are functioning without looking over their shoulder, are they not?

ECB You can then understand something of “mediator of a better covenant” (Heb 8: 6), can you not?

RT Yes, that is very good. So things are in the hand of the Son, in the hand of One who is dispensing blessing all round and we are just there to absorb it. David here is absorbing some of that blessing. And as we absorb that rather than think about ourselves or other things, we are able to function at the true level of sonship.

EO It says “Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so”, Ps 107: 2.

RT Very good. Well, let that happen, let the redeemed say so. Why do we sit quiet so often? I think redemption causes movement; that is very obvious from these scriptures. Redemption does not leave you where it finds you but causes this spontaneous movement. May it mark our gatherings more.

LONDON

10th February 1980

List of initials *(All local except where otherwise stated)*

V.H.Browne; D.A.Burr; E.C.Burr; C.R.Byng; H.C.Hatcher;
C.G.Hitchcock; D.J.Hutson; H.A.Hutson; S.J.Knappett;
E.Oliver; G.A.Palmer; D.L.Stewart, Edinburgh; F.P.A.Stocks;
H.J.Taylor; R.Taylor, Barnet; J.M.Wallach; P.S.Warren



PREPARATION

Romans 9: 23

Hebrews 11: 16

Our brother and sister and all of us this week have done a good deal of preparation for this occasion. It is a feature that is to mark the Christian's pathway, preparation. Often we are exposed to the enemy through being unprepared. Preparation is something that has marked God's ways from the earliest times, but especially in this dispensation. The preparation has in view the eternal day. It is not just something that comes about miraculously, but something into which a great deal has entered.

This matter is to affect us. God has worked on the principle of preparing things. So in regard to our Lord it says, "Thou hast prepared me a body" (Heb 10: 5)—a prepared vessel that the enemy assailed and attacked, but could not overcome, a 'holy vessel of God's pleasure'. The enemy put certain temptations before Him; think of these answers that He gave—"It is written", "It is said" (Luke 4: 4-12), bringing out His perfect trust in God. The world prepares largely through rehearsal and in independence of God; that is not to mark the believer. The path for the believer is, as it was with Christ, a path that involves dependence. May we be helped to be prepared for matters of the testimony. God has entered much into it, vessels of mercy, which He had "before prepared for glory, us". What a work is going on today! What a work is taking place that will eventuate in glory; it will be seen then "prepared as a bride", Rev 21: 2.

So let this feature help us all to be exercised in regard to the local company. The meetings involve a need that we come prepared, prepared to take our place as brothers and sisters in the local assembly. We are not just sitting there as persons unexercised, not as persons who sit in a company as the world would sit, unrelated to each other, but we are sitting in a company of prepared persons. The exercises that have gone before in our pathway are preparing us for glory, but also preparing us to find our part in the local assembly.

So our brother and sister will be taking their place in a small company, as most of the companies of the saints are today; it needs all the more preparation for it. We are not there casually, we are not there, as I said, as the world comes to its occasions, but we are there prepared, prepared as brothers and sisters to fill out the place that each of us has. Every saint of God has a place, a place in the body. May we, through exercise, fill out that place for God's glory. God would have that in mind. Think of the Supper tomorrow; we will be there as persons prepared, prepared in expectancy in remembrance of our Lord. So we are there with what we have, we are there as persons who have something. That should mark all our occasions, that there is some substance through preparation. Preparation too in our homes; Paul says, "Prepare me also a lodging", Philem 22. It means that there is something there in our households that can be used for the expansion of the truth. Our homes are not just furnished, as men would speak, but they are prepared places; prepared places where young people can be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. May we be impressed that preparation involves time, prayer, time spent with the Lord and the Spirit about exercises, and time used in reading the Scriptures and the ministry. Things happen through persons preparing themselves to be serviceable.

Well, in that passage in Hebrews it says that God "has prepared for them a city". Think of the whole outline of things in the chapter, persons who were prepared to suffer. That is how the testimony has come down to us today, dear brethren, through persons being prepared to suffer; they were prepared to suffer because they had their eye on something else. This occasion, the marriage of our brother and sister, has been worth preparing for. So the local assembly, the local meetings, are worth preparing for. Think of this day of glory; God says He has prepared for them a city. There will be perfect correspondence between the persons who are in the city and the city itself. Think of God thinking so much of the personnel that He has, in uncongenial circumstances up till now, that He has prepared for them a city. That preparation is going on

in us today, dear brethren. May we put ourselves in the way of it. May we, through subjection, dependence, and the faith that it calls for, have these features in exercise among us, so that we are seeking to be a prepared people.

KIRKCALDY

22nd March 1980

Word at a marriage meeting



GRACE AND TRUTH

John 1: 14-18:

1 Samuel 25:21-22, 29-31

Romans 5:15-17, 20-21

I should like to refer to Mr Darby's footnote to that word "subsists" in John 1:17—

Grace and truth came into being ... they began to exist *de facto* down here. The verb is singular, and "grace and truth" go together in the Person of Christ. Nothing subsisted by the law, it was a rule given: but grace and truth actually commenced to be, not in God's mind of course, but in revelation and actual existence down here. But its so taking place supposes its continuance.

That is what I should like to speak about, that last clause—'its so taking place supposes its continuance'. We speak of a dispensation of grace. We use the term freely, more freely, dear brethren, than we understand it. I do not say that critically, but feeling it. It is remarkable the amount of exhortation there is in the epistles as to grace. There is one sober reference. It says, "watching lest there be any one who lacks the grace of God: lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and many be defiled by it", Heb 12: 15. Watch, it says, lest any one should lack the grace of God. Why should we lack it? It reigns, dear brethren. It is on the throne. The throne is a throne of grace.

There are many more exhortations about it—to grow in it—"grow in grace", 2 Pet 3: 18. The epistles are very full, if you just look it up, as to the need of grace affecting us in our relationships and in our circumstances. Paul prayed that something might be removed. It seemed a right thing to do. Many things that we have prayed about may be answered, but God says, "My grace suffices". The thing was not removed in Paul. It may not be removed in you, but the Lord's word was, "My grace suffices thee", 2 Cor 12: 9. Grace is the power to

effect things, and grace reigning in our hearts brings peace, even before there may seem a full outward settlement. Things were settled in the incoming of Jesus. The law did not settle anything. Years and years of law—and things got worse. Think of the passover night in Exodus 12, the affections that went out towards that lamb, and then think of the passover, as John puts it in his gospel, as a “feast of the Jews”, John 6: 4. That is the law in the hands of men, things became hardened, they became crystallised. The answer, beloved, to these deteriorations in man was Jesus coming in, “full of grace and truth”.

These things cannot be put the other way round. If I had written this I would have said ‘truth and grace’, but the divine word is accurate—it says, “full of grace and truth”. You cannot put truth first. It is the ultimate, dear brethren. The truth is what will prevail ultimately, but God came in in Jesus in grace. If He had come in in truth only, who would have stood? Think of Jesus in the temple, think of that woman taken, as it says, “in the very act”, John 8: 4. It says, “Jesus having stooped down wrote on the ground”, v 6. Had it only been truth, that woman would have been condemned. There would only have been one writing. But it says, “again stooping down he wrote on the ground”, v 8. Then he says, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more”, v 11. There was the grace and truth. Grace was there expressed, not in a scripture, not in tables of stone, but in a Person—oh, the expression of grace which was in Jesus! And who He was!—“the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth”. These things are to affect us. As I have said, grace is on the throne. The truth is not weakened in any way by that—indeed it is adorned. The truth is adorned in the way that things are done. He came “full of grace and truth”.

It reminds us of the movements of David. Many opportunities arose, you may say, to enforce the truth. Had he not been told he would be king in place of Saul? And there Saul is at his mercy, and what does he do? He waits on God. That is what grace does. In the conscious sense of what has been accomplished in divine activities, there is much that can

be left with God. David came to the throne. He was a king there in that cave as much as he was when he was on the throne, but he can move in the sense of divine grace in his soul. There were those among his followers who would have rejoiced in executing judgment, just as those disciples of the Lord to whom He says, “Ye know not of what spirit ye are”, Luke 9: 55. Surely it would have seemed right for these disciples to have called down fire on those who had rejected the Lord of glory, Jesus, in their midst, turning their back upon Him: but think of the Saviour’s words, “full of grace and truth”—He says, “Ye know not of what spirit ye are”. Beloved, we are of a dispensation of grace, but does it really lay hold of us?

Grace makes nothing of us, but it makes everything of the God who saw our condition. The end result will be that we will be “to the praise of the glory of his grace”, Eph 1: 6. What an end! “Vessels of mercy ... before prepared for glory, us ...”, Rom 9: 23. “Us”, it says: yes, we will be there at the end of that wilderness journey, seen to be “to the glory of his grace”. Oh, what a time it will be! One vessel after another! The results of having received “of his fulness ... and grace upon grace”.

Well, we read in the footnote, ‘its so taking place (its commencement) supposes its continuance’. It began in Jesus, began at the top, if you like. That is what Christianity is, dear brethren: it has begun at the top. Again, I do not want to be critical, but we often say, ‘Grace reigns, but it is through righteousness’. Of course it is! But it is not *my* righteousness. Grace reigns through the righteousness of Jesus, not through my righteousness. It does not reign on the principle of filthy rags. That scripture has been used to modify the operations of grace, maybe inadvertently, but grace reigns through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Grace reigns because He reigns. Grace reigns because He has been raised from among the dead, the Object of the Father’s affections, enthroned in heaven. God has already found the settlement and the answer to sin and every question that it has raised, in Jesus, the Man at His right hand. That is the basis on which grace now reigns.

Sin may still be having its day, sins may cause us sorrows, but grace reigns. The power of grace is dominant, it is greater than sin as we will see in Romans. It is greater than all that sin can bring in, because everything has been effectuated for God's eternal pleasure in the cross of Jesus. The cross stands there as a witness, on the one hand to man's indifference, but it stands there in God's sight as the settlement of every issue that sin has brought in: and that blood, beloved, is the basis for God coming out towards us today in grace and truth.

Well, grace reigns. Does it reign in my heart? Does it reign in the local assembly as we have been speaking of it in these meetings? Well, beloved, there is no shortage of it. It says to "approach ... to the throne of grace"—for a rebuke? No!—"for seasonable help", Heb 4: 16. Do not delay to draw near because of your own condition. The enemy would say, 'Well, you do not deserve grace'. Of course I do not, but God comes out in grace, in Jesus. Grace reigns! As you draw near to that throne you can count on grace. Do not be frightened to tell God about how bad you are. He knows already, you know; indeed He knows more. God loved you before you were converted! "Christ has died for the ungodly", Rom 5: 6. It can never be worse than that: He still loves you. There is nothing that can come into your history worse than that—you were held "dead in your offences and sins" (Eph 2: 1), and it was then that God made known His love in all its blessedness in the Person of Jesus. Do not delay to draw near because you think of how bad you are. Grace is on the throne.

The prodigal, you know, had deliberations about what he was going to say, but the father knew it all. What he found was, "Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it", Luke 15: 22. There is grace—active grace—coming out. 'Bring it out', he says. He was not going to have him in the house as a bondman. He was going to have him in the house in the dignity and the joy and the blessedness of sonship. 'Bring out!'—what a word that is! That is what you will hear as you come to the throne of grace. It is a wonderful experience to go into God. Perhaps you have many things to say about how bad you are, and you do not get the chance to go over it all.

Who could say how bad they are with the robe there, the ring and the shoes? That is what you will find at the throne of grace. You will find a Saviour who has met all that condition that may be troubling you. You will find a Saviour who has already met those very offences and sins in His precious blood. Draw near, dear friend, to the throne of grace. That is what is there today, and it will continue as long as the dispensation goes on—grace reigning. You may say you think sin is reigning. No, grace is reigning unto eternal life.

“Grace and truth” came in in the Person of Jesus, but ‘its commencement supposes its continuance’. It is continuing in Jesus—there is no doubt about that. It is continuing up there, and it is continuing down here as flowing from Him, but it began in Jesus. That is a solid rock to get to in our souls, that what we have come to is not an improvement on anything that has gone before. It was no theory that man had devised, but it was something that was brought in in the Person of Jesus. “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth”. That is what they wondered at, you know. They “wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth”, Luke 4: 22. They wondered at it. A beloved servant, in contemplating the Lord in His lowly pathway here, said that His holiness set Him apart from all, but His grace made Him the servant of all (see J G Bellett, ‘The Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ’ p12). There is a lot in that, beloved. Had it only been truth, had it only been holiness, could He have handled the leper? He was “holy, harmless, undefiled” (Heb 7: 26) but His grace, beloved, made Him the servant of all. He came “full of grace and truth”—how near He has come! Think of Him there in chapter 7 of Luke’s gospel, in Simon’s house, “full of grace and truth”. There was nothing to draw Him in. You go chapter after chapter in Luke’s gospel and you will see Him there in the days of His flesh, “full of grace and truth”. Well, that is how it began but, beloved, it is to continue. The flow we may say, was there in its fulness in the Person of Jesus, but today it is on the throne and the throne is active. May I encourage us all again to draw near and find seasonable help.

I wanted to speak of Abigail as displaying grace in the local assembly. We speak of David guardedly. We speak of David in that chapter as a type of ourselves. What he said was true, you know. There are a lot of true things said amongst us, but are they “full of grace and truth”? What David said in the first verse I read was truth, verily true: “Surely, in vain have I kept all that this man had”. He said, so to speak, ‘Surely what I have done is not going to be respected! I will put things right!’ How often these thoughts come into our minds, dear brethren—we know how things should be put right! Abigail says they will be put right on the basis of grace and truth. ‘You will be king all right, David’. We speak of many things that we can look back on in our histories—we could have done them better: grace could have been more in expression. The judgment arrived at, perhaps, was right, but I only say, was it “full of grace and truth”?

‘Its commencement supposes its continuance’, and that continuance would be in the local assembly. Abigail here, how she comes in! She says, “If a man is risen up to pursue thee.” You see, she was in the light of Christ, and if my soul is fresh in the light of Christ in glory, I can afford to let a lot of things go. “If a man is risen up to pursue thee”—how God will see to that, and He will! Let none of us seek self-justification. God, you know, can sort these things out better than you or I. It says in Zephaniah 3: 5, “Every morning doth he bringeth his judgment to light: it faileth not:” and, dear brethren, your morning will come. There are things to be put right, but God will bring to light His judgment, and your morning will come. David here is coming to the throne without any need to go back and say, ‘Well I should have done this better, I should have done that better’. As I say, the truth stands, the truth is to be attended to, but the truth is adorned in the way things are done, and they are done “full of grace and truth”. Abigail was in the light of Christ enthroned in glory. She says that David will come to the throne and she says it will be “no offence of heart ... that thou hast shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself”! May these things affect us in our judgments. May the character and glory of the dispensation

be in evidence in the settlement of exercises. But it is not only in times of crisis—"full of grace and truth" continues because grace is on the throne.

I want to refer to Romans and our individual exercises, and it says that "the free gift in grace, which is by the one man Jesus Christ, abounded unto the many". The richness of the passage commends itself to our attention—"the abundance of grace". As I said, it is not running out—your exercises and mine are not going to exhaust the supply of grace. We sometimes think like that. We say, 'Well we have given them a week, we have tried perhaps for months', but grace never runs out—"the abundance of grace". It reminds me of Isaac when he dug those wells, you know. He dug a well and it was his. Surely it was his well—he had dug it! The Philistines come along, and what does he do—fight for it? No, he moves on: there is another well. There is "the abundance of grace". He moves on again—there is another well, and he says, "Jehovah has made room for us", Gen 26: 22. It is the answer to the contention, beloved. There is much contention around—may it not affect us! But the answer to contention is "full of grace and truth".

It says of the persons "who receive the abundance of grace, and of the free gift of righteousness," that they "reign in life by the one Jesus Christ". Well, may the power of grace be with us—it says it has abounded—"where sin abounded grace has overabounded". There is no shortage of the supply. May our hearts be encouraged to be opened to allow it to have its perfect work. Paul closes, I think, every epistle with a reference to grace being with the brethren. In two of them he says, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit", Gal 6: 18; Phil 4: 23. May it be so with us, for His Name's sake!

MALVERN

3rd June 1983

At three-day meetings with Mr A John E Welch

GOD'S WAYS AND HIS PURPOSE

2 Corinthians 4: 16–18; 5: 1–5

I read this passage, dear brethren, to speak of two things which Paul puts together, two things which are clearly distinct and yet if we are to enjoy and make the most of the present time these two things are inseparable in our experience. I speak of God's ways and God's purpose. If we only took account of the sufferings we are feeling today, and which are felt universally (there is not a soul that has not felt and known in the ways of God sufferings, maybe discouragement, maybe despair), we might well faint. But what comes into those ways, dear brethren, is the light of His purpose that we may faint not.

God's purpose is unchanging; Scripture uses that expression, "the unchangeableness of his purpose", Heb 6: 17. Before His ways, before ever sin entered into the world, before there was ever a discouraged heart on this earth, God's purposes were before all that. His purposes were before time began; His purposes will be when time has run its course. God's ways are in time. Paul speaks of "our momentary and light affliction". The man that is saying that perhaps knew suffering in a way that none of us has known it; he recounts his sufferings in this very chapter, the sufferings, and "seeing no apparent issue", but what he also says is, "our way not entirely shut up". Why was that?—Because into those very ways that seemed so dark there shone the light of God's purposes—"our way not entirely shut up", 2 Cor 4: 8. He speaks about being "cast down, but not destroyed". You see there in Paul one who felt the sufferings in the ways of God.

We have spoken of the sorrows of losing a loved one; in all these things Paul knew something about them, as we do, but into those, we may say, seemingly dark circumstances there shines the purpose of God, the unchangeableness of His purpose. He refers to it in these passages that "we faint not". "Our outward man", he says, "is consumed". That is what is passing in the ways of God, these very bodies that we are in, the outward man, passing; but in these very bodies of

humiliation there is something connected with God's purposes. You think of the tabernacle system of old. Paul uses that expression, "our earthly tabernacle house".

The tabernacle was something that was taken down; it was something that could be dismantled; but what was in that tabernacle? It was an ark of gold. It went through, and the One of whom it speaks went through. The purposes of God, dear brethren, are not only centred in Christ, for us the purposes of God are centred in Christ in glory. That is what comes into those ways; that is what comes into those hours of suffering for us today—the purpose of God centred in a Man in glory. There are many who know Jesus; there are many know of Him who died for their sins, who died that they might live, but the purpose of God would point us to a Man in whom all God's thoughts are yea and amen, a Man in glory. What an assurance that His purposes can never fail!—also the assurance that what He purposed before time began will be housed in an eternal home, an eternal condition.

What has been wrought in our brother will go through; we have seen in our brother what is going through to the eternal condition, a spirit that accepted the ways of God, a spirit that was submissive in those ways of suffering and disappointment. Many things came into it; our brother displayed a spirit that accepted those ways. Why? Because they were not sore? Not a bit; but because he knew the God whose ways they were, God whose thoughts were bound up not only with His ways, but a God whose thoughts are bound up with the unchangeableness of His purpose.

Well, dear brethren, that is what has been seen in our brother, an uncomplaining spirit; one who accepted those ways, and who lived in the midst of those ways; not unfeelingly, as I have said, but who lived in those ways in the light and in the joy of God's purpose. Those ways are working "an eternal weight of glory". Think of it being secured in a time of suffering; perhaps many of us feeling sufferings that we have never known the extent of before, but what is being secured in the midst of them is what is going to be housed in an eternal

condition. Oh what a God He is! He that has wrought us for these things is God.

May we be encouraged to look not at the things that are seen. May we, feeling them as we do, not be stoical as to them, but may we, as in the midst of those ways of God, the sufferings of them, know more what it is to get the light and the joy of His purposes. As I said, they never fail; they can never break down, and in those ways, in these times of suffering, it says He “has given to us the earnest of the Spirit”. That brings Him very near to us. It brings what is in heaven very near to us; not only a text of Scripture, but in the earnest of the Spirit is brought into these bodies of humiliation, into these circumstances and times of sufferings, not only the light, but the joy, of the purposes of God, in the earnest of the Spirit. He brings these things, One who knows them, One who was there when these thoughts were divinely conceived in purpose. The Spirit was there, and in those counsels He had part, and that same blessed divine Person has taken His abode in us that we might be sustained in God’s ways in the light and the joy of His purpose. May it be so, for His Name’s sake.

BARNET

15th February 1984

Word at a burial meeting



“OUR PASSOVER, CHRIST”

1 Corinthians 5: 6-8

Exodus 12: 1 -11, 14-18, 25-28

2 Chronicles 34: 29-31; 35: 1-4

RT I wondered if thinking of Christ as our passover may serve for a strengthening of our affections and binding together. The passover and the feast of unleavened bread were very early in the experience of the children of Israel; they were also foundational. It says, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months”. There are many things in our lives that we may have and tend to leave. I think that was so as to the passover and its import, something that was given and tended to be neglected. It is noticeable how frequently it is referred to in Scripture and how, when it is freshly revived, the strengthening of the saints is noticeable. It is seen particularly in Chronicles. But the apostles, too, bring it very fully into their teaching. I think that John alludes to the idea of the passover when he speaks of John the baptist, saying, “Behold the Lamb of God”, and “He must increase, but I must decrease”. That was primarily in my mind in suggesting this and I think would be the experience of Exodus 12. There is room made in the affections of the saints for Christ, and the continuance of that is in the eating of the unleavened bread.

The passage in Corinthians shows how Paul brings it in, as he says: “Your boasting is not good”. Who could boast in the presence of a Lamb who has borne so much? Who could boast if our affections were nourished on One who for us has borne the judgment of God against sin? But as contemplating that One who bore that judgment, as feeding on that One who was our passover, there is the corresponding eating of unleavened bread to make room for Him so that the flesh which would exalt itself is negated to make room for another Man. Peter speaks of Him “as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”, and refers to “the blood of Christ” (1 Pet 1: 19), and I think he is alluding to the passover. I only referred to Corinthians to show how it is brought into our time in its spiritual import.

I thought, without going into the detail, that Exodus 12 may nourish our affections. The chapter has far more in it than we can ever compass, but there is a certain sense of the saints being drawn together; indeed, as has often been referred to, it says “Speak unto all the assembly”, that is, the congregation looked at as a moral whole, and I think that binding together comes through feeding on and thinking of Christ our passover. As to the details of the chapter, the Lord’s hand may be over what we speak of, but let us think of Christ here as our passover, the One who has borne what was due to me, so that there may be a new constitution, new relationships, and a unity of the people as bound together with Him as the centre.

EP The expression “our passover” gathers up the affections of all the saints, does it not?

RT Yes, “For also our passover, Christ”: that name stands by itself between the two commas there. It became a feast of the Jews, it became very formalised with many things introduced into it, but, as you say, it immediately arrests our affections: “our passover, Christ”. He who alone could bear that judgment has borne it, but how well do we know Him? That lamb being in the house those four days would be to draw our affections to that holy, spotless, sinless One.

AJEW I was struck as we read it with the touch of finality; “our passover, Christ, has been sacrificed”, as if that establishes a glorious, final basis for every condition of things to be met and met in a way that becomes the God whose heart is really disclosed in this. Although the setting is different it reminded me a little of the one sacrifice that is referred to in Hebrews. Does that comfort us?

RT Yes, I think that is good; the thing is finalised in Him and that One is to be a nourisher for our affections. It is to silence the boasting and what may have come in. In the Old Testament how often the reviving of the passover met the state and the condition that had come in, and created almost, you may say, a new set of living affections that bound the saints together in a forward movement. So that the finality you speak

of, “our passover, Christ”, has met the line that caused bondage in Egypt in view of forward movement.

DJH Sacrifice has in view what is for God, does it not? There is what we feed upon but, as you say, it is very reassuring that everything has been met to God’s entire satisfaction and a people has been secured for God.

RT Yes, that One who has met it is to be the food of my soul for a constitution which would negate the boasting and would be done with the enlarging old leaven side of things, a constitution which appreciates Him and exclaims “Behold the Lamb of God”, John 1: 36. Would that we had affections that could go out like that! They would be developed as feeding on that spotless One.

ECB The passover was God’s initiative, was it not? Moses would have delivered the people by a very different way, but chapter 12 is God’s initiative to deliver the people.

RT Yes, and it was complete. It is simple in its way, but how complete! It is judgment on the world but the children of God spared by the blood of that Lamb. It is not without instruction that the lamb that was to be the means of their deliverance was there four days, then it was sacrificed, then it was eaten. May the details of that come into our souls so that we see the beauty of the One who bore the judgment, His ability to bear it and what it cost Him; all that would come into our souls in the eating of it. Not only was He crucified but Paul speaks to the Corinthians of Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2: 2)—the public side of the matter. But “our passover Christ” sacrificed, I think brings in the feelings and the holy worth of the Person who there met the judgment of God.

EMW This is of sin-offering character but it is not consumed, it is roast with fire. I was thinking about your reference to food. Certain sin-offerings had to be consumed outside the camp but others were available as food to build up, do you think, a spiritual constitution in us?

RT That was in my mind. The roasting with fire before the eating would bring that home to us, that that Person is there to be fed on, and it speaks of it being whole, does it not? It says later in the chapter: “neither shall ye break a bone thereof”, v 46. It brings before us the Lord in His perfections, in His beauties; and do you not think that feeding on Him would bind us together in relation to Him and in relation to the forward movement away from the world and its influences?

EMW So would our thoughts and affections also be adjusted, not by academic means, or even by principles, but by feeding on Him as roast with fire?

RT I am sure that is of all moment, because it was just what happened throughout Israel’s history and it has happened throughout the course of the testimony, that the mind of man has intruded. Paul says, “Your boasting is not good”. That was the mind of man. As was said just now, Moses could not have thought about this. What a divine plan, simple in its essence, but how it draws out our affections, that a lamb, a lamb that was well known in the house for four days,—Jesus as in the gospels—was going to meet everything that was required for us to be clear for ever from the principles and the ways of Egypt.

JM The four days to which you refer would have been a period in which that lamb would have been very much in the affections of the members of that household. And then the roasting with fire, the severity of that, brings a further sense of feeling into our spirits, do you think?

RT What this Lamb endured is tremendous. There is His death, bearing the judgment of God. Was that not enough? Well, if I was to feed on that it required the roasting. It is not only that Christ’s blood was shed, what that means, the abandonment, what Christ bore in meeting and bearing the judgment of God, but the roasting with fire is something added that we may feed on it. It is not boiled, there are other offerings that are boiled, but I think that all such words are used to bring home to us the intensity of suffering, the depth of suffering, that Christ bore on our account. Now is that

attractive to us? In those four days they would see its head, they would see its legs, they would see how it moved intelligently, they would see how it walked, they would see its propensities. We see that in the gospels, Jesus who bore the judgment on our account.

JM Is not the place that Christ has in the affections of the saints the answer to a good deal amongst us? It is not exactly the knowledge of the truth but the place that He has, His moral beauties and qualities, and particularly in His suffering?

RT Well, if the truth as it is spoken about does not lead me to Christ it has lost its point. There could be more of these exclamations among us that John made, such as “Behold the lamb of God”. As we speak about the Scriptures we can become very formal, but who could be formal with this very type, a lamb in its movements, Jesus of the gospels, the way that He was there, in their houses, touching their infirmities, healing their diseases, and yet that same One bore the judgment of God against sin that I may be free and be built up in relation to the divine system.

ECM Is there not a point in Luke’s gospel in the way the Lord brings in the passover before introducing the Supper? He says, “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer”, chap 22: 15.

RT Yes, I think if we look at the gospels, we can see the close connection between the passover and the Supper. The passover is not the Supper; the Supper is the love of Christ in a different setting of things. The passover is Christ sacrificed as meeting all that I was, meeting all the sinful side of things, clearing the ground. The Supper is once a week, the passover is day by day leading up to the Supper. I think the passover would speak about the conditions underlying the Supper.

CGH Would the four days indicate a contemplation of the lamb in all its aspects, a kind of universal apprehension of that precious lamb that was to be sacrificed for them?

RT Well, there is much could be read into it; I think simply it endeared itself in those four days in the household and its

intrinsic worth was brought out. And that One who had endeared Himself was the One who made it possible for us to be free from Egypt and all its principles in view of serving God in the liberty and joy of the divine system.

PM Is it a wonderful moment when I realise that the perfect Man in every detail was sacrificed in order that I who could never please God might be set up in service towards Him?

RT Well, He did it; we could never have done it. At this point in the history it seemed that they could never get out of Egypt, never get free; it seemed that they were going to be trammelled for ever with bondage and all that it meant when this lamb comes in. That is true about Christ, is it not? We were ensnared in the world and its principles till He came in, the Lamb of God's providing; the Lamb so precious to Him has come in and has borne that judgment and He has made a way, not only for us to be free from the judgment of God, but to be free from all that lay under judgment in view of having a part in serving Him.

HAH I have often wondered that it says later on that He brought them out, "With a powerful hand and with a stretched-out arm", Ps 136: 12. Is it like Isaiah 53: "to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed"? What is disclosed is what really answers to the passover in the detail of the sufferings of Jesus. Is that right?

RT Yes. The people take on a different character in this chapter. As we have remarked, it says, "Speak unto all the assembly", and it speaks of them coming out in their hosts and of them worshipping. I think these things could be traced to the appropriating of Christ, the feeding on this roast lamb, and the keeping of the feast of unleavened bread. These things bring the saints into a new position, a new dignity, a new standing and new characteristics.

RET Would it help us to understand the title 'Christ' in a fuller way?

RT Well, many things could be read into it; "our passover, Christ". It is what is provided. He is the One who has met

everything for God, the new order of man that has come in in Christ. And that is in this lamb here. In Christ you see somebody who was so different in all His ways.

RET You can understand Paul building up his ministry round the divine titles in that way, can you not?

RT It is a very wide subject, but here we are speaking of something that has come into small surroundings, but so different, so holy and precious. It is to be our food and precious to our souls.

ECB Could you say more as to how we might, as it were, be spending the four days? In this scripture the lamb is in the house, and I wonder whether there is not scope for more conversation about Christ in our houses so that we become more engaged with Him.

RT We feel very tested about that. But if we felt the awfulness of Egypt, what bondage these people had gone through for a long time, the bondage of Egypt, the tyranny they were under, here is a way out. It all depends on this Lamb, and here it is in the house. We do not have a deep enough judgment about what we have been freed from. The world and its principles come into our conversation, our lives, far more than it should, but the antidote to that is that there is One here in these simple movements who is to be the theme of our conversation. What was the point of talking about Egypt when it was finished? The bondage is for ever terminated. What is before the soul now is a whole new system.

WJRB Is that why the judgments come in? They were to be signs to the children of Israel.

RT Well they were, and yet the bondage increased as they went on. But here for us is One who has come in from God's side, come in in His preciousness to end the tyranny that we may be free to move into God's thoughts.

AJEW It is very interesting how provision is made for a small house: "If the household be too small". The answer to that is in the neighbour. I was thinking of the point of how we spend those four days. It would bind us together if in small

circumstances we looked to our neighbour. That might apply in many different ways, but God provides in that sense for the appropriation of Christ in such a manner that we are bound ever closer in the appreciation of Him.

RT Yes; I think the reference to the neighbour here is very striking. It is, “let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it”. It is not only your neighbour but, “let him and his neighbour next unto his house” as if it emphasises the proximity that is to be among us, that together we can share this. There were many households but in its application there was only one Lamb. There was only one Lamb whose blood could be shed; there was only one topic of conversation, if you like. There were many lambs, many houses, but the same theme was to be in every household; is that what you are thinking?

ECB Yes. There are, as it were, different stages here. There are the four days which, as you are suggesting, involve our occupation with Christ personally. Now four such days is something to be gone in for and it needs our care through the whole of the four days. Then we come to its being killed, then to its being eaten. Is there not more room for our contemplating Jesus as He was, so that we get a greater sense of what His sacrifice and death was?

RT Unless we know that it was such a One who bore the judgment, we will never be clear and free; as was said at the outset, we will never understand the finality of the judgment. But we see that it was One who endeared Himself to us, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; it was He who bore the judgment.

SDKR It may be in a different setting, but as to endearing Himself, there is the word of Nathan to David about the lamb which the poor man had and was nourishing; “and it grew up with him, and together with his children: it ate of his morsel, and drank of his own cup, and slept in his bosom”, 2 Sam 12: 3. I wondered whether that was part of the endearing.

RT Nathan is using God's word there to bring home things to David and I think this passage would bring home to us the immensity of God's judgment against sin, against Egypt, against all that we were under. The finality of His work has been that we might be cleared. These things are to grow in our souls. This was to be a beginning to them and it was to be continued, and the forgetting of it brought in many sorrows with them and has done with us; but the reiterating of it, the reviving of it, the finding of the book of Moses in the days of recovery seem to create new feelings and new affections among the saints in binding them together.

ECM Do we need our affections to be nourished day by day on the love of the One who bore the judgment? Do you think that enters into keeping the passover?

RT Yes. So there was what was sacrificed and then there was what was eaten and the accompaniments of the eating. But the eating of it, its head with its legs and with its inwards, the appropriating of these features, was meant to create new inwards in us. It was meant to end the boasting and to bring in the sincerity and truth.

DER Is it not assuring that Israel's salvation did not come from their appreciation of the paschal lamb but from God's appreciation of it? It is, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you".

RT That was true as to the blood, but for the forward movement it required eating, and it required faith, too, as to God's word. Had an Israelite not taken that lamb he would never have been saved. Had an Israelite not had that lamb in the house these days and contemplated it he would never have been passed over, would he? So there is what involves our souls, there is what involves our feelings and inward emotions bound up with being clear of Egypt and the world and these principles.

EP Then it is significant that in verse 21 Moses says, "Seize and take yourselves lambs for your families, and kill the

passover". They were to do it. Would that be the entering substantially into what was perfect in the sacrifice of Christ?

RT Yes; so there can be no admixture in the feeding on Christ. Things have become so mixed, so disrupted, but there is the feeding and there is the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs: "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs shall they eat it". There is the feeding on Christ, the extolling of that One in His preciousness and in His worth, and there is the feeling in me of how unworthy I am, but there is also being produced the resolve to be committed to the way that He went.

CCI Philip's preaching Jesus to the eunuch was relative to the lamb whose judgment was taken away. The result is that they both of them went down into the water in relation to baptism. Do you think that the preaching of Jesus would have that great effect in the going down process that we all need to take to get ourselves out of public view?

RT Yes indeed; this is, as you say, the going down process. They were to eat it roast with fire and unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. There is plenty of room for the exaltation of Christ and in that there would be the deflating, there would be the end to the boasting. "So that let us celebrate the feast ... with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth".

JM The roast with fire would emphasise the holy judgment of God upon the whole system of sin; do you think that feeding upon that judgment as borne by Christ in its severity would free us from that system in our own souls, particularly what Egypt represents? You have stressed the power for moving out; do we need to encourage one another on that line?

RT Had they apprehended this—well, you bring it to us, had we apprehended it—how should we ever have longed for Egypt again? They would never have longed for the fleshpots of Egypt had the import of this been impressed on their souls. What a change it would have been in the wilderness journey! We look back on our own journeys: how much has come in and caused us sorrow. Had we apprehended this Lamb roast

with fire and eaten it with these bitter herbs, many things would never have been introduced, would they? Worldly ways come in; let us get back to feeding on Christ, let us get back to being nourished with this Lamb that is roast and let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

EMW Do you think that feeding on the holy sufferings of Christ delivers us inwardly in our affections from Egypt, whereas the Red Sea sets us free publicly? We may be separate positionally but not set free in our affections, hence we would be, as you have already said, lusting after the things of Egypt.

RT So there is divine order in these things; this was the first one. As you said, there is the public side, but this is a very wonderful chapter, that God had six hundred thousand people who moved out like one man. They were strengthened in relation to Christ, they were spared from the judgment by that blood, but they were strengthened together to walk out in rank. A great dignity comes upon the people in this chapter. It is not the sons of Jacob here; there is a dignity and a unifying of the saints as they are nourished and set together in relation to Christ and His sufferings, I think that the sufferings of Christ are not spoken about nearly enough among us. But we need holiness, we need respect, we need feelings, to speak about the sufferings of Christ.

VHB Do we need to contemplate what it cost the Father and cost the Son that we might be redeemed? We will never comprehend it but we can apprehend it. We need to have before us what it meant to God to make His own Son sin; as it says: "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor 5: 21.

RT That is very beautiful; I think these four days would show us that. It was a lamb like that,

So perfect ...

... pure in all Thy ways'

as the hymn says, Hymn 313. Only One like that could meet God's judgment against sin. But that was the One who did it

in order that I might be free. That same One, His sufferings and the way He went, is to nourish my affections so that I am held more in relation to God and His system.

CJHD It affects me that the gospel of a recovered man, Mark, is the one that uses the expression, “when they slew the passover”, Mark 14: 12. It does not say ‘when the passover was to be slain’, but “when they slew the passover”. I was thinking of what a neighbour Timothy was to that man when Paul says, “Take Mark, and bring him with thyself”, 2 Tim 4: 11. They would be travelling, feeding on the unleavened bread, would they not?

RT Yes, very fine! Think of this scene again; there must have been thousands of Israelite houses in Egypt at that time all doing the same thing at the same time with the same objective. That could be among us, that we are all feeding together on that same holy precious One and the same object before us, that He might increase and I might decrease, in view of escaping all that is coming on Egypt. Do we know what is coming on the world? Have we some sense of what is yet going to fall on this very world that we may be going in for?

JM As to the reference, “Speak unto all the assembly of Israel”, and the footnote as to the corporate person before God, do you think that working through these exercises would not only give us power for deliverance from Egypt in our affections but some sense of the assembly as a reality so that we come into it on a moral basis?

RT What God thought about it! “He who, yea, has not spared his own Son” (Rom 8: 32), such a One, that this corporate person may come into expression. That would draw us into the dignity and blessedness of it. This feeding is to make it good constitutionally in our souls. We long for unity. I think that the unity that comes in in this chapter, enduring unity, is a unity in affection, a binding together of the hearts of the saints. We have seen other attempts at unity, we have seen attempts at trying to have conformity to bring about unity; it will not work. You may get a thousand people saying the same thing, and in their affections they could be so

different one from another. But I think this chapter unites the saints as one in a unity in affection, a drawing out of the hearts towards this precious Lamb in all its holy worth; and that sets the people together in a positive way.

RET Would that help us in regard to the love of God, bringing a unity as knowing God in a more intimate way?

RT Yes, the love of God lies behind all His ways. There is a tremendous concentration in this passage on the suffering way that the Lamb has gone that we may be freed from the principles that mark the world and be bound together in movements in relation to God.

WHS Is there point in the fact that in the Revelation, before the seals are opened, John sees a Lamb standing as slain, and then there is the ascription, “Worthy is the Lamb”, and then “To him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, blessing, and honour”, (chap 5: 6, 12, 13) before those judgments come in upon the scene?

RT Well, there are several different ways of looking at the Lamb, and the scripture you refer to brings out the deity of the One who came into these small conditions, these circumstances of humiliation. But we should think more of these sufferings, sufferings that He alone could endure and did endure, and feed on that and the unleavened bread which goes along with it, so that there should be no allowance in me of what He has ended, in view of the saints being set and knit together in life in relation to God.

CGH Peter says in exhorting the saints: “for Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God”, 1 Pet 3: 18. What a great work that was!

RT Yes; and it goes on in that section: “being put to death in flesh”. That is what this feeding was to bring about, the ending in me of that kind of condition. As we have said, the murmurings of the wilderness would never have arisen, and the diversions in our pathways would never have arisen, had

there been the nearness to the suffering One and the preciousness of Him enshrined in our hearts.

ECB In John 13 John no longer connects the passover with the Jews, but we have Jesus departing out of the world to the Father, part with Him and our loving one another. Is John looking at it from the point of view of Christ our passover?

RT It is very interesting in John that the passover almost becomes a point of reference as to time. It speaks about “six days before the passover”, then it speaks about certain things after the passover, as if it was a point that John regulated things in relation to, and I think that should affect us. But this was to be for them a “beginning of months”. It was not something that was started and left, it was a beginning and it was something that was carried all the way through, was it not?

ECB In the end of John 11 he refers to the passover of the Jews; in chapter 12 it is “six days before the passover”, in chapter 13 “before the ... passover”, as if John has dropped the Jewish idea and is now connecting it with us.

RT Well, the passover, the feast of the Jews, had become obnoxious to God and things may become academic with us, as was said earlier. But affection for Christ would preserve the real thing. I think the sufferings of Christ would make an impressionable state that would take on the ministry, that would take on the truth, would take on what the Lord may be saying to us.

FCM Peter says, “he that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin”, 1 Pet 4: 1. Would not the contemplation of the sufferings of Christ make me prepared to suffer in the flesh, so that the sin that causes trouble ceases and the assembly as a moral whole therefore comes into practical evidence?

RT That is a very fine objective to have. I suppose we would all subscribe to it: and I think we should. May this meeting help us to be more committed to it. What you are saying causes a certain suffering, does it not? That would be the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. It involves that our

motives are different. What are our motives? God searches them, does He not?

RWF Would feeding on the passover mean that our tastes are changed? There was the occasion afterwards when the children of Israel lusted after the fish and cucumbers and melons and leeks and onions and garlic, but do you think that feeding on all the ingredients, if I might so say, of the passover would change our tastes, touching our motives, as you said?

RT Well, we have to keep at it, and that may come to what we were saying earlier, how much are these things the subject of our conversations? We very quickly would revert to Egypt's food. We very quickly lose our taste but let us keep the feast; Paul says, Let us keep it. This kind of condition needs to be nourished if Egypt's food is to be kept out. We need the positive feeding and the enjoyment of this kind of food along with the unleavened bread if these other principles are to be shut out.

VEW There is a beautiful result here in that "the people bowed their heads and worshipped".

RT I think it shows the unity that marked them. It says, "the people bowed their heads and worshipped", and they "went away, and did as Jehovah had commanded Moses and Aaron; so did they". The worship is an inward binding together in unity of affection.

PM Is the feeding on the head and the legs and the inwards intended to affect our whole being in every department of life?

RT Yes. We are so apt to be fragmentary in our thinking and in our feeding. I think what you say would bring the Person in all His holy worth and perfection before us—its head, with its legs and with its inwards. You see there the motives; you see there the beauty and perfection of that walk, the devotion of it; you see there in the head His intelligence and His committal to the will of God. Now these things, as fed upon, come to characterise the person. That is the way it would work. The feeding, the appropriating, the loving, would give character to our movements.

ECM Would you say a word on verse 14: “this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall celebrate it as a feast to Jehovah”. I was thinking of the reference to the feast to Jehovah.

RT It stands at the threshold of the service of God; it is not the Lord’s supper. But what you say is brought in in Leviticus 23—the sabbath and this feast and the set feasts. If God is to have His portion the basis of it is that my soul is drawn out to the One who bore God’s judgment on my account.

ECM I have often been challenged in dwelling on the passover as to whether it has become a real feast, whether we are really feasting on the love of Christ and on the Person of Christ.

RT Yes, the worth of that Person and His sufferings, what He endured, what He went through. I think it is meant to grow in our souls in the keeping of the feast, what He endured that we may be free of the man so offensive to God.

ECB Do you think the word in verse 14 just referred to might suggest to us that the more we apprehend what this is to God the more it will become meaningful to ourselves?

RT Yes, I think it would draw us into the divine system, that God has done this and He has set this at the very threshold of things, that we may come into His house, that we may come into serving Him in the liberty and the joy of being free from Egypt and all its trammels. They could never have had the service of God in Egypt, and where there are worldly influences the service of God is held up, but the passover comes in to free us entirely from that. You will be My people, My possession—what we are to Him is the fruit of contemplating and feeding on this sacrifice.

DJH None of it was to remain until the morning. Does that mean that these impressions are always to be fresh with us, maintained in that way?

RT There is a tremendous urgency brought into this chapter that would help us as to the complacency that so easily settles upon us. There is an absolute need of this being fulfilled in its detail if they were going to be clear of Egypt. As

you say, let none of it remain until the morning. There is an occasion here to be seized on, is there not?—an opportunity for something that is never going to be again in the same way, and the sense of that is to give urgency to me as to coming into these divine thoughts that God is setting out.

JM Is not the service of God the divine objective: “Let my son go, that he may serve me”, Exod 4: 23? In the reference in Josiah it goes on to that: “according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon”, as though this is not only the beginning of months initially but the beginning of recovery.

RT Yes. The scripture in Chronicles is very full. I did not intend to go into it in detail but just to call attention to what you said, that what they found was the words of Moses and the words of David and Solomon. Certain things that were basic had been forgotten, certain things that were fundamental had been passed over; these things can be very true of us, dear brethren, in our own circumstances. Certain fundamental things can be, if not forgotten, not carried forward or emphasised enough. In this revival what happens is that they found the words of Moses, the authority of what God had brought in, and the blessedness of that caused repentance to work in them, the king rent his clothes. Something had come in that was not suitable; he says, I am finished with it, I am going to make way for the word of God that has come in through Moses. And I think that makes way for the word of God that has come in through David. The liberty and joy of the service is to go forward.

ECM It is interesting that in the recovery under Hezekiah he keeps it in the second month, but Josiah kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. He goes back to the inauguration of it under Moses.

RT Yes. Well, God in His grace made provision that it could be held in the second month. I think we should be set for the best.

ECM I thought that was a feature in Josiah, that the recovery reached a greater height. God would get a richer portion.

RT Grace and mercy come in as to us in the circumstances that we are in, but let us have God's ideals before us. And as the book was found the king rent his garments; he says, what has marked me before has been wrong and I am finished with it. The king comes into his place, and the reference here is to the holy ark. I think it is the only such reference in Scripture. What getting back (I use that expression guardedly) to Christ and His suffering love enthroned in our affections brings about is, He must increase—a fresh allusion to the ark that never had been before. And how precious it is! “Put the holy ark in the house that Solomon the son of David, king of Israel built; ye have not to carry it upon your shoulders”. We may go on with formalities but the holy ark is Christ enthroned in the affections; we have finished with formalities. He now is the Leader, He now is the One in whom all our affections are joined and knit together.

CJHD Do you think Paul uses a strong word: ‘celebrating’? We cannot do that exactly individually. The passover had a start in the households in Egypt, but do we not have to get back to the divine thought of the divine pleasure in the celebrating of the feast?

RT Yes, it is “our passover, Christ”. It is one; there were many lambs in the type but in the antitype we are set together. What a theme it would be to have the sufferings of Christ before us collectively, to be speaking together about them! I think there is nothing that would draw our souls, nothing that would cause us to be ashamed of what may have come in, like speaking together over the sufferings of Jesus.

DJH It says of this passover that there was none like it since the days of Samuel the prophet. Does that show the importance of the prophetic word and is this the direction in which the prophetic word would bring us?

RT Yes, and I think the reason for there being none like it was that everybody was in their right place. We have not time

to go over that; the chapter is very full. In the verses we read the king was in his place, and then we have the holy ark in its place, then we have the priests in their place and the singers in their place; we have persons set in their right place. No envy, no strife, no aspiring as to who is to be the greatest, in the celebration of the passover, everybody is in their true place and that true place is to be joined in one voice in praise to our God. Well, may it be stimulated among us, for His name's sake.

LONDON

21st January 1984

List of initials *local unless otherwise stated*

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PEACE

Colossians 1: 17-22; 3: 12-15

Ephesians 2: 14-22; 3: 1; 4: 1-4 (to “one Spirit”)

Luke 10: 5,6

Matthew 5: 9

I have read rather extensively, dear brethren, that Scripture may have its own voice to our spirits at this time. The scriptures that we have read have said far more than ever I would be able to or could say in this time, or any time. Scriptures have their own voice, and may they have a voice to us on this occasion. “What says the scripture?”, Gal 4: 30. They say more than I can say, but I read them as having an impression to speak about peace. The psalmist did not find it too easy a thing to speak about. He says when I speak about peace “they are for war”, Ps 120: 7. And brethren, it is not always that we are peaceful, it is not always that we are able to speak about things peacefully. You speak about peace and someone says, Oh yes, but there must be righteousness. You speak about peace and somebody says it is not peace at any price. Of course it is not. But, beloved, peace has been made. That is where I start, that peace has been made. We all get help as coming into the enjoyment of it, but the starting point is that peace has been made. There will be conflict but it is only done rightly with peace in the heart. If there is not peace in the soul in going into the conflict it will never secure the divine end.

It says in the first passage that we read that He has made peace; He has made it, it did not exist before. There can be all kinds of agreements, all kinds of legislation, to try to bring about peace, but the only peace is the peace He has made. It says He has made peace: “having made peace by the blood of his cross”. What a Person He is who made it! O, that I could have a tongue to speak about Him! The passage brings Him forward, the Person who is before all; there is the righteousness for peace, beloved, the glory and worth of the Person who has made it. “He is the head of the body”, “he is before all”, whether thrones or lordships or whatever, before

the very creation; He was before all these things. He has come in in His own body and by His own service in love He has made peace. "In him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell"; what a dwelling place! There was never a spot on earth before where there was peace in which God could rest. God looked down from the heavens on the children of men; what did He see? Sin. As He looked down on Christ, "in him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell". God had peace on earth then as never before. What came in in Adam had continued—unrest, strife, murder, war, jealousies. "In him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell". Think of the occasion of His baptism. John says he beheld the Spirit descending in bodily form as a dove and abiding upon Him. God had found peace on earth. God had found in Him all that He ever had looked for, found there a dwelling place where He could open the heavens upon a Man in whom all the Fulness was pleased to dwell. That is what God found in Him, and He was pleased to dwell there.

Then it says, "and by him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross—by him". O, the heart of God! "By him to reconcile all things to itself". Peace has come in to effect reconciliation. The distance that existed between God and man, the distance that existed between man and his brother, Christ has come in, God has come in, may I say, in Him, "to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross". There could be no other way for peace to be made. That is not peace at any price, beloved, that is not peace at the sacrifice of righteousness; what sufferings (we have spoken of them already) entered into these words: "making peace by the blood of his cross". I say again, may it be food for our souls, may it bring with it that He has established peace that is never to be broken; never to be broken, because it speaks in the passage about presenting persons "holy and unblamable, and irreproachable before it". That is the kind of peace that He has made, not a graded peace, not a peace that can possibly lose its value, not a pact that can be broken by the whim of a man or the press of a button, but it says He has made it "by the blood of his cross ... to present

you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it". Beloved, He has made it; that is the point that we must start from. We sometimes speak as if peace was something that was to be worked up to, but it says it is to be pursued. It says pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace; we are to pursue all of them together. It is not that I pursue righteousness one day, faith the next day and eventually arrive at peace. No. Peace has been made. We work from the standpoint of what He has done. Righteousness is pursued, so are faith and love and peace together. If in that pursuing peace is not touched, perhaps your righteousness is not right. Perhaps it is unrighteous if peace is not coming in. It says pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace. The fruit of the Spirit is what? "Love, joy, peace", Gal 5: 22. These are things in the kingdom, that is what the kingdom of God is: "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit", Rom 14: 17.

I only referred to the passage in Colossians to bring out that peace has been made. In Ephesians 2 it has not only been made but He is it. It says that "He is our peace". O, how blessed to have it in such a Person! Do you know Him thus, beloved? King of righteousness, King of Salem, King of peace (see Heb 7: 2): is that how you know the Saviour? You say, in all those exercises in my life there are many sorrows to be borne. The Prince of peace will be with you as you are with Him—King of righteousness, Prince of peace. "This Melchisedec": it alludes to His Person, to that One in whom the Fulness was pleased to dwell, that He is my peace. "He is our peace, who has made both one". It is not only His work; His work has made it, blessed fact to go back to time and time again, that He has made it by the blood of His cross. The sacrifice that we have spoken of entered into the making of it, but the Person is our peace; the Person. Not only do I know His work, blessed, glorious fact, but do I know the Person whose work it is? "He is our peace". Do I do things, beloved, under His impulse, under His control, as coming from His presence? "He is our peace, who has made both one". There is His work, but the Person who did the work is our peace. My

peace is in Him, the peace that I can enjoy is through knowing Him, it is through being with Him. It says He has annulled all the things that come in to disturb my peace, He has slain the enmity; and then it says, “he has preached the glad tidings of peace to you who were afar off”. How far away you were! “To you who were afar off”—the apostle puts that first—“the glad tidings of peace to you, who were afar off, and the glad tidings of peace to those who were nigh”. It is one Person. Whatever the difficulty, no matter how great the distance, however much these things may have marked us, that we were strangers, that we were foreigners, it says “he is our peace”. The work has brought us together; through Him we have access by one Spirit, we are no longer strangers and foreigners, we have peace. How peace is needed that strangership, foreign principles, accents, whatever they are, may be gone! He is our peace, all that may have marked us is gone, and we are brought into the great household of God. This passage is very full, as all the Scriptures are—the ones I have read perhaps, in a particular way—but it says “ye are no longer strangers and foreigners”. Mr Darby could speak about that: ‘Stranger thou’, he says, ‘in courts above!’ (Hymn 76). We are no strangers there, beloved.

He, who to His rest shall greet thee,
Greets thee with a well-known love.

What banishes the feelings of strangership that we may well have? What banished the feelings of strangership that the younger son was even carrying with him to the father’s house? Ah, it was the embrace of the father’s love. What peace! “He is our peace”. The One in whom the Fulness was pleased to dwell, the Son of the Father’s love who had made peace by the blood of His cross, He is the Father’s object and He is to be my object. There is the peace that He brings in. So we come into that wonderful company that is enjoying it, where all enmity has been met, met by Him. We “are fellow-citizens of the saints”. The apostles: what a company we are brought into! “Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone”. So I only refer to these passages that, as I said at the outset, they may have their own voice, their own authority over us. Paul there in

prison is speaking about peace because he knew Christ to be his peace. He had a chain, the limitations that a prison brings, perhaps limitations of food, not able to move very far, what limitations he was in, and he is speaking about Christ: "he is our peace". Oh what refreshment! Paul speaks about persons refreshing him, but I think that those persons who visited Paul in the prison were far more refreshed. They saw a man who was enjoying peace, a man who could rise, as these scriptures speak about, above the limitations in the circumstances, to let his heart expand in the peace of Christ.

But then he is speaking about the conditions that we are in. He says, "*I Paul, prisoner of the Christ Jesus*", "*I, the prisoner in the Lord*". What could he speak about peace? Well, he says, "*I ... exhort you therefore to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love; using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace*". He does not say 'of love'; "*using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace*". Peace, dear brethren, is to be pursued. It is to be enjoyed in my soul, it is also to be an objective. "Keep", he says, "*the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace*". Peace is something that should be more before us. Yes, exercises have to be met, but they are met in peace. If any actions that I do are done with a ruffled spirit, if any actions of mine are not done in this meekness and lowliness, they are not done rightly. Actions, beloved, flow out from a man who is enjoying peace and we have to use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit. What is it? Something that the Spirit has established which I can never disturb, but I may for the moment cause these ruffles, I may again bring in these distances, I may for the moment engage the saints with something short of what they should be engaged with. Keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. Mr Taylor, when asked about keeping the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace, said, if a meeting goes on too long and somebody says it is time we went home, that is keeping the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. The spirits of

the saints become ruffled, he said, if things are being said that should not be said; it is wisdom that may say it is time we should go home. That is an example of keeping the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. May we be pursuing it, may we have the peace of Christ. Paul says in Colossians in the second scripture I read: "let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts". It does not just take place once a week. It is not only when you are feeling, perhaps, in better form, but it says, let it preside. The other scriptures we read are full, leading up to these verses I am speaking of in some more detail. It says, "let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts". Preside: that what you do is done in love, that what we do has peace before us. "Let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful". It is not without meaning that each time the Lord came in in John He says "Peace". Were there not exercises to be faced? Was there not a doubting Thomas, as we call him, on one of these occasions? Was it the first thing the Lord did as He came in to say, Thomas, you come here? No, the first thing as He came in was He said "Peace". I leave that having its own authority and meaning.

But then He says elsewhere in the gospel, "I leave peace with you; I give *my* peace to you", John 14: 27: "*my* peace". O, what a peace His was, beloved! That peace was a confidence in God. That is what peace is. The Lord in prayer says "Father ... let thy will be done as in heaven so upon the earth", Matt 6: 10. That conveys something of His peace, confidence in the will of God, and confidence that that will will prevail. It may not be manifest immediately as you are in these exercises, but "*my* peace" is known in the midst of sorrows, in the midst of exercises. What exercises Christ knew, Pharisees, all fled from Him, no comforters at all, and yet He could say, Thy will be done. His peace was that He trusted His Father. Do we, beloved? Our own energies, our own weapons of warfare, will never effect the divine pleasure. Can we have confidence that God's will will prevail? Can we rest in peace that it will? Not carelessly by any means, certainly not unrighteously, but can we rest in confidence that the will of God will prevail? Think

of Christ on the cross; troubled, yes, sorrow, what exercises in His soul, and yet He was in peace. How else could He have said "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 24? He said it as a Man who was enjoying peace. He says, "I give my peace to you", what I have enjoyed in the sufferings of the way I leave with you. Does it attract our hearts so that we want it, beloved? As I said, I think Christ's peace was a peace that could rest complacently in the will of God. There may be things to be said, it may be right and just that matters are raised, but, beloved, do not pursue the warfare. If things have to be done, they can be said and left in the conscious sense of peace with the brethren. Paul could leave them in peace; he could raise exercises, could raise matter that had to be raised; then he could say, "Peace to the brethren" (Eph 6: 23) in the confidence that the will of God will prevail.

I only refer to Luke to speak about a son of peace. It is an essential part of every local company that there is a son of peace in it. There is hardly a right representation of the local assembly if there is not a son of peace in it. You could draw that from the way the Lord speaks. He is sending out the disciples; bringing it to our time He is giving ministry; the Lord gives a word of ministry, He gives a word to a locality, His own word, and He says that when they go into a place, "first say, Peace to this house. And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it; but if not it shall turn to you again". The Lord may give a word of ministry and we do not get the gain of it. He says that if there is a son of peace there the word will have its own effect. That is virtually what He is saying. They were not to contend and argue, they were not to do this, or do that, to try and establish the point; they were not to stay a week and hope that they could ram home something into these persons; no. The word of the ministry comes; if there is a son of peace there it will have its own fruits in its due time. May there be an exercise that there is a son of peace, a heart that is ready to receive a word; it may be a hard word but peace can still be enjoyed.

I close with that reference in Matthew which I think is very beautiful. "Blessed", not now a son of peace: "Blessed the peace-makers". Would you have called them that? "Blessed the peace-makers, for they shall be called sons of God". I read that to allude to dignity. "Blessed the peace-makers". It is greater than a son of peace in some ways, it is a son of God, it is sonship in expression. That is the way the Lord speaks about it; "Blessed the peace-makers". Men give more medals for fighting battles but the Lord gives a peace-maker the highest title that can be conferred. "Blessed the peace-makers, for they shall be called sons of God". There is need of dignity, beloved, to be brought into our occasions, there is a need of royalty. We are all "God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus", Gal 3: 26. A son of God brings in peace. He does not bring in trouble. As I have said, he may raise exercises, but they are raised in peace—a peace-maker. A son of God can extend the influence and the atmosphere of peace among the brethren. It is royalty, and there is need of more royalty. These baser things that are of the flesh: what warfare and conflict they entail! May the dignity, the blessedness of sonship, lay hold of us; may this be a feature—sonship in expression. Not a way I would have thought about describing sonship, not a way that I would have thought exactly, but when you think of it, royalty, dignity would bring in peace. That is the Lord coming in in John 20: "Peace". All the apostles raise exercises in their epistles. It would be interesting to look and see how Paul closes certain ones with the blessing of peace. Galatians: would you have expected it there? Corinthians: would you have expected it there? I leave these things to be thought about. But where there are exercises, where there are matters to be gone through, if there is not a sense of peace coming into the times among the brethren, beloved, there is something wrong. There is a need for sonship coming into expression. May we, beloved, join with the psalmist and pray and seek the peace of Jerusalem, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

21st January 1984

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Luke 22: 14-21, 25-27

John 13: 1-9; 20: 19,20

Acts 1: 1-3

RT What is in my mind is that there may be some fresh impression in our hearts of the love of Christ for His own. The first passage we read speaks of Him desiring before He suffered, and the passage in Acts speaks of Him appearing to His own, presenting Himself after He had suffered. During that period of time the Lord seems very concerned to leave with His own an impression of His love, His dying for them in love. There comes a point in the gospel where He seems to turn His attention to that line of things. We think of the gospels, rightly, as the Lord here in relation to men. He “went through all quarters doing good, and healing all that were under the power of the devil”, Acts 10: 38. His attitude was towards all, yet a point comes in the gospel when He seems to turn His attention particularly to His own and would give them an impression, such as, “This is my body which is given for you”, and I wondered if there is scope for us to think of the death of Christ in that way. It is more limited in one sense. The value of that work is towards all, but the Lord seems in these simple incidents—and they are simple, just sitting with twelve men, and in another incident just taking a basin to wash their feet—I think He would convey something of His love for them in particular. He was going into death, and they were on His heart. We could have read in John 17 where we get something of the breathings of Christ in relation to His own, but I thought these occasions and the simplicity of them would have their own charm. He desired: “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer”. He would give us an impression that He was dying, His love for His own entering into His death, that they might be free to enjoy Him in the conditions into which He was going, where that love could be enjoyed unhinderedly. I think there is room for our hearts to contemplate the Lord’s death on this side of things. It is not the sin offering, it is more, perhaps, that He “loved the

assembly, and has delivered himself up for it”, Eph 5: 25. What a sense that gives us of His love! that we were in His heart and that He went into death to secure us and to bring us into relationships that love had designed before time began.

DJH In Luke it is before He suffered, and this is after. In the scripture in John the note says, as to “loved them to the end”, that going through with everything is implied. That would be in between, would it not?

RT I thought that. Think of what was before the Lord. In the passover, which is referred to there, He was going to bear God’s judgment, the passover Lamb was bearing the wrath and judgment of God against sin. That is one side of His death. But while that was being accomplished, while the hatred of man must have pressed in on His spirit, He seems to want to convey to these few persons some sense that He was dying in love for them.

AJEW Is that why it is here “my blood, which is poured out for you”? The pouring out really alludes to His own action, does it not?

RT That is fine! Say some more about that.

AJEW We read of His blood being shed, in which you might think of another shedding it, the soldier with the spear, but the pouring out is surely His matter, what it involved for Him.

RT That is very beautiful; there was no hesitation, there was no drawing back; the fulness of the love that was expressed was “for you”. I think the emblems are meant to give us some sense of the love of Christ in this way. “My body, which is given for you” is like a private side. He speaks of it in John: “Ye are my friends”, chap 15: 14. He lays down His life for His friends. What it meant for Christ, the pressures of the moment tremendous, and yet He takes this time to impress on them that He was dying to express His love for them.

DJH We speak of committal on our side in relation to the Supper, but when He says, “which is poured out for you” (at this point that had not been done), He was committing Himself unreservedly in relation to it.

RT Yes, and the spear of the soldier, and the ignominy and shame to which He was going to be subjected, would not turn Him aside from expressing this love for them: “my body which is given for you”.

EP There is a touch in the Song of Songs where the word is, “Many waters cannot quench love, Neither do the floods drown it”, chap 8: 7. That is followed by, “Even if a man gave all the substance of his house for love”, but the Lord gave more than that, He gave Himself.

RT Yes, He gave Himself. It says about the pearl that “he went and sold all whatever he had” (Matt 13: 46), but the many waters were all there, the waves that rolled upon Him. That was perhaps the view of Him bearing the judgment of God; but then His heart—the hymn speaks about it—

Borne in Thy heart through death’s dark tide (No 347)

These persons, as I have said, must have reflected on the simplicity of these incidents, conveying the love of Christ amidst the hour of His pressure, His distinctive love for them.

ECB Is there any type of this?

RT Well, you have been going through Leviticus on Wednesdays, have you found one?

ECB We have reached only to chapter 12, but I do not think there is a type of this. The offerings involve one person taking the sacrifice and sacrificing it but I wondered whether this entered into “who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God” (Heb 9: 14), His love being involved in that.

RT Say some more about that.

ECB As we understand that scripture it is presenting Himself to God; Mr Darby says ‘What did God do? He made His soul an offering for sin’, but it was in love, was it not? “That the world may know that I love the Father” (John 14: 31), but as already quoted; “having loved his own”. It seems to me that it exceeds the type and required God having come into our condition in manhood for it to be demonstrated.

RT Yes indeed. I think Mr Darby comments on some of these instances that He was both Victim and Priest; the Victim was slain but the Priest went through. What remains is the Priest, and there is a touch of that in these verses, is there not? The charm of His love! He did not hesitate in the offering of Himself, but, as you say, I do not think there is a type which measures up to it. It required the Person who was there, because who else could have been one like this, who could in dying speak of living? He looked on them as He was going to receive them again in the kingdom of His Father. He looked right through the whole thing. The power of death rolled in upon His spirit and He felt it as no creature could, but He saw that work accomplished and He saw them with Him, we may say in the restfulness of all that love had secured.

WJRB Paul says, “my body, which is for you”, 1 Cor 11: 24. I wondered whether you had some thought on that, because Paul received that from the glory.

RT Yes. As we are so often reminded, Paul and Luke go very near to each other but, as you say, there is that difference. Here it is “This is my body which is given for you”. I think the word ‘given’ would just convey to us something of what we are trying to speak about. The Lord would give them a sense of how much they meant to Him; and the same with the cup; “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you”. The words “for you” are not mentioned in Corinthians, which has a much wider bearing of things in a sense; His blood being shed and the cup of the new covenant will extend in its fulness to many families. Israel will come into it, and all families will come into the blessedness of it, but I think the words “for you” and “given” here would just impress these few disciples with the personal love of Jesus for them as He was going into death.

CJHD There is a beautiful expression in the book of Job—

If he only thought of himself, and gathered unto him his
spirit and his breath,
All flesh would expire together

chap 34: 14, 15

But “the Christ also did not please himself”, Rom 15: 3.

RT That is very beautiful. “I am in the midst of you as the one that serves”. How much they meant to Him! We have the Supper week by week and it may lose its freshness and its appeal, but I thought these verses would just revive some thinking about it in our minds. How much they meant to Him, and how they were held in His affections—borne in His heart through death’s dark tide—so that after He had suffered He might present Himself to them living.

RWF Does the repeated use of the word “desire” carry great force? God’s desires are made known in the glad tidings to all men, not looking for the death of a sinner but desiring “that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”, 1 Tim 2: 4. There is great force in that, but does the repetition of the word convey considerable intensity towards His own?

RT And especially at this time. How many things must have been in the Lord’s mind. He came to do the will of God, and here is the whole point of His coming about to be accomplished, and yet in that hour, as you say, His desire was to be with them: “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you”. It shows how much they meant to Him in these closing moments; the last part of His service was in relation to them.

CJHD We thought this morning, on this line of Luke that you are on, that that body held so perfectly for the will of God is said to be given for us. How affecting that is if you think of the immensity of what He did for God, through the blood; “made peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1: 20), and yet He says, “poured out for you”. That greatly affected me this morning.

RT It shows us the place that the saints have in the purpose of God, and here is the way that that purpose is being effected in the power of the love of Christ.

JCE Would you say something as to the blood being related to the new covenant, please.

RT Oh, you could say more than I could.

JCE It does not seem so much concerned with the moral side; the moral side was needed in their personal need of cleansing, but in relation to the new covenant it is founding it on a basis that could never be disturbed.

RT That is presented, do you think, to make way for the love of God shining out in its fulness?

AJEW I had wondered about the expression used: "This cup is the new covenant"; not exactly 'the cup of the new covenant'. It is very closely identified with it, as if there is a present touch for us in the cup. I mean, in saying that, that the cup is not only a reference to an accomplished work but it becomes an immediate expression to us, as gathered, of the blessedness of that work. It would enforce what you are thinking. I was noticing too, as a matter of interest, that He uses the title Son of man in verse 22, that is, He is speaking to them, but not without regard to the full extent of what He would effect through death. He is in a sense confiding that to them, as if to say, You are the ones who will understand this.

RT That word 'confiding' which you use is a feature of love, is it not? There is confidence. They were very unlikely material from one point of view, but think of the love of Christ, as you say, confiding in them, how He would bring it home to them, His regard for them and His thoughts about them. I think they came into this as they reflected when they had the Spirit, the blessedness of the way the Lord moved and His thoughts about them, unlikely material as they were in the flesh, but He confided in them something of His love and His thoughts and the Father's thoughts about them.

ECB Do you think the two going to Emmaüs would especially have that as He drew near and went with them?

RT Yes, love adapts itself to the circumstances that may come in. It is a very affecting verse: "Jesus himself drawing nigh, went with them", Luke 24: 15. He could have passed them by because of their doubts and conversation but He went with them. He says, I will come down to these circumstances in which you are to bring you into the circumstances which

My love has designed for you. They said, “Was not our heart burning in us?”. It has often been commented on that the distance from Jerusalem is given but the length of the journey back is not given. The love of Christ compelled them and soon caused them to be gathered with those who were speaking about these blessed things. Well, the new covenant is the love of God; it is the basis laid in His blood that the love of God might be shed forth in all its fulness.

JCE I think the Lord was looking at them as together. He was speaking of ‘you’. The passover cup they were to divide amongst themselves, which suggests a sphere of things where one takes one appreciation and another another, but it seems that everything is for us, does it not?

RT Yes, I think there is a concentration. As I said, in the gospels it is towards men, serving humanity, but there comes a point in these incidents where He is concentrating on them, to leave an impression with them that His death was an act of love in relation to them. As we said, it is not the sin-offering, it is not the bearing of the judgment of God, it is making a way so that they may be free from all encumbrances and have part with Him. Well, He leaves that other impression; “I am in the midst of you as the one that serves”. He says the world will go back to its own ways after My death, the kings of the nations will act, and men will act in their own ways, but He says, My love in your heart is to make you different. He says “I am in the midst of you as the one that serves”; He has come down and expressed love in service, and He would be encouraging and stimulating them to move on that line.

PM In that service He gave everything that He had, even the body which was prepared for Him. Is it not to attract us that the love of Christ is such towards us?

RT It is, and that He took these simple ways to express it; the loaf and the cup are left with us as a memorial, a reminder that the Lord died this way with the saints in His heart: “My body which is for you”.

BWW So are we to gain some impression at this time that although the company to which the Lord actually spoke here was, as you have emphasised, very small, the effect of it and the meaning of it is for us as much as for them?

RT Oh, I think it is for us. What an extension there has been! It says here that “he placed himself at table, and the twelve apostles with him”. It was done in that setting that there might be an authoritative representation of it. It was witnessed by these persons and it is carried on into the Acts. They continued this service in simplicity, but He has these persons there who were witnesses of the way He moved in His closing moments to express His love for them.

AJEW Is there something for us in the references to the table? He placed Himself at table in verse 14; He feelingly discloses one whose hand is with Him on the table; then He speaks in verse 27: “he that is at table or he that serves”. Is there not an emphasis in that of the reality of joint participation with Him in what is peculiarly precious to Himself? It is not, so to speak, a public view but an intimate view in relation to Christ.

RT Would it bear the interpretation of family affections? Family affections are something that enter into the Supper. We have been helped to see that it is not in big numbers—we do not have them anyway—but there are a few together in family affections. “At table” would suggest something of that. There is a simplicity and a family idea in being together at table, and the Lord places Himself there, and at that table there is a reminder of the love of Christ in its fulness.

DJH Would it be right to connect it with the reference to “the communion of the body of the Christ”, 1 Cor 10: 16? We were seeing during the week that the table relates to fellowship. Could you say something as to that expression: “communion of the body of the Christ”?

RT It is joint participation, that we are together in that way. We are so apt to separate ourselves and think of diverse things coming in, but the communion would be a very binding thing, would it not?

DJH Yes, and in relation to His body. I was thinking of the reference made to “thou hast prepared me a body”, Heb 10: 5. That body was unique; but was this in view of that divine preparation of that body?

RT Indeed, and the circumstances only bring out the intensity of His love. From the public point of view, He is almost saying “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain” (Isa 49: 4)—the public view of the path of Christ—but here is an inside, a family setting of things. But if the course of things in the world was going on as it was, persons acting just as they were before, He says, I am showing you another way; in My death you are brought into another line of things and other principles that you are to enjoy in My love.

FPAS We often refer to the Hebrew bondman; does that connect with “the one that serves”? The outstanding word there is “I love”.

RT Yes, and He loves unhesitatingly. There was another way out for Him but He loved without hesitation, did He not? I was thinking of that scripture, the way that the Lord expressed His love in relation to us.

FPAS Would it connect with the family thought that you were mentioning?

RT Yes, I think the simple side of these incidents would promote the family atmosphere and affections among us.

DAB The Hebrew bondman committed himself, it says, “because he loveth thee”; then it says, “because he is well with thee”, Deut 15: 16. You were pointing out as to the Lord that there was much ill that He endured; He transcends the Hebrew bondman, does He not? He loved, not because it was well with Him but in spite of what was ill against Him.

RT Yes, that is like what was referred to: many waters could not quench it, neither could the floods drown it. That is true, but think of the intensity of that coming in relation to us, His own; He loved His own, “His own who were in the world”; it says He “loved them to the end”. “His own”—a very choice

expression. The circumstances in that chapter were “before the feast of the passover”; that is, He was going to bear God’s judgment against sin; but before that He is impressing His own: “having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end”.

ECB Do you think that the one who hears His voice and opens the door, even in Laodicea, would be conscious of His love? I was thinking of Laodicea being the public position in which we are, but the understanding and the enjoyment of the love of Christ lead to hearing His voice and opening the door.

RT The knocking there is another instance of love adapting itself to our circumstances, is it not?

ECB Yes. I was thinking also of “I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me” (Rev 3: 20) as bearing on the references made earlier to the table.

RT That knocking; what an appeal! “I will ... sup with him, and he with me”. That comes into John 13, does it not? “Part with me” was His whole point in it; they did not quite grasp it, but His word to Peter, and Peter’s action, bring out that His service in love, His taking this position, His doing these, you may say, menial things, was to impress them with His love in view of their having part with Him.

PM The emblems each Lord’s day remind us that Christianity is based on sacrificial service. Should that affect us in the way we move in service to one another?

RT Well, that is a feature of love. We have remarked on the Hebrew bondman; the cost was there in a sense, but it was not counted. The object was so great, the saints meant so much to Christ, that He moved towards the cross, He moved towards those sufferings unhesitatingly.

JSG When the Lord was apprehended, He says, “If therefore ye seek me, let these go away”, John 18: 8. I wondered if there was in a way a contrast between the Lord’s preparedness to express love to His own protectively and this inner side that you are expressing, which the Lord seems more to have in view, leading up to the 20th chapter.

RT Well, we have each had experiences of the love of Christ, and it is a time for encouraging one another in it.

JSG It is very precious to know that the Lord's love goes as far as the protection of each one. He says in chapter 17: 12: "those thou hast given me I have guarded, and not one of them has perished", but I wondered whether the Lord specially has in view leading us through personal experience of His love into the collective enjoyment of privilege.

RT That would come into "part with me". The Lord would not stop short of the full accomplishment of what love had purposed, and that involved "part with me". It involves part with Him in the resurrection circumstances and surroundings and with Him in that glory that He now bears, which He shares (wonderful fact!) with us. "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them" (John 17: 22) would enter into "part with me".

EP Would this be a continuing part with Him? I trust we have all had a touch with the Lord and known His love, but to have a continuing part with Him! He credited the disciples with having persevered with Him in His temptations (see Luke 22: 28)—wonderful that He should say that! But is this in view of continuing, both in the sense of privilege and testimony?

RT I think that "loved them to the end" would imply that, that His love is great enough to sustain the position. He has not only brought us into a relationship as His brethren but His love is great enough to sustain the relationship in all its privileges and responsibilities.

HPW Would the use of the water and the linen towel show how things are to be done? The example of the Lord would bring out the priestly features that should be enacted in the disciples?

RT Do not forget the towel. We may see there is a need for certain things and we may forget the towel. The using of the towel is needed for "part with me".

HPW I was thinking of the linen towel, the righteousness that it would suggest, and the priestly way in which things are done.

RT Yes. It has been pointed out that the water was 1 Corinthians and the towel was 2 Corinthians. Paul wrote another epistle. He did not write only about what was wrong but he says, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you”, 1 Cor 16: 23. That would come in in view of “part with me”. Love would serve to have this relationship in its sweetness and its blessedness to be enjoyed.

JMW I was going to enquire about formation: do you think that these experiences we have, personally or collectively, would cause there to be formation after love?

RT I think so; we can see that in Peter. Formation was not there when he said, “Thou shalt never wash my feet”. You can understand his sentiments about it, but I think that the formation came as he reflected on this. I think formation comes as we give time for the love of Christ to form us in its own blessedness. It gets rid of our own ideas, and the love of Christ forms us and strengthens us, do you think?

JMW Indeed; and the reference you made earlier to “after he had suffered” (Acts 1: 3) would involve for us the gift of the Spirit, would it not? Is He not essential so that what is divine might be formed in us, not merely mentally but in deep harmony with His service towards us?

RT What is formation? I think if there is formation at all it is formation in love. Nothing forms us like the divine nature. Other things will puff up; Christendom is full of that. Love is the formative side of things; love’s response as was expressed in our hymn—

Worthy of homage and of praise

(Hymn 195)

—should come into all our gatherings.

CJHD How quickly love in service and the table came in when the gospel reached Europe at Philippi. The jailor washed them

from their stripes, he laid the table for them and rejoiced householdly.

RT Very beautiful! That was a good start for Europe: what has happened since?

CJHD May it be continued in the unity of the household of God!

RT Yes. Love does not wait on some big occasion; it is the simplicity, I thought, in these two scriptures we have read. "Knowing ... that he came out from God and was going to God", departing out of the world to the Father. What a prospect that must have meant for the Lord, that He was leaving these circumstances of humiliation and was going to be with the Father in His glory! But before He goes, having loved His own who were in the world, He leaves them with an impression of His love for them going through with everything.

EO When you selected this chapter I thought, What, again! We had it a fortnight ago in the city and we have had it many times over recent months, and it seems to me that the Lord, in detaining us on it, desires us to reach fully into it and to arrive at something.

RT Well, you often feel slow in suggesting familiar scriptures and yet they have their own charm, have they not? The simplicity of this scripture was what attracted me. He was about to go to that glory and yet He says, This is the impression of love I would leave among you. As you say, He has asked them to continue it, love in simplicity, love in activity in view of "part with me". Let us not stop short. Love would not tolerate the distance, love will not allow the shortcomings. It is in view of "part with me", 'in My glory'.

AJEW Simplicity delights to follow an example. This is the Lord's example, is it not? An example means much more than a great deal expressed in words.

RT Yes, indeed it does. What meaning in this chapter, what fulness, and down as far as He could go, He washed their feet. He could not have gone lower; and as He said in Luke: "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves".

ECB In chapter 17 the Lord in a certain sense hands over the protective side to the Father, but His desire is that those the Father had given Him should be with Him where He was. What the Lord has in view in His love is not merely that He should be with us in our circumstances but that we should be with Him in His.

RT Well, in the assembly, in our gatherings we should touch that. In these settings the Lord was still in the world, the course of things was all around, but there was a point—private maybe touched with these disciples that was in character not of the world.

ECB Do you not feel that, while as we have been taught and understand, the breaking of bread itself is in the wilderness, as soon as the Lord comes in, He brings His own environment with Him?

RT Yes. Mr Taylor said that when He comes in He brings the wealth of heaven with Him.

ECB Should not the value of the two words in chapter 20: 26, “again within”, be with us each Lord’s day?

RT Yes indeed, but as He comes in the whole circumstances change and we are absorbed with Him. We feel the slowness of apprehending Him, but here He comes; you might say in principle that He brings the wealth of heaven with Him.

ECB I have been impressed by it before, but I was impressed again this morning with the way in which the experience of the Lord’s coming in refreshes you, with nothing being said. Just to be in the Lord’s presence is refreshing.

RT Yes, He does not say very much here on these occasions. They must have gone on for a bit longer than what is recorded, but the impression that He leaves on them, the impression that He distinctly leaves on John, is “Peace”. That is very refreshing, is it not? “Peace be to you”; and as you say, they were again within. One of them had missed an occasion. They must have gone and visited him and told him how good a time they had, they must have stirred up some reviving of

affection about the absent one, stirred him up to be there the next time.

ECB They might even have reminded Thomas of what is recorded in chapter 13.

RT Yes, that He washed his feet. He did not wash Thomas's feet for him to stay at home, He washed his feet to have part with Him and to bring out the gold. Somebody once spoke about that: "My Lord and my God" was a piece of gold, and so it was, but the gold is to be in circulation. There is gold in the brethren; we want it in movement, to see its face value; we want it shining. This experience stimulated Thomas to be there when they were again within.

PM "Peace be to you"; would you say something as to that; it is not 'Peace be among you'. Would it link with the Lord imparting His own peace and He Himself becoming their object?

RT I think it is what He brings in here, with "the doors shut where the disciples were, through fear of the Jews". There are often certain anxieties in our hearts, but if we see the One whose love has settled every issue, as He is before the soul what peace it brings! It is in view of this enjoying part with Him; "he shewed to them his hands and his side". What affection! What could be read into that—the love expressed in a suffering way to bring into expression a vessel that is His counterpart!

ECB "Peace be to you": that is ministry, is it not? Is not ministry something conveyed or communicated? While the Supper itself and the service of God is not exactly a time for ministry, although we welcome what the Lord may say to us, is that not the character of ministry?

RT Yes, and I think it is His attitude as He comes in on any occasion. As to ministry, "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves" is another example. The saints are always greater than the minister. You are speaking to persons who are Christ's brethren. You are addressing the work of God, not men after the flesh. How attractive and blessed it is! And the

Lord is greeting the work of God here. He says, "Peace be to you", even a Thomas. In the mixed conditions which sometimes mark us the Lord comes in and He addresses His own work.

RWF Why did the Lord say "Peace be to you" three times in this section?

RT Say what is in your mind.

RWF I was wondering whether the Lord has perfect knowledge of our condition. He is aware of fears, questions, doubts; He knows exactly the point at which they arise and His word comes in swiftly to deal with them and leaves us with a sense of peace from Him.

RT I think one point of it would be that it is what is to mark and characterise the assemblings of the saints. They were again within. The Jews are outside, the doors are shut. What is to mark the inside, the gatherings of the saints, is peace: "Peace be to you". It can, and it should. The atmosphere of it facilitates the place that Christ is to have enthroned in our affections.

TJB Is that confirmed by the way in which it says, "And having said this", and, "Then he says to Thomas", that is, He would establish something in ministering His own peace, and then things can proceed?

RT Yes. So very simply, the first hymn should bring us into peace. We come with problems, we come with exercises, but I have often experienced it, the singing of the hymn transports your soul into a different area, and we should think of that kind of thing, because if there is not peace there cannot be, as you say, the unfolding of His hands and His side. The Lord wants to show us something. He does not only speak. It says He said "Peace ... And having said this, he shewed to them ...". If there is not peace He cannot show, but having said "Peace", He showed them His hands and His side. It should be something that very quickly will set us together to hear and to see what the Lord may do. That should be at the Supper

primarily, but there should be some touch of that character coming into all our occasions, would you say?

AJEW Surely. It is a little again on the line of the example. It is what is done rather than what is expressed in word.

RT We have been taught that these appearances were to accustom them to spirituality; it was an example. These appearances were to accustom the saints as to how the meetings were to run, if you like; it was to accustom them to thinking spiritually. So the example of the Lord coming once, coming twice, and John says, "This is already the third time" (chap 21: 14), is as if the Lord would establish it without any doubt that He is coming in relation to those He loves.

JSG The second statement actually comes in following the reference to their rejoicing in seeing Him, as if the peace is necessary not only to meet conditions of fear externally but to sustain us in any rejoicing that we may reach, to set us forward in it.

RT Yes, the basis of that peace is the love of Christ.

CGH It is a great thing for our souls when we have an impression of the Lord presenting Himself living.

RT Yes, especially these words, "after he had suffered". The Lord was about to go to the Father, but Luke says He continued for forty days coming in and going out among them; after He had suffered His first occupation was His own who were in the world He "loved them to the end". He was not seen again publicly, but it says, "he presented himself living, after he had suffered, with many proofs; being seen by them during forty days, and speaking of the things which concern the kingdom of God".

CJHD Is not peace necessary the second time in view of the sending out, for their feet are said to be shod with the preparation of the glad tidings of peace?

RT Very good. I think it is a normal relationship of love known. If there is love between us, and if we know and enjoy

that love, there is bound to be peace. We will have things to speak about, but there is peace between us.

AJEW “During forty days” suggests that it was not just a question of some occasions; there is a certain constancy about it.

RT That is very beautiful. As you say, again it is an example, what the Lord has left as a treasure coming into the assembly. He is coming in and going out; He has established the thing immutably. His love is bound up with them “after he had suffered”. Before He suffered He was assuring them of it; now, after He had suffered, the first thing He does is that He comes in among them during these forty days.

RWF Were His own themselves the proofs?

RT Yes, I think His hands and His side was one of the proofs. “He presented himself living, after he had suffered, with many proofs ... and speaking of the things which concern the kingdom of God”. I think the many proofs would assure them, reassure them, of the love of the Christ. What do you think about it?

RWF Well, it was not exactly a legal proof, but there was that proved by those who saw Him and had to do with Him, and they would from that point set Him forth, become themselves proofs.

RT The Supper each week as it comes in would be a fresh proof of the love of Christ for His own. That is to awaken response in us.

I just thought, in closing, that I would allude to the end of Deborah’s song. She says, “But let them that love him be as the rising of the sun in its might”, Judg 5: 31. Nothing could stop the love of Christ to us, but the answer to that is, those that love Him are like the rising of the sun in its might. Then it says, “the land had rest forty years”. The love in expression brings about these conditions where it can be enjoyed without let and without hindrance.

ECB Do you get some answer in that sense to the heavenly host at the incarnation: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men"?

RT Yes, it has come out in its fulness, and what an answer there is! There is the love of the Christ for us; now, in the assembly there is a vessel that loves Him above all else, cherishes Him, and it is like the rising of the sun in its might.

LONDON

22nd January 1984

Lis of initials (*all local unless otherwise stated*)

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LEANING

**Genesis 32: 24-31; 49: 33 (from “he gathered”); 48: 8,10;
Song of Songs 8: 5;
John 13: 23**

I read these scriptures, dear brethren, to seek to say a word about leaning. It is something that comes out in Jacob in a very fine way; the best days of Jacob were when he was leaning. You remember the word, the word of wisdom, to “lean not unto thine own intelligence; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will make plain thy paths”, Prov 3: 5. We are slow to come to it, to lean. O, beloved, we have Somebody worth leaning on! That is what Jacob came to see, that there was somebody worth leaning on, and as I say, his best days were when he had learned to lean. He had spent a good deal of time living on his own understanding; he could have written a book about it, but he comes to a point where that will not do, to a point where he needs somebody to lean on. Have you ever felt that? Maybe you have been successful, made a lot of money; Jacob had. He had a big family, he was able to meet every circumstance as it arose, but here is a circumstance that he could not meet; he did not know what to do. What do you do? Call up the lawyers? look and see what your rights are? see how you can work things out with your resources, your money, your accountants? No, beloved, you learn to lean on Somebody who is far more than that, One who is a Friend. Jacob learns to lean; it says, “And Jacob remained alone; and a man wrestled with him until the rising of the dawn”. How will you do, beloved, in the swelling of the Jordan, Jer 12: 5? Perhaps you have run with the footmen; you have had friends who have thought the same as you, but how will you do in the swelling of the Jordan? This for Jacob was a real exercise and it will be so for you. Jacob remained alone—alone. He still had a large family and possessions, but what good were they? He was alone, alone with a man who was wrestling with him, who took no cognisance of his money or of his brains or his ability, but who says, Jacob, what are you going to do, you are alone with me? Lean not unto thine own understanding. I do

not want to speak unduly of critical times, I trust we will speak of something greater than that, but Jacob here is in a critical time and what does he do? He was alone; he did not have his bookcase, he did not have these other resources that he would have called on perhaps in earlier days; he had hardly before met a man that he could not match. Laban tried but Jacob could match him. Here he is alone, and a man wrestled with him. Dear brethren, here is a soul going through exercises with God and coming out victorious. As I said, his best days are ahead of him. He would not have thought that in this hour and maybe you do not think that at the moment, but, beloved, the best days were ahead of him, a man who was limping and the sun shining upon him. But here a man wrestled with him until the rising of the dawn. It says, “he touched the joint of his thigh; and the joint of Jacob’s thigh was dislocated as he wrestled with him”.

To bring these exercises to ourselves it is God speaking to you, passing you through deep waters and yet allowing you to prevail. What a God He is! He could have brought up a lot against Jacob at this juncture; He could have told him the kind of man he had been, but He is touching the Spirit’s work in Jacob, He is touching a work of God in his soul and God has allowed it to prevail. He does this in circumstances that you may be in. God allows you to get some power; maybe He helps you in the preaching, helps you to ask questions in the meeting; He helps you through these exercises and yet you are still leaning to your own understanding. God would bring you through things into the victory that you lean on Him; you learn to walk with a limp, but you learn to walk as leaning on Christ. God would help you. Jacob says, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me”. O, beloved, get the fruit of an exercise. There are many exercises—we speak feelingly—that we have all passed through that have been fruitless, they have left a limp perhaps without a Beloved to lean on. Well, Jacob says, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me”. And what does God do? He changes his name. O, what a light dawns into the soul when God says you are no longer Jacob, your past history has forever gone—gone. His lawyers could never have done that;

no advocate could do that for you. God brought him to this experience and said, All that you are as after Adam's order with your schemings are for ever gone, and He says, Israel is your name. He is going to walk as a prince. Limping, yes, but walking in the dignity of leaning upon somebody well known. Dear brethren, there is a need for dignity among us; there is a need for Israel. Jacob has gone; is he gone with you? "What things were gain to me these I counted ... to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord", Phil 3: 7,8. In a few chapters after, Jacob no longer uses his wits or his own scheme of things but he has learnt to lean on somebody and he walks as a prince. Can we move through these things, beloved, in the princely dignity of our name being changed? Or do we revert again to other principles? Paul calls them beggarly principles, persons bringing them into the assembly of God, bringing in bondage. That is what the line of Jacob would have done, but God says Israel shall be thy name "for thou hast wrestled with God ... and hast prevailed". God gives a reason for it; it is not only conferred in the grace of Christ but there is something of the Spirit's work coming out in him now. There is something that God has divinely wrought in the soul to be seen, and God says I name that as princely. Let it function, beloved. He may still be limping but he is a prince of God. It says here (I like that verse), "And as he passed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him; and he limped upon his hip". "The sun rose upon him": O, think of the warmth of divine love coming into his soul! The sun must have risen upon millions of others that day but it says that it rose upon him. You get a sense of divine love in its warmth coming into your soul that you no longer want to walk as a Jacob, you no longer want to walk in those diverse ways of leaning to your own understanding, but "in all thy ways acknowledge him". At every step Jacob had to acknowledge Him, at every step he limped. O, but he leant heavily, he brought out those princely features in his movements. The Corinthians said of Paul that he was limping, that is what they would have drawn attention to: "his presence in the body weak, and his speech naught", 2 Cor 10: 10. But Paul said, Did it matter? The sun was shining upon him. If you are in the sunshine and somebody else is in

the shadow you feel for them. But you keep in the sunshine. The sun rose upon Jacob; his limp, his need of leaning did not hinder the sun shining, he felt it and enjoyed it all the more, the wealth and warmth of divine love coming in. There may have been some sore or tender parts, some parts that might not have been fully healed yet, but the sun shining on them brings its warmth and all its beneficent rays. There is Jacob, the sun rose upon him.

Now, dear brethren, have you known the experience? Maybe you have been alone, you have known the wrestling, you know what it is to have your name changed. God is ready to do it, He would do it today. Are you prepared to be finished with your own ideas, your own understanding, what you think about things, even what you think should be said in the ministry, what you think should be this or be that? Beloved, let us make way, as leaning, for the sun to shine upon us.

In these chapters that I refer to (I only speak of them briefly and simply) you see a man, a prince of God. At the end of his days he is seen still leaning, he worshipped leaning on the top of his staff. "The eyes of Israel were heavy from age": did that deceive him? Not a bit! He could still guide his hands intelligently, he still knew right from wrong, he still knew what seemed to be right that was not just it; he had insight. Here is a man who is with the Spirit of God and who has had his eyes opened; they were heavy from age; even Joseph here thought he knew better. O, do not despise what may be failing outwardly; do not despise outward circumstances that may not seem so powerful. Jacob here is still as much a prince as ever he was, I would say more than ever he was; he is here a prince of God. Joseph said, Well, it really should be this. Dear brethren, we are very presumptuous at times, we think it should be this and it should be that. I do not speak disparagingly of Joseph one bit, but I speak to bring out the advantage of a man who had lost natural powers maybe, but who was in the power of the Spirit of God. It says that he guided his hands intelligently (see v 14); he says to Joseph "I know". Joseph thought he did not know. Israel says, "I know, my son, I know". There is a man who is leaning. How did he

know? He did not see; you say he has not the advantage of youth, he does not have a quick mind. No, he did not even see, but he knew and guided his hands intelligently; he was a man that was leaning. O, beloved, if there is one thing we need it is dependence, dependence on Christ, dependence on the Spirit of God. What disasters have been wrought through persons leaning to their own understanding, and persons of ability bringing their own ideas in that seemed right! But it was not the divine touch. Here is a man who had lost his eyesight; his eyes were heavy from age, and it says again, “he could not see”; but he guided his hands intelligently and he says, “I know”. Do you know? The way to know, beloved, is through leaning. Jacob must have been told about this, he must have smelt the savour and odour of these sons; he had had that experience earlier in his history. He must have known, he did not see with his natural eyes but somebody must have told him—communion beloved, communion, dependence; leaning makes way for communion, makes way for speaking too, divine speaking in a local assembly. Personalities may project themselves too much, but here is somebody who is leaning, he does not see but he is leaning and he guides his hands intelligently. I only speak of that to show the advantage. It is no disadvantage to have a limp, dear brethren, it is no disadvantage to have been through these experiences with God, it is a blessed asset. May we be helped to make the most of it—leaning. It speaks of him worshipping too, on the top of his staff. O, what a father he is! These next chapters bring out the wealth of a man who has been leaning. He is not here disposing exactly of what he had gained by his own power, he is not telling them what he had brought from Laban’s land and what he had gained there. No, he says “the God that shepherded me ... the Angel that redeemed me from all evil”. He is a prince, he has something that has been handed down; he has acquired it in his own exercises and experiences with God as leaning, leaning on Him. Now may we be helped individually to lean, lean heavily, beloved, and, O, what a Man to lean on! the One who has changed your name, the One who has taken away all that stood against you and your offences and your sins, the Priest that we were

speaking of today in Hebrews 3. What a One to lean on! The Word of God, the Apostle, the High Priest, is the One to lean on. "Mixed with faith", (Heb 4: 2) comes into the leaning. Jacob did not know the days that were ahead, but he was leaning and he guides his hands intelligently.

I refer to the Song to see there one who is leaning upon her Beloved. It would be speaking of things not exactly individually, but there is an exclamation here: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved?" Is Christ not going to see the testimony through, dear brethren? Does He not say, at the close of Matthew's gospel, "I am with you all the days", chap 28: 20. It has been well said that the Lord is with us as we are with Him. "Leaning upon her beloved"—she is with Him. She comes up out of the wilderness. The assembly is not a wilderness creature; she is not native to the wilderness exactly, she is coming up. Is that the experience in your local company? Not only wilderness exercises, not only Romans, not only the experiences of Corinthians, but is there some experience in your local company of coming up? "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness ...?" She is able to meet all the responsibilities of the wilderness way; but somebody here sees something very beautiful: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved?" He is leading us, dear brethren, conducting upward. "I ascend" was His word to those few in John 20. Are you going to ascend with Him? They did. It says, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (v 17); there is the ascending line. The disciples came into something of that in John 20, they came up. They went to their homes, I suppose in despair, having looked into the tomb, but the word of God comes to them that He was risen and they begin to rise up.

It is not only wilderness exercises, dear brethren, it is not only times of sorrow, but there is a coming up—"Leaning upon her beloved". O, how He would lift us up as we lean! He is going that way; may we not miss His movements. The assembly, as I said, is not a creature of the wilderness, she belongs to another sphere altogether, and He, the Beloved, is

going there and she is leaning upon Him. There could be a reference in it too to the Spirit; the Spirit is with us in the wilderness exercises as the servant was with Rebecca. How she must have leaned on the resources in the camels and in the servant; she must have been drawing on that. But here there comes a point of leaving the wilderness. Are we ready to leave it, dear brethren? Righteously she is able to deal with the wilderness line of things, but as He comes in there is to be a change: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, Leaning upon her beloved?"—"Leaning". You will never come into the land in all its blessedness and all its features any other way, save us leaning upon the Beloved. What a title He has there! "I ascend to my Father": what a title He has in heaven! What a place belongs to Him in glory, the angels and principalities and authorities all giving way to Christ! He belongs there, and as His counterpart we belong there too. May we be helped to get free of the wilderness circumstances, to see that the service of God is not carried on in the wilderness, it is carried on as leaning, leaning on the Beloved. What wealth He is ready to bring us into! He is more ready to bring us into it than we are to lean on Him and follow Him where He goes. If you are leaning on something and it moves, you have to move or you will fall. Leaning on the Beloved: as He moves, we would move under His touch. Has the wilderness such a hold that we cannot drag our feet from it? Have burdens become so heavy that we cannot arise as He moves? We have not been leaning on Him, dear brethren. There are exercises, burdens, to be carried and things to be done, but as He moves to rise we have to rise with Him. The test of righteousness in exercises is as we are ready to follow Christ as He moves. Are we leaning on Him so much that as He moves we move with Him? It says, "I awoke thee under the apple tree; There thy mother brought thee forth; There she brought thee forth that bore thee". I do not know much about what this would mean but I think the Lord is reminding us of the divine work in the saints; the assembly is divine property. He would remind us of the power and the grace and the fruit of divine work: "the apple-tree among the trees of the wood", chap 2: 3. The work of God, the assembly, has a different

origin; that is the impression I get about the verse just now, that the assembly has an origin different from the wilderness. It is in the wilderness but it belongs somewhere else. "I awoke thee under the apple tree; ... There she brought thee forth that bore thee". Beloved, the whole point of the assembly is to make much of Christ. She has her own shining, her own glory, but the glory the assembly has is not inherent, shall I say; the glories that it will ever have are conferred glories, reflecting the glory of Him who has it inherently—the apple tree. The apple tree is Christ in heaven, His own blossom, His own fruit, His own preciousness; the assembly is to augment that. In the wilderness can she point to Christ? In the settling of exercises and sorrows among us have the brethren been pointed to Christ? Are we leaning enough to bring Him in, to follow His movements? That is the impression I would leave, dear brethren, that the assembly belongs somewhere else. She has an origin outside of the wilderness altogether; you never saw an apple tree in the wilderness, she has an origin that is outside the wilderness sphere of things altogether, and as leaning on Christ He would bring us up—"Who is this ...?" No wonder there is an exclamation! The angels will yet exclaim (I feel it very humbling), but the angels will yet exclaim as to the wisdom of things working in the assembly—she belongs somewhere else. The fruit of leaning on her Beloved is that the wisdom of Christ comes through in exercises. It is someone else who is being drawn attention to and not me. How many sorrows there have been through men projecting themselves, but leaning means that the right thing is said, the power and wisdom is there, but it is all the time directing to Christ.

Well, do not let us think, beloved, that leaning is only for times of crisis—very largely perhaps that is our experience—but John was one who was at table, and he was leaning on the breast of Jesus. It was a constant thing with John. It says about him: "Now there was at table one of his disciples in the bosom of Jesus", that is where he lived, it is where Jacob had learned to live. As I say, not only at times when difficulties are to be met but his constant pathway was that he was in the bosom of Jesus and leaning on His breast.

He was there to be referred to; he was a fine brother to be referred to, somebody who is leaning on the breast of Jesus. Peter was leaning too; at times, like the most of us, he had leaned to his own understanding, but he says that that is not going to do here, no; it says he made a sign to him; it shows how near he was to him. Oh the advantage of a brother like this, the advantage of drawing on him: "Simon Peter makes a sign"; he does not even speak. Are these brotherly links strong enough among us so that there is a freedom just to look, to make a sign? There is somebody nearer the Lord than I am, consciously known. He says, "Lord, who is it?" He does not say he knew, he is still leaning. You ask somebody and they may answer quickly. John did not do that, he was still leaning, there was no pride with him. "But he, leaning on the breast of Jesus, says to him, Lord, who is it?" Beloved, may we ask questions leaning and prove the power and the resources that are available as we lean; let us lean heavily on Christ for His Name's sake.

MAIDSTONE

24th March 1984



“LET JERUSALEM COME INTO YOUR MIND”

Jeremiah 51: 50

Nehemiah 11: 1, 2

Daniel 6: 10; 9: 19–22

Revelation 21: 9–14, 21–23

I would like to use this appeal of Jeremiah's to “let Jerusalem come into your mind”. We have been speaking of hearts being expanded in affection for Christ. I believe all here would have affection for Christ, our Saviour, in response to the way that He has met us in all our need, and I take it we would want to express that affection. One form the expression of affection would take would be that you love the things that Christ loves. You say you love the Lord Jesus; who could not but love Him? If you know Him at all, you are bound to love Him. What graces and beauties have shone out in Him—where is the heart that could refrain from loving Him? To know Him is to love Him, and the better you know Him, the more you love Him. But one way that love expresses itself is in loving what He loves. He is in glory, and there is a great system of things all made subject to Him. Yet there is something here that He loves, and I would like to promote some love in your heart and mine for what is here that bears His name, maybe in rejection, but very precious to His heart. If you say you love Jesus, we would all have a right to see that love expressed.

If you love Him, you will be committed, as I have said, to what is precious to His heart, and what is precious to the heart of Christ is His assembly. It says, “Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it” (Eph 5: 25)—that wonderful vessel! Jerusalem is but a type of it that I would like grace to speak of for a moment.

Adam had no helpmate. Chapter 2 of Genesis shows that there was a void in Adam's heart. It appeared that he was surrounded by everything that he needed, but there was a void in his heart that only Eve could fill. Christ is a Man of great affection, nobody could doubt that, and He longed for a vessel. His assembly, to respond to His affections. According to Matthew 13, He sells all He has and buys the field where the

treasure was. He purchased the whole scene, but the whole scene is not responsive. The nation of Israel said about Him, "Away with this man" (Luke 23: 18), "We will not that this man should reign over us" (Luke 19: 14); but in the midst of all these conditions there is something being secured that is precious to His heart, the assembly—something that is filling the void and filling it at the moment. When Adam saw Eve he said, "This time ..." (Gen 2: 23)—you would like to have heard the way he said it. What a note of praise would be in his heart as he said, "This time ..."! He had seen everything else, he had seen all the creatures, and none of them satisfied his longings. There were some wonderful creatures, but there was nothing that was suitable to minister to his affections. There was power with some creatures, there was speed with others, but there was not one that could minister to his affections. Christ has died to secure a vessel that will minister to His own affections. Would you not like to be committed to it? You say, 'Where is it?' Have you the desire to be committed to it? It says, "He went and sold all whatever he had" to secure the pearl, Matt 13: 46. "He sold all whatever he had"; He has given up His rights to Israel for the moment. Having died and risen again He has a right to the universe, but for the moment that is in suspense. It is the time of Christ and the assembly.

I would like to speak of Jerusalem as a type of the assembly in having gone through various circumstances, but Christ has never ceased to love it. You can trace Jerusalem through the Scriptures and you will see some very beautiful touches. Man interfered with it, they broke down its walls, they left it in ruins, but did Christ cease to love it? We are in a broken day, beloved, but I would like to tell you that there is something that can be found here today that bears assembly features, precious to the heart of Christ, and you can show your love for Christ through being committed to what He loves; "Let Jerusalem come into your mind". You say, 'It is all broken'. That was the position in Jeremiah; it was all broken, it was a time of great confusion. You say, 'Where can I find it?' Well, let it come into your mind. Let God's thoughts about that city govern your mind.

I would like to speak about some men who had Jerusalem in their minds in difficult days. Jeremiah was one of them, the feeling prophet, a man who wept as he saw the confusion. We hear sometimes about 'a broken-hearted churchman'—Jeremiah was that; but did he give up? This broken-hearted churchman did not give up. He is not a man going about with a long face mourning the breakdown. He is a man who has Jerusalem in his heart. He retains the thought of what it was, "the holy city", God's centre, God's ideal, a type, as we said, of the assembly that alone can satisfy the heart of Christ.

Jeremiah says, "Ye that have escaped the sword". That would be you tonight, beloved; you have escaped the sword, that sword that was standing there judicially because of what men had done, because of the way that Christ has been rejected, because of the way that Christ has been refused. The sword is standing, as it were, but you have escaped the sword. There will yet be judgment on the whole scene that has refused Christ, but the gospel has brought you into an area where you have escaped the sword. Oh, how a sense of mercy should flood our souls because we have escaped the sword. Had we any right to escape? Had we any right to be spared? I believe we escape the sword so that we may "let Jerusalem come into your mind".

Daniel did that, Nehemiah did that. They said, 'Where can we find it?' Nehemiah went looking for it. The assembly is one of these prime thoughts we have been speaking about, that sin or time will never destroy, and Nehemiah laid hold of that. There is a need for laying hold of these thoughts that the breakdown can never upset. In Nehemiah things were very broken. There was a time when Nehemiah could hardly identify it, the very walls were broken. The stones were all there; it was a heap of rubble, very like the days we are in, but what was in the heart and mind of Nehemiah was, "Let Jerusalem ..." O, beloved, do not take your thoughts of the assembly from what you see around you. I encourage you, dear young men and women, to read Mr James Taylor's ministry—that has brought to us the beauties of the assembly

as a vessel that is precious to the heart of Christ. Do not take your idea of the assembly from what is around. I may even have to say, do not take your idea of the assembly from what you may see in your local meeting. I say that with a sense of shame, but God's ideal has been presented objectively, to be realised in some way when Jerusalem comes into your mind. God has set forth His thoughts about the assembly, that she is a heavenly vessel. What we see around us today is what man has done. As viewing the area of man's responsibility there is breakdown and failure, and it is hard to identify Jerusalem, but God's thoughts about the assembly remain and they are to be realized; yea more, they are to be enjoyed by some in a day of breakdown. "Let Jerusalem come into your mind".

I say again, do not take your ideas of the assembly from what you see in man's responsibility. That is what Nehemiah saw, and had he stopped at what he saw in man's responsibility he would have said, 'There is no hope'; and some of our dear brethren have said that; they have said, 'Everything has broken down'. It has not, beloved. Prime thoughts do not change. Prime thoughts go through to eternity, and there is power in the Spirit of God so that they can be enjoyed today. So Nehemiah did not take his understanding of Jerusalem from what he saw. He had heard about it, and our fathers have told us something about it. It has come down to us in the recovery, the ministry of what the assembly is as a vessel for the heart of Christ. Do not lose sight of that. It is not only an administrative vessel, it is primarily for the heart of Christ. Keep that in your mind; it was in Nehemiah's mind, so he goes about building it, building the wall. The stones were still there. The breakdown has come in, but there is material there that can be revived. It speaks about that, about stones being revived. These days we are in are for the reviving of the stones. God's work can never be destroyed. It may become unserviceable, it may be out of circulation as when the woman in Luke 15 searched the house for the piece of silver and says, "Rejoice with me". We know something of that sometimes, thank God!—the restoration, the reviving of the stones, the

recovery of pieces of silver that have been out of circulation coming in again to be in circulation in the assembly of God.

Nehemiah worked until he had these stones built together and it says, “the princes ... dwelt in Jerusalem”. Would you not like to be among them? There are some people who are princes who dwell in Jerusalem. They give a touch of dignity in a day of breakdown. It is a very beautiful thing to know a man, to know a sister, to know young persons too, that can bring in a touch of dignity amidst a scene of breakdown; and let us remember, dear brethren, there is no more dignified vessel than the assembly. She takes her glory from Christ. It is a reflected glory, it is not exactly hers inherently, though she has it. She is so near to that Man, the copper has become so polished, through much exercise, as we had last night, that it is reflecting a heavenly Man. The assembly is for the reflection of the glory of Christ. May the dignity of it lay hold of us more in these broken times! So “the princes ... dwelt in Jerusalem”, but now it says they cast lots for one in ten. O, beloved, let Jerusalem come into your mind! Are you going to be the one of the ten? The nine, where are they? Think about the Lord’s feelings about Jerusalem, think of His feelings about the persons He had healed. He says, “The nine, where are they?”, Luke 17: 17. Where are they tonight? Where are they in Edinburgh? Where are they in the place where you are local? Are you going to be the one that returns? Are you going to be one in ten, the one that returned?

They “cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem”. It may involve sacrifice. You cannot dwell in Jerusalem and be in men’s associations. You cannot be in the clubs of the world. You cannot be at the theatres of this world or the ice-rinks, or whatever, and be dwelling in Jerusalem. Oh, I appeal to you, beloved, to come and dwell in Jerusalem. What a place to live! You say, ‘It does not look much, only a few there, the most are outside’. They may be included in God’s mercy if they are part of His assembly, but they have lost the present enjoyment of being true to a rejected, despised Saviour—“one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem”. Will you not commit yourself? You say, ‘It is raining tonight; we will not

bother about going to the meeting'. Some of the meetings are not so well attended as they might be—"one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem". Oh, I say again, beloved, how else are you expressing your affection for Jesus? You say, 'I have other things to do tonight with all the pressures around us'—will you be one of ten? These persons we are speaking of took up the responsibilities and the obligations of the position, and they committed themselves. It says that they "willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem". Now, that is your local meeting. Let me apply it that way for the moment. It is the few that meet in the light of our rejected Lord and seek to be faithful to His name. As I said, you cannot be in two camps. Oh, you have feelings after the world; so have I. You have feelings after certain things that please the flesh; we all have. "Let Jerusalem come into your mind". What a preservative!

Christ is absent, but there is something here that needs you, there is something here that needs those who willingly offer themselves to dwell in Jerusalem. It means you take up the responsibilities of the local meeting. It is easy to criticize; the nine could tell you all the faults about Jerusalem; but there was one that said, 'I see the faults, but I am going to be committed to what is precious to the heart of Christ'. Let us commit ourselves to the local position; bear the word, dear brethren. There are many things that may keep us away from the meetings—business, our own work, cold nights—there are many things and we all know them. Let us say, as these feelings come into our minds, "Let Jerusalem come into your mind". That will give you the incentive to be one of the ten. Simeon was like that. He was an old man, a very old man, but he is spoken of as "a man in Jerusalem". He would not be absent. What a pity if he had been absent when Christ came in. But he was not. It says, "And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem" and "he received him into his arms", Luke 2: 25, 28. He said, "Lord, now thou lettest thy bondman go, according to thy word, in peace", Luke 2: 29. He saw the whole thing. He had waited a long time for it, and you may not have to wait so long. Commit yourself to Jerusalem. She will yet be seen in her glory.

Daniel committed himself. There was a great deal against Daniel. Nobody would have known if Daniel had stopped praying. He was away from anybody else that would have seen him. There were a few companions, only three of them. They would not have known if Daniel had not prayed. He did not need to pray the way he did either, but when he knew that certain things were signed that were working against God, it says, "He went into his house; and, his windows being open in his upper chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed". It was a broken day, a very broken day, but he always had access to the prime thoughts; Jerusalem was in his mind and heart. When he "knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house"—nobody can stop you from entering into these thoughts of God. "Enter into thy chamber" (Matt 6: 6); that is what Daniel did, and he prayed, but it says, "his windows being open ... toward Jerusalem". Do you pray enough for the brethren in a wider way? We should pray for our local brethren, but do we pray that there should be more throughout the earth liberated to be in the praise of Christ? That is what Daniel was doing. It seemed an impossible thing, it seemed absolutely impossible. The things of God were in captivity, everything broken, but he prayed toward Jerusalem, and he prayed "and gave thanks ... as he did aforetime". Do not lose God's thoughts about Jerusalem or else you will be confused.

But Daniel goes on, and he continues in his prayers; he prays, "Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, hearken and do!" Oh the earnestness of his prayer when he could have been taking his ease. He could just have been reading about it. Oh, I would not discourage anybody from reading about it. Read all you can; but the reading about it as it comes into your heart will send you to your knees. That is what the broken day does. That broken-hearted churchman would be a man who is on his knees. Daniel was one here. What a prayer it is! He says, "O my God! for thy city and thy people are called by thy name". Did it look like it? A people in captivity, and yet they were "called by thy name"—"my assembly". What the saints are to

Christ, beloved! What are they to you? Well, they will mean more to you as you see what they are to Christ. That is what Daniel saw typically. They were perhaps doing their own wills at that time; they were certainly in captivity and bondage; but he says, they are “thy people” and “are called by thy name”. How precious this man was to heaven, how precious!

Well, these are the times we are in when I could not point you and say, ‘That is the assembly’; but I could point you to assembly features. Commit yourself! “Let Jerusalem come into your mind” and go to the meeting. Listen to the prayers, let the gospel come into your heart, read the ministry, and I think you will find assembly features in some. “The Lord knows those that are his”, then it says too, “Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity”, 2 Tim 2: 19. That is what Daniel was doing, that is what Nehemiah was doing, then it speaks about pursuing “with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart”, 2 Tim 2: 22. There are assembly features. May they be more in our minds to regulate us amidst the breakdown!

Revelation 21 brings us to the glory of it. It brings us to see something of the ideal. I only want to speak about its foundations for a moment. While there has been breakdown, and the will of man has intruded, “Yet the firm foundation of God stands”. Beloved, that is the way to find your way through the breakdown, look for the foundations. They will not be destroyed. It says, “If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?”, Ps 11: 3. There may be somebody here who would say, ‘Well, there is this company and there is that and there is another’. I would say, Look to the foundations. How do I know I am in the right place? How do you know? You should know. Why is it there was a division in this very city and some went somewhere and some remained? How would you know where to go? Look to the foundations! If you are with any company, you are responsible as to its origin. Some people say, ‘I love the Lord and I meet with Christians’. Well, we are thankful for it, and I am not setting up where I am or where anybody else is as being it—far from it; the brethren will understand that—but if you are with a company, you are

responsible as to how that company originated. Is it in accord with the foundations? It says that on the foundations there were the “twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb”.

Now, if Peter came to where you were, would he be received? If you are in a company that has had its foundations in not judging error as to the humanity of Jesus, Peter would not stay there. Oh, you say, that is past, it is history; but what of the foundation? If Peter came he would want to know why you were not all meeting together in a city. If Peter came to Edinburgh, how would he know where to go? He might go to some place and he would find that the origin of that company was that there was error not judged regarding the manhood of Christ. He might go to another company and he would find that they had separated from Paul. Would Peter stay there? Not for a moment. Well, should I? There are lovers of the Lord Jesus, I know, who seek to be identified with the foundations of the wall of the heavenly city. That is where you should be. You find some companies who say they are Christians and do not remember the Lord. Would Paul stay there? Not for a moment. It says, “the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb”. Well, that is where I want to be, identified with that which has its foundation in a risen, glorious, blessed Man and the apostles of the Lamb.

These things we have been speaking about have intruded into Jerusalem, but here in this scripture we see Jerusalem as a divine conception, and there is, “Her shining”, “the bride, the Lamb’s wife”. What a company! It will soon be seen, but the spirit of it can be enjoyed today amidst the darkness and confusion, if you will let Jerusalem come into your mind. Now, I am not asking you to be committed to a broken system. I am asking you to be committed to Jerusalem. Jerusalem above, “the bride, the Lamb’s wife”. Would you not like to be committed to that? You say, ‘Where is it?’ Well, as I said, if you identify the foundations, if you find a few who love the Lord and are persevering in the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers, if you pursue these features, you will come to know a touch of the

heavenly city. The foundations of the wall of the city are here, and they have heavenly adornment. Could the foundations of the companies of men be adorned in this way? Never! But these foundations are adorned with every precious stone in the ministry of Christ, adorned with features of Jesus, the heavenly Man, adorned with the apostles' teaching—these are the adornments of the wall of the city. If you go inside it is better still, beloved. It says, “And I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb”. To see Him there in all His glorious worth, no longer in circumstances of humiliation which He took in view of dying, in view of shedding His blood, but to see Him there in His own glory. Oh, what a sight it will be, but what a sight it is now, by the Spirit, for these things are realised in enjoyment today, in a broken time. This, dear brethren, is our heavenly part!

Well, he goes on, “And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine for it”—you see how independent it is. What marks Jerusalem abroad today in the breakdown is the intrusion of the mind of man. The assembly of God has no need of it. The wisdom of man coming in spoils the flow of what is coming from our blessed, heavenly Head. “And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine for it; for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb”. The only thing the assembly needs and cannot do without is Christ. She derives everything from Him. These glories that are spoken of here have all been derived from Him, the heavenly Man. May we be more committed to what He loves, beloved! It is to be seen in the local meeting, it is seen in these lowly surroundings today, but soon it will be the light of the universe as the holy city Jerusalem comes down “having the glory of God”. “Her shining” will radiate over the whole universe. It would be a pity, would it not, to miss having our part in it today? “Let Jerusalem come into your mind”. May it be so, for His Name's sake!

EDINBURGH

6th April 1985

“DO YE KNOW WHAT I HAVE DONE TO YOU”

John 13: 3-5, 12-17

I would like, dear brethren, to speak, briefly I trust, of the Lord's question here: "Do ye know what I have done to you?". I would like each of us to bear that question. Maybe you would like to go home today and answer it more fully, write it down. "Do ye know?". Perhaps it will take a lot of pages as you start to go over it. You know the old hymn:

Count your many blessings ...

And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

Johnson Oatman jnr 1897

You might begin that He has forgiven you your sins; that is something He has done for you. I would like to make things a little more personal. We will speak about what He has done for you. Ah, the day will declare it, beloved, what He has done for us. What He has done for God! What He has done for you, forgiving you your sins! Why should He? Have you ever thought of that? Why should He have forgiven you your sins and left the sins of others upon them? Does it not endear Him to your heart, what He has done for you? Could you say, like some others, that He has done for you what no other one could do? He has. Father, mother, ancestry, money or anything else—He has done for you what no other and nothing could ever do. That is the claim of Christ. There is a great deal that He has done for you which He has done for many others, but I would like to get just a little more personal, if I may, as the Lord would raise this question with you: Do you know what I have done to you? I would like to ask the question. Has it left its mark? Has what He has done to you left its mark? I think we could say it did on these men. The scene here never fails to affect me, that the Lord was going back to His Father. What expectations must have been in His heart! During those thirty-three years He was here in circumstances of humiliation, tasting as He alone could the sorrows and sufferings of humanity, and He is going back to His Father; yet what occupies Him for this short space of time is His own who

are in the world. And He lays aside His garments. How affecting that must have been! He takes water, a basin, a towel: how simple but how affecting, and after He has done it He says, "Do ye know what I have done to you?" It left its mark upon these men, I am sure. You could almost say this is the Lord training those who were going to be here to represent Him in the dispensation during His absence, and this is what He does. He does not send them to college, He does not give them indoctrination, an intensive course of study; He takes water, a hand-basin and a towel and He washes their feet and wipes them with the towel, and He says, "Do ye know what I have done to you?" Where was the wisdom of this world? There was Christ impressing upon these persons something that was going to come into expression in the dispensation.

If we could turn to Genesis for a moment I would like to speak about Abraham. Verse 16 of chapter 14 speaks of Abram returning from the conflict and it says, "he brought back all the property, and brought again his brother Lot and his property, and the women also, and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after he had returned from smiting Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, into the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's valley. And Melchisedec king of Salem brought out bread and wine. And he was priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heavens and earth. And blessed be the Most High God, who has delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him the tenth of all. And the king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the souls, and take the property for thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand to Jehovah, the Most High God, possessor of heavens and earth, if from a thread even to a sandal-thong, yes, if of all that is thine, I take anything ... that thou mayest not say, I have made Abram rich". He knew what God had done to him, done to him, not just for him, and in the conscious sense of it he refused all that the king of Sodom could offer.

I would like to speak for a moment about the priesthood of Christ, what He has done to you as a Priest. Great resources

and wealth met Abram here, Abram the believer, a man of faith, a simple man in many ways. He had been promised the whole earth. What have you not been promised? What would God not give you today? What is not available for you in Christ? The king of Sodom tries to deflect Abram away, to tempt him with the world, its resources, what it has in the way of education, what it would offer in the way of prospects. Abram, in the conscious sense that the Lord has done something to him, says, You could not add anything to me. That is a very testing thing, very real. Here is a man in humble surroundings and the king of Sodom says to him, You can have all the property for thyself. Abram says, No, I belong to somebody better. Could the world add anything to you, beloved? Could the world give you any more satisfaction? Think of this priest that met Abram. "Melchisedec ... brought out bread and wine". Oh! what is available in the priesthood of Jesus! "What I have done to you". He set Himself apart as a priest, brought in the resources of bread and wine, bread that would satisfy, that would nourish and strengthen the constitution, and wine that would make glad the heart, speaking of a great system of blessing that is available in the priesthood of Christ. I want to say, it is part of what he has done to you. It is not the priesthood of Christ only as a general idea. The world knows nothing of it. I may say that unexercised believers scarcely know the benefit of it. You have to put yourself in the way, as Abram did here. Melchisedec brought out bread and wine. How ready the Lord is to bring it out to you today, dear friend, young or old. There may be exercises pressing upon your spirit, the world offering some kind of palliatives, maybe just the enemy offering an easier path; what a temptation! Is there a heart that does not feel tempted by it at times in the sorrows of the way? The priesthood of Christ is there bringing out bread and wine. What a priest He is! "Melchisedec, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine". It refers to the Lord in His deity. It is not Aaron that would meet you here about your exercises and wilderness circumstances. This is another touch, like the man from Baal-shalishah. It is Christ coming in with the wealth of heaven, the infinite resources of divine love that no world could

ever provide. Abram absorbed it, and when the temptation comes he says, No, you cannot add anything to me. I suppose the king of Sodom might have made him a duke. Melchisedec made him a prince. What a great line of dignity and royalty Melchisedec brought Abram into! The priesthood of Christ: I wonder at times how much we know of this kind of priesthood. We cry to God and the Lord, rightly so, about our exercises and our sorrows and our circumstances, but do we know anything about Him bringing us into what we are before God? Oh! what strength Abram received here. He says, "I have lifted up my hand to Jehovah, the Most High God, possessor of heavens and earth". The king may have said to him, Abram, I do not think you know what you are talking about, you have only a tent. Ah, he says, I have everything through what He has done to me. He has enriched you, beloved, in a way that the world can never enrich you. He has left His mark upon Abram. He went through in the steps of faith, "the steps of the faith ... of our father Abraham", Rom 4: 12. May we be encouraged, dear brethren, as to what He has done to us in His priesthood, what He has brought out in the way of bread and wine that would nourish us in the midst of trying circumstances, that we may not turn to the world. Can it add anything? It can; it can add something to you, and that is sorrow and grief and distress; but Melchisedec brings bread and wine. He strengthens Abram so that he can refuse, like Moses, the great system of what the world could supply because he knew something that God had done to him.

I would like to read another scripture, in Judges: "The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them; and they said to the olive-tree, Reign over us. And the olive-tree said to them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to wave over the trees? And the trees said to the fig-tree, Come thou, reign over us. But the fig-tree said to them, Should I leave my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to wave over the trees? Then said the trees to the vine, Come thou, reign over us. And the vine said to them, Should I leave my new wine, which cheers God and man, and go to wave over the trees?", chap 9: 8-13. There is something else that the

Lord has done to you; He has set you in the body, the body of Christ. He has done that to you. He has set you in a place where you can function in your measure for the glory and praise of God. The setting here is a man who was mourning the loss of his brethren, and I trust that is the feeling in every heart here, that we are mourning the loss of our brethren. I never go to a meeting but I miss many. You never travel through this country without passing through places where you used to know some brethren who are no longer available. These are sorrows of the testimony that we should feel and we should carry day by day. Let us never become accustomed to it. This man was feeling it, he was feeling that some of his brethren had been slain, some of his brethren were no longer there, and so he comes to what I want to speak about—the need for the body functioning.

Maybe you are tempted to be out of your place. The enemy brings all sorts of things, he puffs up our minds, and we may function out of our place, but God has set you in the body, in your own place. That is something He has done to you, and may I say that you have a place that nobody else can fill, and please do not try to fill anybody else's place but be with the Lord to know what He has done to you. What place has He given you? It is a very disturbing thing if the feet should go beyond where the eye may see in the body. What would happen? You would stumble. But the body works so beautifully, the eye sees the path in which the feet tread for safety and for blessing. So here are persons who are enjoying their place in the body and nothing would tempt them away from it. The trees want to anoint a king over them. What a sad thing that would be! There is one body; the Head of the body is Christ. In that body there are many members, and here is the olive-tree enjoying its place. It is like a believer who knew the touch of the Lord, what He had done to him. The olive-tree says, "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to wave over the trees?" Oh beloved, our minds are very open at times to the enemy giving us thoughts that may be beyond our place in the body. God has set certain in the assembly, but the body has been

tempered together, each in their place to function in glory to God. Then they go to another tree. They say to the fig-tree "Come thou, reign over us". It says, "Should I leave my sweetness". What a fine brother that would be! Well, these things are open to you. Desire to be in the body in your place, whether it is a foot or an ear, or maybe some member that is not seen. Each has its own function: "Should I leave my sweetness ...?"—a conscious sense of being there under the direction of the Head. There could be nothing more blessed. I say again, these brothers, these sisters, knew what the Lord had done to them. Then they said to the vine "Come thou reign over us ... Should I leave my new wine, which cheers God and man, and go to wave over the trees?" They speak of persons who could not be moved from the place of functioning in the body. There are many not available to us today and you may have to take on a little more; instead of just being sweetness you may have to take on something of the fatness. There is more to be done. Most of our companies are smaller than they used to be but the body is still to function. The resources from the Head are the same. The numbers enjoying them may be less. In a sense there is all the more to be done. Nehemiah speaks of those who committed themselves to dwell in Jerusalem. Jerusalem in one sense is a public idea where there is breakdown. There is a great deal of outward pressure but somebody says, I will commit myself in the midst of the pressure to fill out my place in the body that Jerusalem may be held in view of the great King. There are people today who are holding things in view of that time about which we sang: 'wider praise in Zion waits for Thee', hymn 75. What a time it will be! But how is it going to be brought about? It is being brought about by persons today filling out in obscurity their place in the body.

Now there is much more of which we could speak, but these are some things that the Lord has done to you. I would like to return to John 13; may you allow the question: "Do ye know what I have done to you?" Having washed their feet He says, "Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord, and ye say well ... If I therefore, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet,

ye also ought to wash one another's feet". Peter would not forget what the Lord had done to him. You see Peter in the Acts with John as bondmen; indeed all the apostles, if you look at their writings they refer to themselves as bondmen. Peter, John, James, Jude, Paul, all take that place. They were affected. Affected by what? By the love of Christ. That is what He has done to you, He has loved you, and the impress of that love is to be upon every believer in Christ. May the impress of Christ's love grow with us, dear brethren. "We know that we have passed from death to life". Oh why? "because we love the brethren", 1 John 3: 14. The impress of the love of Christ was to be on them. How it was set out: He laid aside His garments. Is that how you approach the brethren? The way the Lord corrects the disciples is very interesting; usually it is by a question. They went fishing, a fruitless expedition away from the Lord, and He says "Children, have ye anything to eat?", John 21: 5. That is not how I would have done it. I would have said, See what you have done. We would have met it by the rod, would have said, This has to be met, we cannot pass this by; all these things have to be taken up. No, He says "Children, have ye anything to eat?". Everything was met. They said "No". May we learn to be simple, dear brethren. Love gets through all the complications, it gets to the root and it saves and enriches the person. That is how the Lord was instructing them here. He laid aside His garments. Do you do that? Is that how we approach one another. In matters needing to be attended to, do we lay aside our garments? Or do we go armed with all the references to this and to that? If somebody questions it we can say, Oh well, it is on page so-and-so. Can we approach, laying aside our garments? Can we take a wash-hand basin so that that brother says, Well, in the presence of the love of Christ I was wrong. That is what the Lord does. He says, Now that is what you have to do, "I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, ye should do also". What He did to them, the impress of it, never left them. Maybe what He did to me has waned with me, what He did to me in bringing me into this one body. It did not wane with Peter, it did not wane with John. He made them other kind of men. It did not wane with Paul. He says, "what things

were gain to me”, Phil 3: 7. The Lord did something to Paul, to him personally, that changed his whole way of life and his whole outlook. I say, He has done that to you, He has done it to me. May we allow the impress of it to function among us, for His Name’s sake.

LONDON

16th November 1985



ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LORD HIMSELF

Matthew 17: 1-9

Philippians 2: 5-11

RT I felt a fresh sense this morning of being engaged with the Lord by Himself and am encouraged to suggest this line of things from the hymn and the prayer that we have had. We are brought into wonderful privileges. We have been brought into an area of wonderful blessing, and these blessings rightly fill our hearts, but I believe there is a need, if we are to get the gain of the dispensation, of looking at the Lord by Himself and holding Him in our hearts, because even in the midst of privilege it is all to make much of Him. If we taste and know the relationship of brethren, the whole purpose is that He might be seen to be the Firstborn among many brethren. If we touch the privilege of sonship, the glory in it is that He may be seen as the beloved Son. We have it by adoption; He alone has sonship in His own right.

I thought we might just look at these passages and see Him by Himself, in His glory and in His movements in descending love. I believe He would endear Himself to our hearts as we look at Him like this and the way He went: no other could go that way, and there is a glory that belongs to Him as a man that no one else will ever share. There is some suggestion of that when He says, "Tell the vision to no one, until the Son of man be risen up from among the dead", a secret that they were to carry in their hearts, I believe to strengthen them. You can think of how this secret in the hearts of these three disciples would strengthen them amidst all the opposition and all the indefiniteness as to His person, the secret in their souls of the Father's voice, that "This is my beloved Son". After this voice "they saw no one but Jesus alone". Certain things are repeated in each of the gospels. Mark says they saw "Jesus alone with themselves" (chap 9: 8); Luke says that "Jesus was found alone", chap 9: 36. It was just some impression of that in my mind that made me suggest these scriptures, trusting that the Spirit may use them to magnify Christ's own uniqueness among us.

EO Correspondingly, do you think that the Lord standing in the midst gives us the opportunity to be occupied with Him in His beauty and attractiveness?

RT Yes: He comes in to be worshipped. The first reaction of affectionate hearts as the Lord comes in would be that our hearts would rise to worship. There is much that He brings with Him, there is much that He unfolds, but I think as He comes, as He is apprehended, the first rising up of spiritual feeling would be, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he”, 1 Sam 16: 12.

EP Would the fact that they go into this high mountain apart convey the idea that they were to be there without distraction from anything around?

RT You feel the need of that in assembly service.

Christ, its unmingled Object, fills the heart

(Hymn 247)

We would seek to make room for that, would we not? We know our minds, we know how quickly we are like Peter and speak and bring in other things, not meaning to detract from His glory at all, but they do. As you say, there is the need for being apart, for this state of soul being with us, that we may have an apprehension of Jesus alone.

ECB Have you any suggestion as to how we might the better arrive at this? One notices that a brother will set on something about the glory of Christ and within a few minutes the brethren are talking about themselves, and for that matter, their deficiencies. What would help us in this engagement with Him?

RT I think sensitiveness to the Spirit. What you say I feel, because we are so slow to get beyond ourselves; but the Father here is very jealous about it. It did not seem a bad thing. There were not many better men than Moses or Elias, were there? It would have passed muster with most. They would say, That was a good word that Peter gave. But the Father would have no rival. He says, “This is my beloved Son”. But as to your

question, affection for Him is one thing, but I think we are very much cast on the Spirit to be able to get beyond ourselves and see His face shining as the sun.

ECB Do you think that in John 16, when Jesus says, “He shall glorify me” (v 14), the Spirit is on the same line as the Father is here?

RT I think so, and also in John 1 at His baptism, as we sometimes sing to the Spirit:

Thou didst descend in love to mark Him out

(Hymn 300)

John would say there was no other man upon whom the Spirit descended in bodily form. You can see that divine Persons are very active to distinguish Christ in His manhood, as having a manhood and a glory in which no other ever shares, His face shining as the sun, His garments white as the light—as Mark says, “such as fuller on earth could not whiten them”. Something belongs to Christ uniquely. When we think of the Lord our feelings should move adoringly at the mention of His name.

CB John was no doubt contemplating Him. Peter was speaking, and what he said was all right at first, but John would contemplate that Person, bringing out those glorious, beautiful features in his testimony.

RT Yes. John the baptist says, “Behold the Lamb of God”. That conveys some impression of somebody standing back, admiringly looking at Him: “looking at Jesus as he walked, he says, Behold the Lamb of God”, John 1: 36. The question raised needs to be thought about, and I think it is something we need to make room for in our minds, that the Spirit may have free way to allow us to get beyond ourselves to see His glory. The fact is that we will the better enjoy what we come into as we see it all in relation to Him.

RWF Do we need to accustom ourselves to what is elevated? It is a high mountain apart. Under the influence of Christ and with the help of the Spirit we might be encouraged to find

ourselves more familiar with what is elevated. Christ has Himself stooped, has He not? as in John 8 and Philippians 2. He has descended, but He has ascended. Do you think, as has been stressed in the past, that we could do well to enter into the heavenly, to enjoy what is elevated, so that we see Christ more clearly?

RT Yes, what they saw here was a touch, you may say, of Him being in His own home. Those disciples in John who abode with Him that day would get some impression like this, too. There was a physical movement here to a high mountain apart. For us it would convey that it requires some exercise on our part, closing some doors, that we may touch an area of things where the Father is free and the Spirit is free to show us Christ in His own glory.

HAH The Baptist's first reference would be more on our side, but the verse you quote would be like "Jesus alone", would it not? I wondered whether Mary had the experience of Jesus alone, that in His word, "Touch me not", He is indicating that it is to be Himself absolutely, apart from His work and apart from ourselves altogether, as was said.

RT Yes, the work is so glorious because of the One who did the work. The work is precious to our hearts, and without it we would not have come into anything, but it all reflects the glory of the One who did the work. I think the transfiguration comes in the gospels for that very reason, to show that the Man who died was a Man who was distinguished by heaven. In a sense it enhances the sufferings. These men knew that He was not there as a malefactor. He was there as One who had been distinguished by the Father's voice as His beloved Son. That was the Man that went to the cross.

WJRB There would be some reason why it has been emphasised that it is the Lord's supper.

RT Yes, it brings out the distinctive place that Christ is to have as we come together. He will lead us onward; He will lead us into heavenly relationships. He leads us to the Father, but

as you say, it is the Lord's supper. We come together in relation to Him.

EP In resurrection He says to His own, "I myself". It is remarkable that He should use those two words.

RT Yes, there is to be no rival, there is to be no other object for our affections. I think that in these days, when there is so much that would becloud His Person, there is a need for us to have a fresh sense of His distinctiveness. "*This*" (emphatic) "is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight". Moses or Elias, or anybody else, could never fill that position.

ECB In Luke it says that they spoke of His departure. Does that bear on what you said just now, that these three in particular would know when they saw Him alone on the cross that He was the One who had this exalted glory?

RT Yes, that is a part of what He says, "Tell the vision to no one". Heaven saw to it that some persons had a view of who He was in His Person before they saw Him there in a position of suffering and shame and ignominy. Pilate and the Jews and the Romans could do what they willed to humiliate Him, but there was a witness from heaven that the Person who was there was God's beloved Son.

ECB Is that not calculated to help us, especially in the preaching of the gospel? As far as men were concerned, He was, as you say, there as a malefactor, but the secret in our hearts is that. He was the Father's beloved Son.

RT Yes, and that gave efficacy to the work that was done, did it not?

ECB Romans 8 says: "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son", v 32.

RT Yes, so that the value of the work done was that it was done by One who was God's beloved Son, and honoured from heaven as such in the days and circumstances of His pathway of humiliation and sorrow, marked out in those conditions as God's beloved Son.

CB You can understand that He was in the bright cloud.

RT Yes, what do you say about that?

CB He made them; His brightness must shine out, must it not?

RT Yes; I think that that bright cloud comes in as a protective covering, as it were. Moses and Elias were there, but the bright cloud relates to the Father and the Son, does it not? It overshadowed them, and then there is the voice. The voice is distinctive. Hearing it they fell upon their faces, terrified, but through the touch of His love what they see is Jesus alone. These men are still there in one sense: they continue, they have a place of distinctiveness in the course of the testimony, but here is One who is the object who fills the Father's affections.

HAH At the end of Exodus Moses was unable to enter because of the cloud: it is the same cloud, I take it. But here is One who is able to sustain the glory because the glory is intrinsically His own, is it not?

RT Yes; He fills the Father's affections, and He has come on to view that He may fill ours. I felt that the view of this is to help us through the dispensation. The Lord speaks in John 17 of the glory that they may behold. There is a glory that we share, but in John 17 the Lord in their presence speaks to the Father about a glory that they may behold. I think that is connected with seeing Christ apart from everybody else, One who is able to carry the dispensation through and to sustain the saints through it for the Father's pleasure.

CJGB Is the effect of that seen in the way that Peter speaks in his epistle of eye-witnesses of His majesty, leading on to the importance of the prophetic word, see 2 Pet 1: 16,19?

RT Yes. Peter got the gain of it; He would not have said again what he said on the mount, and I think you can see Peter in the gain of it in the Acts in the way he functions. "Neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved", chap 4: 12. No other name: how he would emphasise that in his preaching! As you say, writing to those of the dispersion he says that there is

somebody who has majesty, there is someone on the throne who is able to carry things through, in whom we find our trust and strength. I think, as you say, it would make room for the prophetic word, divine speaking to preserve us and see us through.

RWF Does that scripture in 2 Peter 1 indicate in what Peter says that it is possible with the help of the Spirit, to a degree at least, to have the Father's view of Christ? "He received from God the Father honour and glory, such a voice being uttered", v 17. Do you think that that might enter into the question of seeing Christ in His distinctiveness, that we aspire, with the help of the Spirit, to have the Father's view of Him?

RT Yes. I understand that was something that the brethren used often to be reminded about, to ask the Father that He might help us to see what beauty He found in Him, what it was that called forth this exclamation. It was not His service only, I think it was what was in Him intrinsically, and we need to be helped to see that, what is in Him that no one will ever share or have part in. It is what He is in Himself that is carrying the dispensation through in power.

ECB We used also to be told of the Spirit of God's Son helping us towards the Father but the Father's Spirit helping us as to appreciation of Christ. It is interesting in Ephesians 3 that it says, "to be strengthened with power by his Spirit" (the Father's Spirit) "in the inner man; that the Christ may dwell", vv 16, 17.

RT Yes, that is the end to be reached, and I think that, as He dwells in us, we will very quickly come into our blessings. As there is the dwelling the blessings will be the more easily entered into and enjoyed to the full.

CB We can say we experienced this touch this morning when Christ was before us in all His beauty and excellence.

RT Yes, I think that that would normally be true; we could say the same. Well, the Lord says to them "Tell the vision to no one, until the Son of man be risen up from among the dead". Now when it comes to Monday the secret of it is to be

in your soul, the secret of Christ in His personal worth as being greater than all is to sustain us through each day.

EP There is a touch by Paul, too, in 1 Corinthians 2: 8. He speaks about “the Lord of glory”, and that such a one as the Lord of glory was crucified. The circumstances on Monday or the rest of the week may be very testing, but are you suggesting that this view will carry us through?

RT The passage you quote says “had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”. Well, we know, do we not? And these disciples were let into the secret. That He is the Lord of glory is something treasured in our affections.

BWW Should we count upon the help of the Spirit of God as always and immediately available to us? I am not disregarding how my state might be at any time, but normally the Spirit is ready to help us to move in this way of taking account of Christ in His glory.

RT Yes; I think of that verse in Samuel; if we bring it into our dispensation it is like the Spirit’s voice: “Arise, anoint him, for this is he”, 1 Sam 16: 12. David came in in his beauty; he was ruddy; something drew the hearts of the brethren as David came in, and it is like the Spirit saying, “Arise, anoint him, for this is he”. We need help in the attitude of our minds, to be in an area where the Spirit can be free to speak these words, and as we carry this secret in our souls we will all the more readily touch it. Christ is to be the centre even in our gatherings together. Ministry is not expounding the Scriptures; ministry is Christ, and unless He comes into view in the ministry, the ministry is failing in its object. It is not just that we know the Scriptures better and we can say chapter and verse, and dot our i’s and stroke our t’s. That is not what ministry is for; ministry is to enlarge the heart and bring about a place where Christ has a greater influence and area with us.

DAB Is the Father’s voice ministry, in that sense?

RT Yes, you might even say it is corrective ministry, but what a way to correct the brethren, to bring in Christ, and what a correction it is! Peter is adjusted and he says that what

he saw was majesty. It is a very fine example of Christ being introduced in His distinctiveness and glory, and everything finding its place in relation to Him.

EP Would it be right to say that the word from the Father came from the bosom of the Father, because Jesus was there?

RT That is right. He never left heaven: “the Son of man who is in heaven”, John 3: 13. “The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father”, John 1: 18. It brings out here the Father’s jealousy. That may help us to make more room for Him. The Father is jealous that no other man, no code, no system, no brethrenism or anything like that, takes a place that hinders Christ from having His distinctive place among us.

CB Would it be part of what Jesus has done to us, in being able to voice to the Father the appreciation of Christ? What pleasure for His own heart, and what pleasure this morning for the saints to hear a young brother simply thank the Father for Christ. He did not say a lot but it was beautiful.

RT Yes. He “has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love”, Col 1: 13. That is what He has done to us, and Peter never forgot something that was done to him here and that was that Christ was to have the first place in all things and there was to be no rival whatever.

JSG Is His face shining as the sun a hint of universal glory, which some were being introduced into in advance?

RT Yes, that is very beautiful. It is beyond compare, that His face shone as the sun and His garments became white as the light. What we see is beyond being compared with anyone and that is to hold us through the dispensation.

ECB Do you think “his garments ... white as the light” is like

We see the Godhead glory

Shine through that human veil (Hymn 188)

RT Well, that may also be Philippians 2. We set there a glory shining through, and we need that touch, that the Lord

has come into circumstances, but it has not changed His person. In John 17, after having been here in these days and touching circumstances of humiliation, He asked to be glorified with the glory which He had before the world's foundation. Humiliation and lowly manhood have not detracted from the Person. It has brought Him on to our view, but He is the same blessed Person who was there in the beginning.

ECB That is what you had in mind when you referred more than once to His ability to sustain things through the dispensation, because He is in an unchanging condition of glory.

RT I think we need to apprehend that, that the dispensation will not run out, that things will not fall down, because of the glory He has been given. I think that is that glory in John 17: "behold my glory which thou hast given me", v 24. In His manhood, in His Person and in His position there is what is unassailable.

JAB "*I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age*", Matt 28: 20.

RT Yes, go on; I was thinking of that verse. What do you say about it?

JAB It was very stabilising for the disciples at that point, was it not? And it goes on into the testimony now.

RT That is a very fine touch. It is another of the mountains in Matthew. It has been called the mountain of divine appointment. So keep the appointments; if we keep them we get helped into this area of things. They kept the appointment there, and they saw Him and all power had been given Him in heaven and upon earth. They were to go forth into a position of reproach, but they went forth in the full sense that there was a Man whom they knew, into whose hands all power had been given.

JSG Does the thought of transfiguration convey that His own were introduced to the circumstances that Jesus Himself was accustomed to? He lived in them.

RT Yes, I think so. We referred to them in John: they went and abode with Him that day, see chap 1: 39. They would see something of the same things as they saw on the mount here; as was said, it is the Godhead glory shining through the human veil. We are apt to limit the Lord to these conditions unwittingly. We are apt to limit Him as we know Him in His grace, know Him in the conditions into which He has come, but we must always remember that He is God over all, blessed for ever. The circumstances, the conditions, the grace of His manhood, have not altered who He is, but the wonder of it is that He has brought all the resources of divine love into manhood. There is all the wealth of what is divine shining for us in a Man.

RWF His glory is illimitable, is it not? Do you think we would look to the Father to give us a fresh view of His glory? I was thinking of the service on Lord's day in particular, whether we might, if a word is given at the stage of address to the Lord, wait to hear the Father's voice, that we might have a fresh view of Christ. There can be no limit, can there, to the range of His glories?

RT No;

Every view of Him unfolding,
Wakes fresh bursts of joyful praise! (Hymn 83)

There will be fresh glories of Christ through all eternity which will wake fresh outbursts of praise. We will then be in perfect conditions, and yet I think there will be fresh apprehensions all the time of the glory of the Man Christ Jesus. In Philippians we see Him in His descending movements, the way that He has gone and how unique He is in it.

ECB The Ephesian scripture in chapter 4 that corresponds to this—He descended but He has also ascended—is “that he might fill all things” (v 10) and in that He becomes exclusive, does He not?

RT Yes, I was thinking of that scripture. There can be no thought of a rival, because of the way He has arrived at it, do you mean?

ECB Yes; that is what comes out here. It is all presented apart from any question of sin or of sins, it is just His own movements and the Father's answer to it. It helps us to forget ourselves a bit.

RT Yes; it was His movements in love, expressing Himself like this: "subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form".

EO Is the setting of this becoming poor that we might be enriched through His poverty, see 2 Cor 8: 9?

RT That verse says, "he, being rich, became poor, in order that *ye* by *his* poverty might be enriched". That is how He has brought things out to us. But the Man who became poor never ceased to be who He was. Even in these circumstances of a bondman's form He was God in His Person, and there was there in Him, in bondman's condition, what was unique and distinct.

WJRB Is it brought about peculiarly here that the saints might be thinking one thing?

RT Yes. I purposely did not read those verses at the moment; we may speak about them in a minute, but I thought we might be affected first of all by the descending movements of Christ.

DAB He did not become an object of the Father's love, did He? He always was. I was thinking of that scripture in Matthew; the voice said, "This is my beloved Son", Jesus said, "thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world", John 17: 24.

RT Yes, that was as to His Person. He loved Him before the foundation of the world, but coming into manhood drew out those affections in a way that marked Him out as distinct from all.

Dab Yes. I was thinking that God's love to us is sovereign. We sing about it being causeless, but it was evoked by what

was in Christ, was it not? There was what was in Him substantially that drew out the love of God.

RT You get that in John's gospel: "On this account the Father loves me", chap 10: 17. The way that He went, you may say, caused the heavens to be opened. If earth was silent about Him in these movements of down-stooping love, heaven could not remain silent to distinguish who He was in His Person.

CB Have you any thought as to "emptied himself"?

RT Well, just that it was His own action in love. He did this of His own accord. The One "who, subsisting in the form of God", moved like this. How it drew out heaven's appreciation. Paul is bringing it in in Philippians that it might draw our hearts to Him, to see how unique He was in His movements of descending love.

ECB So in every one of the downward steps of these verses He is alone. He is in the likeness of men but He is unique in every one of these steps.

RT Yes, that is what drew me to the passage, that we are looking here at Christ alone. No one could have any part in Him taking a bondman's form. He was in each of these steps, as you say, alone, and in it to be an object that draws out our hearts and softens them and makes us impressionable, draws us to the wonder of His Person.

EP In the scripture you referred to in John, "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again", He says "I have received this commandment of my Father", v 18. Would that be the glory of the obedience that is referred to here?

RT You mean in the sense that He says, "I have received this commandment of my Father"?

EP Yes.

RT That is a wonderful thing to think about, that there was a Man here in bondman's form—"humbled himself"—and in it

perfectly pleasing and in perfect communion with the Father who is in heaven.

ECB What is even more remarkable about that is that according to Luke He increased in favour with God, see chap 2: 52.

RT Yes, you can just think of these things wonderingly. Who He was in His Person! As was said, He was loved from before the foundation of the world, yet in His movements in manhood He called out the Father's fresh appreciation of Him. How He should call out ours as we contemplate these descending movements! And He was never deflected in them. Think of being "tempted of the devil", Matt 4: 1. He was never deflected in these descending movements. The whole power of the enemy's resources were arrayed against Him but He went on in perfect obedience, in perfect accord with the Father's will.

DAB And they did not change Him either, did they? I was thinking of when He said, "until the Son of man be risen up from among the dead". The glory they had seen on the mount would remain, would it not? It was not something death would taint or spoil.

RT Somebody used to speak about a tried and tested humanity, and you see it here in these steps downward. As was said, it was Jesus alone treading that path, and there is nobody to be compared with Him, but He is to be an object that draws out our hearts towards Him and makes us impressionable.

ECB The very fact that He became obedient even unto death distinguishes Him, because death is our lot, the lot of every other man. He became obedient even unto death.

RT Yes, a very affecting verse, that. I do not know how you understand it, "becoming obedient even unto death". Think of Gethsemane! Think of those moments in the garden. I think there is something there of His becoming obedient, even to death, do you think?

ECB I am sure that is so. We get Gethsemane in Matthew and Mark, but I think you get a distinct impression of His

becoming obedient unto death in John's gospel: "as the Father has commanded me, thus I do. Rise up, let us go hence" (chap 14: 31) and it is to the cross.

RT Yes, that is very beautiful. I think Mr Darby comments that in John everything is settled. In the garden everything is settled. He says, "Rise up, let us go hence". He goes forward in that perfect obedience, settled in His soul, feeling the weight of it, but obedient unto death.

CGH The more that we are occupied with the blessed Person of the Lord the more the Spirit causes us to take character from Him. It may be in a certain sense to us unconsciously, but it happens, does it not?

RT Yes, I think that what you say is good. So you would encourage the brethren to commit this passage to memory. It is good to memorise it all if you can, but I think some of these things are good to read over. As you say, unconsciously, the effect in our minds is that we will become more like Him. Paul writes this that this mind may be in us; not only to be contemplated, not only to be adored, but that some of this attitude may be with us.

RWF There is what is unconscious, and growth is not a conscious matter to us. Do you think there is also in this section what is deliberate, that the steps taken were deliberate? There was full knowledge on the part of Christ of what they would entail. They were deliberate, and the effect upon us, do you think? is that we are to be deliberate: "Let this mind be in you".

RT Yes, and the Lord said, "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. That was a deliberate committal to a will that He fully understood. We may commit ourselves and we do not understand what the will of God may be, but He, in the full conscious sense that the will of God involved for Him the death of the cross, committed Himself to it. You can understand that drawing out the Father's affections, and that this kind of Man must be exalted. It says "Wherefore also God highly exalted him". As it were, the Lord took these steps down to the end of

verse 8 but heaven intervenes. Peter says, “whom heaven indeed must receive”, Acts 3: 21. It was impossible that He should be held by the power of death.

PSW Could we say, reverently, that it is God’s deliberate act highly to exalt Him, and that we are to come into accord with it in bowing the knee to that name, the name of Jesus?

RT I think it is to give us strength to commit ourselves to this mind, the going-down mind that God will honour. The readiness to take on this path of committal, obedience, humbling ourselves: God, in due season, will honour. It is a line of things that tests us all as we feel how far short we come, we would all have to feel that; but as we said at the outset, we are looking at Christ alone, something that is far beyond us. But then Paul says “Let this mind be in you”—the attitude of going down. That is how Christ has met the whole question and God has honoured Him in giving Him a name that is above every name.

HJT Why is it God here? We have been enjoying what the Father has done. Is this a wider view, a more public view?

RT Yes, I think it is finality. “Wherefore God”: there is nobody higher, it is the final matter. There is what the Father has done, and that would be an inward view of things, but I think it is a public, final matter, that God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name.

ECB It is God and the Man, is it not, not the Father and the Son?

RT That is right, and there is nobody to interfere in that. “God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name”.

CB Would you say that we have to bow the knee before we can use our tongues in that way? We bow to Jesus and then confess.

RT Yes, and that is an outward order of things, that we bow the knee, but I think we bow our hearts in the presence of this. That would be the mind: “Let this mind be in you”. It means

that we bow our hearts in adoration as we see Jesus alone in these movements of love.

ECB I carry the reference made to this leading to what is prophetic. Do you not think this would help us in our prophetic meetings? You may have heard of an occasion of which we have heard, when there was a ministry meeting at which nobody spoke, and they gave out a second hymn and went home, and a brother said ‘Could nobody have said anything about Christ?’ Do you not think there is more scope for this on Tuesdays?

RT Yes; well, we feel very tested on a Tuesday. The prophetic word is maybe in the first four verses. I think he is bringing the atmosphere of the downward movements of Christ to make us amenable and impressionable. Do you think that?

ECB I am sure of that. I have often thought, I can testify to it myself, that if a brother on Tuesday night said ‘I have gathered this about Christ today’, what a difference it would make. In the scripture referred to in Samuel the prophet said “we will not sit at table till he come”, 1 Sam 16: 11.

RT It is hard labour trying to work things without Him. The disciples in the boat were rowing and toiling when He was not there but as soon as He came into the boat they were at land. You find that in meetings, and I think we should arrange ourselves more to look for the Lord coming in, whether it is Tuesday night or whatever night. We should look for the Lord coming in with His own touch. I think it makes room for these opening verses, that if these things are so, Paul almost uses this as a lever in their hearts and he says “fulfil my joy”. It is like the prophetic word coming in, that the impress of the love of Christ and His descending movements may cause us to “think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing; let nothing be in the spirit of strife or vain glory, but, in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves”. These things will only work as Christ has His place among us, and that would be the burden of Paul presenting it, that these movements of Christ may cause Him to have His place among us, and these things,

“thinking the same thing, having the same love”, would be the result. We will never reach them any other way.

RWF It is sobering to reflect that according to this section, even the infernal beings will acknowledge the greatness of Christ; how much more those to whom He has endeared Himself.

RT They will all have to bow, but I think as He comes in among us there would be a bowing in heart. It would be easy to have the same love, to be joined in soul, to esteem the other as more excellent than ourselves, as we see Christ having His true, unrivalled place among us.

JSG The Lord says about the woman in the Pharisee’s house that she “from the time I came in has not ceased kissing my feet”, Luke 7: 45.

RT Yes; I think we need to remind ourselves in all our meetings that the assembly is for Christ. It is His counterpart. I was thinking about the wife: the assembly is His wife, she is doing everything, arranging everything for Him. It is not her name that is on the door. All that she is doing is to extol Him and make it easy for Him. That would be our present position, that we are holding things for Him as He comes at the time of love.

LONDON

17th November 1985

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PRAYER LEADING TO CHANGE

Luke 9: 28-30

Daniel 9: 3, 17-23; 12: 12, 13

I believe one outstanding feature of our heavenly calling is prayer. It has been much blessed in the recovery of the truth; the testimony came into Europe as people were praying, and a very fine assembly developed in Philippi. As we apprehend something of the greatness of our heavenly calling one thing would be that it would drive us to our knees. We may think the things we have been speaking about are almost unreal. You may look on the public breakdown of things today and wonder, How can we enjoy heavenly things? Is it true that we are to enjoy sonship? Is it true that we are to enjoy the best robe and the ring? Paul when he was writing to the Ephesians mentioned twice over that he prayed. I have often wondered about that, that, in the presence of the whole counsel of God, Paul almost says that the entrance into it is by prayer, and I believe that is verily true today.

I would like to speak of how in praying we should look for change. I am sure it is true that we should not rise from our knees the way we knelt down. I believe if we just tarried for a moment God would lift our view of things. Many persons in Scripture have gone into God very burdened; Hezekiah is one outstanding example; the pressure upon him was so great he hardly knew what to say, he just spread the letter that he had out before God, and God answered. There are many times like that; the burden of things may be so great we hardly know what to say, but God is very ready to come in as we are in that attitude.

I want to speak first of all about Jesus going up to pray; it says, “he went up into a mountain to pray”, and with Daniel it was a very deliberate thing. We need to have these times when we make room for the change that prayer would effect. I am not just speaking of crying to God in our need; that is open to us at all times; but it says here that Jesus “went up into a mountain to pray”. The Lord encourages the disciples to pray, to “enter into thy chamber ... and shut thy door”. That would

all make room for the divine answer, the change that God would bring about as we pray.

Here we have the Man who was here in lowly grace, who took His place in the likeness of men, touching the lepers in all their need; but here we see Him on the mountain—"And as he prayed the fashion of his countenance became different"—what a Man He was! These persons who were on the plain did not exactly see this, but here we come to see something of the Father's thoughts about Jesus, here is God's beloved Son. It changes our thoughts about everything when we come to see God's thoughts about them. Peter, James and John would look on Jesus in a different way after this experience; Peter shows that as he writes his epistle, that divine majesty was here; not Jesus in lowly grace, but divine majesty. What a view to have of Christ! It helps us to realize the reality of what we have been speaking about, that there is a Man, God's beloved Son, who is able to carry everything through to glory. I can understand Peter and John having confidence in Christ in a new way after this. I am sure this was in Peter's soul when he said, "for neither is there another name under heaven which is given among men by which we must be saved", Acts 4: 12. It was the same Jesus, but they had come to see Him in a different light, and prayer is to help us in the change of view.

Asaph was very discouraged about the breakdown until he went into the sanctuary, and in the sanctuary he saw things in a different way (Ps 73: 17); he thought that men who did not love God were prospering, and we may have these thoughts; persons who pay no attention to Christ seem to get on well in the world; they seem too to escape some of the sufferings that the saints go through. Asaph was discouraged about all these things; but as he went into God's presence, he saw that all flesh was as grass; he saw that the wicked were like a leaf that would flourish for a day and soon dry up, but the path of the righteous was going on and brightening until the day be fully come.

Well, here is the Lord in His glory, once on the plain in all the circumstances of lowliness. What a privilege to get a

view of Him in His own glory, the centre of all divine thoughts, and the One in whom all divine promises will be given effect. It says whatever promises of God there are, in Him is the yea, and in Him the amen, see 2 Cor 1: 20. That is the view they had of Jesus here, His raiment white and effulgent, and the scripture says it was “as he prayed”. You see, prayer makes way for heaven to bring its influence to bear upon us; prayer shuts man out and opens the door for God to come in with the wealth of His thoughts. So what they see in this experience is that there is nobody to be compared with Christ. God is saying here, ‘There is only one Man before Me, and that is My beloved Son’. Peter says about Him that He received from God the Father honour and glory when they were with Him on the holy mountain.

These things would be to encourage us as to making room for the idea of change in prayer. Daniel had the experience of it. He was in very broken times; he had read, bringing it to our time, the ministry of the recovery, he had read, typically, about Christ and the assembly, but he wondered how it could all be enjoyed, and he bowed his knees in prayer. What a resource! He had read about what God would do for His beloved city, but he is saying, All around me is breakdown. He felt he was part of it, felt his responsibility about it, but he laid hold of divine thoughts and promises, and bowed himself in prayer that he might understand how it was possible to enjoy them. He wanted to enjoy sonship; he wanted to enjoy fellowship; he had very few companions there; he wondered how he could work it out, and so he prays to God about it. He owned his part in the breakdown. As we go in to pray, you know, we are made to feel how small we are; we are in the presence of a God who is in heaven and we are mere mortal men in all our weakness, yet God would listen to us as we are in that attitude.

So Daniel does not give up, he lays hold of the thoughts as being God’s thoughts. I would like to encourage us, brethren, that the recovery is of God; it is not just something that happened in the 1880’s or 1950’s, or 1970’s; the recovery is something that is proceeding from God; it all proceeds from

a Man gone into heaven and the blessed Spirit of God having come here to secure a bride for Christ. We need to embrace these thoughts; we are part of a heavenly company, surrounded by forces of evil, hades' gates all around us. That is the position Daniel was in hades' gates were active, but he had the faith that they would not prevail. So he set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer, and God sees that. God finds delight in praying people; He is quick to answer. He did not change the circumstances, but he gave Daniel a fresh outlook on the circumstances. There will be conditions of public breakdown around until the rapture, but what will be raptured will be a bride for Christ, and we would seek to fill out our part in that wonderful vessel. It may be in reproach today, but Christ is soon to have it in glory.

Now Daniel would find support as he is praying; he embraces divine thoughts in all their wealth because it is God who has said it; the word of God is to be our stay and strength in these present conditions. God has not changed His thoughts because of the breakdown. He has not said that something less will do because things are very difficult. No, He is saying as we come in prayer, My strength is made perfect in weakness. What is to be secured at the rapture will be a wonderful triumph of the ways of God, that He has secured a vessel that is suited to those heavenly courts above; it has been beset by many foes, but is suited to be at home in glory. Daniel is on his knees and it says, "And whilst I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel"—he felt the responsibility of what was around, and who of us does not feel the confused days that we are in? But Daniel still speaks about "thy city Jerusalem", and "the holy mountain of my God". God's thoughts are going through, dear brethren. So Daniel embraces these thoughts in his prayers. God comes in to strengthen him; it says, "whilst I was yet speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel ... touched me about the time of the evening oblation". Then Gabriel says, "for thou art one greatly beloved". This is heaven's estimation of a man in prayer. Daniel did not exactly expect this when he went in to pray; he went in burdened, but he gets some impression of the

heavenly calling as he is in there. I believe God is ready to give us a touch like that—a man greatly beloved. Heaven is drawn to persons like this and would show that they can be trusted with divine secrets. I believe that the reason that many people understand things better than I do is because they pray more. Daniel would show us that the way to understand things is to pray about them, not to talk about the breakdown; the more we felt our part in it the less we would talk about it; but let us spread it out to God, dear brethren, and we shall find how ready God is to open our understanding about His thoughts. He says to Isaiah, My ways are not your ways, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways”, Isa 55: 8, 9.

So as we are praying we are amenable to divine influence, to see how God views things. For God would strengthen His servant; it says earlier in the chapter that Daniel “understood by the books” (Dan 9: 2), but now he understands through a divine secret in his own soul. It is fine to know things through the Scriptures and the books and from the brethren, but it is finer still to have a secret in your own soul. That is something that Paul had; he went into Corinth, and he hardly knew where to begin his building; he went into that city where there was tremendous confusion, but he had a secret in his soul, that God had said to him, “I have much people in this city”. So when the sorrows came in, did he give up? No, he still laboured to have a chaste virgin to present to Christ; he had a secret in his soul which he received from God. And we need that in present circumstances, dear brethren, that we have a secret that God is seeing His testimony through in spite of hades’ gates. God is ready to confirm us as we make room for these divine visitations. It says in verse 21 that Gabriel was flying swiftly and touched him; that might be a very arresting thing, you know; God may come in to change the line of thought we have to bring us to see things as He sees them. The holy mountain has not changed. What a God He is! He has not only purposed, but He is able to give effect to these purposes in the Man Christ Jesus. I think that is what

Daniel comes to see here, that the times are going to go on, but in the midst of all he can find his way.

At the close of the book he is told, “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh”; Daniel had a secret in his soul. It was still, we might say, a small meeting, the days were still difficult, but what a word—“But do thou go thy way until the end; and thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days”. Dear brethren, the assembly will be raptured; it will not fade out through people dying off and conditions of weakness; the testimony is going to finish in glory. We shall meet the Lord in the air. What a meeting it will be! What a stay that is for our hearts! Paul brings that into the Thessalonians to be a comfort to them; in the midst of difficult days he would bring in the light of the Lord’s coming. We shall not be taken away because things are too difficult, but we shall be caught up because the Lord is wanting to have His assembly for Himself in suited surroundings. The vessel that has been a comfort to His heart, those two or three in a place holding faithfully to the testimony, who have been a comfort to His heart in the time of His rejection, to them He says, I want you now to be in My surroundings. He wants to have us in suited surroundings to enjoy His love.

Well, what a word it is to Daniel—“Go thy way until the end; and thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days”. May we, be helped to go from these meetings strengthened, like Daniel. Next week, perhaps, back in testing surroundings, with pressures to be faced in households and localities. May these words be used to strengthen our knees and to lift up the hands that hang down. May we have Daniel’s secret treasured in our souls, that we may be enabled to take up our heavenly calling and function as sons for God’s eternal pleasure, for His Name’s sake.

GÖTEBORG, SWEDEN

3rd August 1985



JESUS' JOURNEY

Luke 10: 25-37

The man who asked this question thought that he had a right to life eternal. Many people think that today, that they have a right to their life and that through their own works they will be accepted. But the truth is, dear friend, that man has lost his right to live; through your own sins, you lie under the sentence of death. The sense of that brings home to us our need of a Saviour. The man who asked this question hardly felt that need, but Jesus in speaking to him brings up that he needed a neighbour, someone who would come close to him in spite of all his need and bring in the wealth of divine blessing. Jesus speaks about a man who fell into a half-dead state; he was alive, but he was not truly living, and he was a man who was needing help. That is your position tonight, dear friend, in this preaching, that you are in need of somebody to help you. They are very scarce, in fact there is nobody that can help you but Jesus. That is what came out in this story which Jesus tells, that the law could do nothing. There was a priest, and a Levite, but the man was beyond any help that they could bring. If you look to the law, it only condemns you the more, as it did this man who asked the question.

But, friend, in spite of all your need, I want to speak of a Man who has taken a journey to help you. As to the priest and the Levite, they were passing incidentally; they happened to be there; but the Samaritan journeyed to where the man was. I do not know where you are tonight in the need of your soul, but Jesus has the answer to that need. The state that you may feel—and I hope you do feel it—has not turned Him away. It turned away these other two men, but the Samaritan came to where he was and was moved with compassion. Oh, what an answer to man's history, that Jesus has taken His place in the likeness of men. We sang in our hymn:

From heav'n the Saviour came (Hymn 245)

- just to where you and I are in all our need. He came in unrecognised. The Samaritan was a despised person in those

days, but Jesus took that position; He took His position among men. He was not spectacular among them, as it were, and that journey that He took led Him to the cross. On the way, what blessing He bestowed; there was never a need that He did not meet in young or old; the children He blessed, the lepers He cleansed, the dead He raised; that was all in the journey of Jesus. There was none outside the scope of divine blessing. He was moved with compassion; this gospel is full of that. Persons who men put outside the city, such as the ten lepers, Jesus freely handled them. But that journey, as I said, led on to the cross because death was our portion; the consequence of our sins was the grave; but He upon whom the heavens had been opened and who had been proclaimed to be God's beloved Son, journeyed that way of His own accord. There is no man that can escape death, but Jesus journeyed that way, as I say again, of His own accord. He went there, beloved, that He might bind up these wounds that you have tonight, that He might pour in this oil and wine, speaking of the outflowing of divine blessing toward you in all your need. Jesus in going into death bore what was due to you and me in the righteous judgment of God. There He was, as the ends of the gospels portray Him, rejected by men, despised, nailed to a cross, God's beloved Son. In the face of all that man would heap upon Him, He uttered that cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do".

Oh, what a Saviour! Men gave Him a crown of thorns. When Pilate said, What shall I do with Jesus?, man's cry was, Away with Him! But, beloved, God's eye was on that scene; it could well have been on that scene looking judicially on man, for the greatest sin that had ever been committed was being perpetrated there; but the fact is that God's eye rested on Jesus as He took upon Himself God's judgment against sin. He upon whom the heavens had been opened was there on the cross; the heavens were darkened, speaking of the judgment of God; but He was able to bear it. Had God visited men then, as He righteously could, in judgment, that would have been the end of man. But there was a Man there upon the cross who was able to bear the judgment. No offering was ever like

that before. There was a holy, sinless, perfect, blessed Man, the Saviour of sinners, on the cross bearing the judgment of God that was due to you and to me. That was the journey that He took. It is a blessed fact that He came to take that journey, came from heaven to die. He knew full well, as no creature could know, what the judgment of God involved, but as knowing it He says, "Lo, I come to do thy will". I say again, What a Saviour! There He is on the cross, darkness lying on the world. Think of God's feelings as Jesus bore that judgment. It was all poured out upon Jesus. The gospel is that He exhausted that judgment; God's wrath that was due to man. Jesus bore it in its fulness. Then God raised Him from among the dead. He not only died, but He was buried, that was the distance to which He went. But our sins were taken away, as the type says, to "a land apart from men", see Lev 16: 22. He carried away the sins of those who believe; they will never be brought up again; but He has been raised. He died for our sins, and was buried, but it was not possible that He could be held by the power of death. God has highly exalted Him at His right hand.

That is the end of His journey, beloved; the cross was not the end. The end of the journey is that Jesus is in glory, crowned in heaven. There is no name so precious in heaven as the name of Jesus, because He has satisfied God about the sins of the world. John writing his epistle says He is the propitiation for our sins, "but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world", 1 John 2: 2. That is why the gospel goes out today, because the work of Jesus has satisfied God as to the sins of the universe. That is why this half-dead man could be touched, you know. There is nobody outside the scope of the appeal of the gospel. May every heart that hears it tonight be left with that impression, that God is able to reach you where you are with all the wealth of His mercy, pouring in all that is available through the work of Jesus.

Now the gospel is a very personal thing, it says, he "came to him, and seeing him, was moved with compassion". That is the attitude of Jesus towards you tonight where you sit; He is moved with compassion about you. You may be

sitting under the conviction of your sins, you may be feeling the guilt of your history, but Jesus is moved with compassion about you. He is ready tonight to come just where you are with all the resources of His love. This man was not able to move. Would that the conviction of your sins would bring you to this. It was no use directing this man to do good works, telling him to improve himself, live a new life; he was just there entirely dependent upon all that divine wealth would pour in. How ready the Saviour is to take up your case! The truth is, you know, that He knows your history better than you do. You maybe only remember some of your sins, you could hardly feel the guilt of them all; but He knows them all, and yet He would commend Himself to you with all His resources, and would pour in the oil and the wine.

Jesus tonight is not coming to condemn you. He did not raise with this man how he got into this state. The law would have done that; the priest and the Levite would say, How did all this happen? Jesus does not come to raise that with you. He comes that you may be ready to put your trust in Him and in what He has done, to feel the awful hopelessness and helplessness of what you are, and to be ready to receive all that the oil and the wine would speak of. You know, they are fruits of another country; they are what has come from somewhere else in all the soothing power of divine goodness. There was some expression of it at the beginning of the Acts as Peter was preaching; what an outpouring there was there of the oil and the wine! To a nation with the guilt of rejecting Christ fresh upon them, Peter says, "God has made him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ", Acts 2: 36. He does not say, He has made Him Judge, but he says He has set Him forth as a Saviour for all. That is the oil and wine of the gospel, beloved, that from that glorified Saviour there is shining out tonight all that would meet your case.

There was this man; he was not able to walk, it says that the Samaritan "put him on his own beast, took him to the inn and took care of him". I would like tonight, beloved, to draw you to the arms of the Saviour; there they are outstretched in blessing; he would have to stoop down to pick

this man up; He will take all the responsibility about your case; He will take it all. Let not your sins keep you away. The enemy, in many gospel preachings tonight, will be active to remind people how bad they are, but God knows all about your state, and there is nobody outside the reach of the wealth of divine mercy. The Samaritan meets this man with all that he needed to bring him to the inn. The persons who are blessed in Luke's gospel are all brought in and left in a place of safety. The gospel does not leave you where it finds you; the gospel has provided a wonderful sphere of protection and blessing where you will be cared for. It is not only that Jesus has gone into heaven, but the gospel would bring you to a place of safety now, a place of blessing and salvation where your soul will be cared for. Do you know something of that? Maybe you know something of Jesus as your Saviour. Have you proved the wealth of the gospel as bringing you into a place of safety? The world today is a dangerous place, but the Samaritan carries the man to where he will be cared for; and there is a system of blessing and protection that is going to continue until He comes again. How full the gospel is, beloved; it is not only to remove your sins, it is to set you up superior to all the bondage that is in the world. The Samaritan says to the innkeeper, "Take care of him". Are you conscious of being in a circle like that, where you are cared for? This man would never leave the inn; he would never again go into an area where he would be overcome by these robbers; there is a wonderful system of care here today, where the gospel, and the fruits of the gospel, are enjoyed. What fine conversation there would be in this inn as one and another was able to tell of his experiences. All come in through the Saviour's grace, all come in one by one, each the subject of the Saviour's compassion and love. As I said, those resources will never run out. The power of the gospel would appeal to you to stay in this area of divine blessing. God forgives you your sins, and He does that in perfect righteousness as you have faith in Jesus. That was what every one of those persons in that inn would have, faith in Jesus. They extol Him as the alone Saviour of sinners, who was able to save, and as there in that inn they would enjoy all that divine love proposed for their safety and blessing. I would

appeal to you tonight to stay in the area where the gospel is enjoyed. It may be that all here have accepted the gospel and know Jesus as their Saviour, but I would appeal to you to stay in the area where the blessings of the gospel are enjoyed. They are not enjoyed in the world. Jesus loved this man too much to leave him where He found him. He does not only want to forgive you your sins, but in the gospel He wants you. So He is coming to this inn again; He says, "When I come again". He is coming into this area where these persons are looking for Him; they are looking every day for Him to come back, to look upon Him then not only as the One who had met their need, but as the One who was great enough to fill their hearts. We shall see Him then no longer as a certain Samaritan, but as God's glorious Son. That is what we are looking for, beloved; we are not exactly looking for the lowly Jesus, we are looking for the Son of God from heaven, the One into whose hands God has given everything, and those hands are outstretched tonight for your blessing. May you in the faith of your soul make room for that blessing to come in in all its wealth and its fulness, for God's glory and praise. Amen.

GÖTEBORG, SWEDEN

4th August 1985



THE ANOINTING

2 Corinthians 1: 21, 22

1 Corinthians 12: 12, 13

I count on the Lord's help to say a word about the anointing. It is a very rich suggestion that I trust may become clearer to us as we proceed. Persons are anointed, anointed by God; it is not everybody who is anointed, but for us to enjoy the fulness of what divine love has purposed I believe it involves our appreciating the anointing. The matter is not a new thing, it is something that God has been very particular about; there was of old a tabernacle system set up, and before it functioned the whole system was anointed. There are many other references to God anointing, and it is something, I believe, that needs to be appreciated; indeed, without it, we shall function below our dignity. That is what I wanted to speak about, the need for dignity, because things around us today are very common. May we never think, dear brethren, that divine things are common, because divine things have been secured at tremendous cost. Whatever there is that belongs to God here. His value of it is seen in the price that has been paid for it. Have you some sense in your soul of the price that was paid for you? Paul says that to these very people that we are reading about here, he says, "Ye have been bought with a price", 1 Cor 6: 20. I think Paul felt the need of reminding the Corinthians that they had been bought with a price.

Have you a sense of that? Could you tell me what that price has been? Initially the price that was paid for you was the blood of Jesus. If you look at the anointing in the old dispensation the blood was placed there first; the anointing never comes on anything common, never. Paul says, "he that establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us"—these are redeemed persons, they have been bought with a price. He says more than that; he says, "glorify now then God in your body" (1 Cor 6: 20), and for that we need the anointing.

But first of all may I just pause for a moment as to the price that has been paid for you. It takes away any right that

you may think you have to please yourself. You have been bought; you belong to somebody else. Do you feel that? Do you take into account who you belong to in what you do, and where you go? You are not your own, you have been bought. O, beloved, that purchase price has demonstrated to you and to me His love for us. What a love! What a love that would pay such a price for one that was lost! What a love that would pay the price in His own blood to secure us for Himself, to be His own possession. It is a very sad thing to be purchased at such infinite cost and then to live to ourselves.

So Paul brings all these things home to these dear brethren, that the purchase price was the blood of Jesus. He did not hesitate to pay that price for you. Has that ever come home to your soul? It needs to come home to us time and time again, the rights of Christ over us in redeeming love. Redemption is a very wonderful thing. You know, if you really want to be happy just open your heart to enjoy redemption, because it is one of the most wonderful things. God has intervened in the power of redeeming love, and the persons who enjoy redemption are singers. You just look at the prophet Isaiah. He had a lot to say about redemption, and one of the things that he said was that the redeemed shall return and come to Zion with singing (Isa 35: 10)—a great system of liberty belongs to the redeemed. You may have thought that a system of liberty belonged to persons who were not redeemed. Maybe you looked out, and still look out, and think that persons in the world are in liberty. They are lying under death. The great system of liberty is opened up to those who have been redeemed, redeemed to God by the precious blood of Jesus. I commend some of the closing chapters of Isaiah to you as to the great system that is opened up to persons who have been redeemed.

John, the beloved writer, enjoyed it; he said, “To him who loves us ... to him be the glory” (Rev 1: 5, 6); that is the basis of redemption, His love for us. Beloved, there is nobody who loves you like Christ. In your gravest problems do not let anything becloud that; turn to Christ, turn to Him. The token of His love for you is that He shed His blood to have you. The

enemy is very active to instil into your mind and mine that we are too bad to enjoy divine things; but the love of Christ never wanes, and the demonstration of it was that Christ died for our sins. Oh what a great fundamental truth it is in this very book, "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15: 3), that we might be free from bondage and all that the enemy would try to impose upon us, that we might come to enjoy redemption. The redeemed shall walk there in liberty; the power of redemption gives you triumph over all that the enemy can bring in. We have one of the songs of redemption in Exodus 15 when Moses spoke not only about what God had done to the Egyptians but also says, "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance", Exod 15: 17. We are not redeemed, you know, to live here to ourselves, but are redeemed in view of inhabiting another land, to find our life somewhere else.

Well, these are things that I may say are fundamental, that I hardly intended to say, save to remind us afresh of the wonderful love of Christ that has brought us out of a system of death and bondage into a system of liberty and of joy. The psalmist said, "Why art thou cast down, my soul?", Ps 42: 5. Have you ever said that? I have, and many others. It is only the enemy that would cause these thoughts.

But what a system, beloved, we have been brought into; what an outlook we have. Paul says, "Now he that establishes us with you in Christ", establishes us each on the great ground of redemption, the great ground of the finished work of Christ—and then he says, "and has anointed us, is God". The anointing is to give us power and, as I said, to give us dignity that we may not be enslaved in what is common, what is ordinary. And Paul says the Person who has done it is God. Why did He do that, beloved? Why should He anoint us? It was in view of our enjoying what it is to be His own possession, in view of each of us enjoying what it is to be a son of God.

That is what you are, you know; "Ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus", Gal 3: 26. For a long time I thought sonship belonged to progress in the truth; I thought it was

something for older brethren. No; God having brought us into His house, I would address you tonight, dear believer in Christ, as a son of God. That is why I am speaking about the anointing; there is no point in speaking about the anointing to sinners. God does not anoint sinners; God does not anoint anything that is of man in the flesh, but as to you, dear fellow-believer, I would regard you and speak to you, and God would speak to you, as one of His sons. It is a very elevating thing. Think of Paul saying that to these Galatians. As that letter was read in Galatia they were acting rather badly; maybe that is like you and me. Yet Paul wrote these precious words, “for ye are all God’s sons by faith in Christ Jesus”, Gal 3: 26. Well, you know, there are a lot of things that are unsuitable to a son of God. You would readily admit that, would you not? You would readily admit that a great many things, things that are common, are quite unsuited to a son of God. Well, Paul does not only say that they are sons of God by faith, but he says, “God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts”, Gal 4: 6. He has given you the wherewithal, dear fellow-believer, to enjoy sonship. So it is not only something that is yours in title, but it can be, and should be, yours in possession and in enjoyment.

So the apostle would seek to elevate us, and I would seek to elevate us all tonight in our own thoughts about ourselves as subjects of the work of God. Paul is elevating the Corinthians here, he is elevating them as Christians. He says, “Now he that establishes us ... and has anointed us, is God”. Why should He anoint them? You know, the anointing separates you morally from the race of humanity. You only need to think of what God said to Abraham. Abraham was a lonely pilgrim in the eyes of men in his journeyings, but God writes about him later and He says, “Touch not mine anointed ones”, 1 Chron 16: 22. Some people would not have given much for Abraham, but there he was, protected, sheltered under the divine anointing. What protection there is for you, beloved, as anointed of God. Oh do not treat it lightly! There was a man in the Old Testament who died, and somebody wrote about him that he died as not anointed—not anointed,

2 Sam 1: 21! It is possible to act in a common way. But the anointing is there that we should not; we have been anointed in view of moving in the dignity and the blessedness of the wealth of divine love, and, beloved, it is God who has done it. There is a wonderful range of things with a very final touch about them; forgiveness of sins is one of them. Some people will tell you that it is not final, but John says our sins are forgiven us. Why? “for his name’s sake”, 1 John 2: 12. There is finality about that, you know. That your sins are forgiven you for Christ’s name’s sake means they are forgiven in a final way.

Well, these things need to be enjoyed in our souls, beloved. It is not to say we may not sin again, but the memory of our sins should not hold us in bondage because of forgiveness “for his name’s sake”. O, beloved, look off on to the Saviour! Our great deliverance is in looking to Him, finding that there is such a One who has come in to break the power of bondage that we were under, and God has anointed us that we may live in the dignity of the anointing. Paul says too that He has sealed us; that means you know that you are His. Have you got His stamp? Every believer, you know, who belongs to Christ has got His stamp; sometimes you do not see it too easily, but it is a fine thing to find it expressing itself. It is a wonderful thing to talk to somebody—maybe you did not know he or she was a believer—and you find in the conversation that something comes out and you see they have been sealed; they are divine property; they belong to God. Then it says, “and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts”. These things are more than we have time to speak about. The seal underlies the anointing; the seal is that you belong to God; He has made you His own at the cost of the precious blood of Christ, and He has anointed us that we may live in the wonderful wealth and blessedness of that anointing.

Well, I want just to speak about the protection of that anointing. We are exposed to a great many things, but, you know, you are protected by the anointing. Do not treat it lightly, beloved. It refers in its application to the blessed Holy Spirit of God. He has come here to give us power to go against

the stream. The protection of it, as I say, was seen in Abraham, that God shielded him from all these forces that were around—"Touch not mine anointed ones"—"Touch not"; that applies even to the enemy; that word is addressed to him too. Satan took up certain things with Job but he could go only so far—"Touch not mine anointed ones". God has ownership and it is seen in the seal, that you belong to Him, and He protects you in the anointing, the Spirit of God. Sometimes you may be in a tight corner, as all of us are at times; the Lord says, "It shall be given to you in that hour what ye shall speak", Matt 10: 19. Christianity is very simple. Confidence in the anointing gives us power in the hour when it is needed. "He that ... has anointed us, is God".

Well, there is much more to the anointing; it comes out very beautifully in circumstances of suffering. The oil that we referred to earlier, in the Old Testament, must have been very fragrant. I do not understand all the ingredients, but if you look at it in Exodus 30 the anointing oil must have had a very fine fragrance about it, and the fragrance of the anointing was seen par excellence in Jesus. I have often wondered that He never preached until He was anointed; there He was, God's blessed Son, but He waited until that time when the Spirit came upon Him. It says the Spirit descended in bodily form as a dove and abode upon Him (see Luke 3: 22; John 1: 32); I take it that was the anointing, and from that point onwards there is a service of unparalleled beauty and majesty by Christ. He reads a scripture, and He stops at a certain place; I think that is the divine anointing. He could have gone on; the prophet went on; but He stopped at a certain point and He says, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4: 21)—the divine anointing. As I said, never seen so excellently as in Him.

Now I wanted to speak about the time of His sufferings, because I think the anointing shines there in the spirit of another Man. We have referred to it already today, a Man rejected, despised, crucified, saying these words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 34. There was the anointing. Oh what words they were! What

words of meaning they were! because, you know, the anointing gives power to words; it gives power in adverse circumstances. They were not empty words that He said; the very fact that you are here tonight shows the power of these words of Jesus, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". There we see the grace, the blessedness, of the anointing.

But I would speak of it for a moment as seen in Stephen, a man like ourselves. He was stoned unjustly, despised by those around him. He said a very true word and they took up stones that they might stone him; it says, "And kneeling down, he cried ... Lord, lay not this sin to their charge", Acts 7: 60. He also said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit". It must have been a very easy thing for heaven to receive the spirit of such a man. I believe we need to count on the Spirit's help in times of suffering; there is much of it among us in body, and more of it in spirit, and perhaps suffering in spirit is something that tends to induce hardness. I speak carefully, but maybe it does. Suffering in spirit going on for a long time tends to produce hardness in the human heart apart from the anointing. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"; I doubt if there had been more precious words uttered, at least up to that time, since the words of the Saviour, and we see Stephen, kneeling in the hour of such extremity, and the power of the anointing coming out in his suffering.

Well, I leave that, beloved, for you to think about. I believe that there is a need for the anointing. We do not want to speak mysteriously; it refers to the power of the Spirit of God, who has been given to us, coming into expression in persons in circumstances of pressure and suffering, that we may not become hard. The altar, in Leviticus 8, was sprinkled seven times with the anointing oil. I do not understand it in its fulness but it arrested me today. I do not know that Moses was told to do it seven times, but he seemed to have some impression that there was a need for the Spirit's particular help in the suffering that the altar speaks about; it says, "And he sprinkled thereof on the altar seven times", Lev 8: 11.

It seems to suggest the need for counting on the Spirit in times of suffering, especially suffering in our spirits, that we may not become undignified. It is very easy to answer the flesh by the flesh; very easy to resort to what is below the level of sonship; very easy to act in our own ability; whereas just at your hand, beloved, to be called upon, to be relied upon, to be made room for, is the power of a divine Person, the Holy Spirit of God. You all know that if there is something in your heart it means that it is peculiarly treasured. That is where He is operating; He has shed abroad in our hearts the love of God, and it says God has given “the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts”. God has to say, you know, “Oh that there were such a heart in them”, Deut 5: 29. Does He have to say that to you and to me tonight—“Would that there were such a heart in them?” Would that there were a space there that could be filled with the joy and energies and blessings of this divine Person, come to be with us and in us, in our very hearts.

Well, I have spoken of the great area of the anointing as being proved in these circumstances, that we may not become ordinary. I would like to speak in the other scripture of how we “have all been given to drink of one Spirit”. The allusion is to persons being satisfied. It says, “For also in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body” and then, “have all been given to drink of one Spirit”. May I say reverently, What a well to drink at! Samson found that; you will recall he was weary; he had done certain great things, but he was very weary. I suppose there are none of us who do not taste something of that at times. Then it says he found ‘the caller’s spring’; he found something that refreshed him to go on his way. Well, may we find that in the Spirit, beloved—strength to go on our way. You know, “to drink of one Spirit” is meant to make you satisfied. It is another thing about the anointing; persons are not looking for help here or there, but are satisfied in what they have drunk into—we have “all been given to drink of one Spirit”.

I just close in speaking again for a moment about Abraham. The king of Sodom came to him to try to bring him into his system. Abraham’s answer to that monarch shows

that he had a sense that he was anointed by God. He says, 'You cannot add anything to me'. The greatest king, I suppose, of the moment approached Abraham and said, Whatever you want I will give you. What an offer! Beloved, would you trade the enjoyment of divine love for that tonight—would you? Abraham would not. He says, "I have lifted up my hand to Jehovah, the Most High God", Gen 14: 22. 'I have been given to drink of all the wonderful resources of divine love. What can you give me?'

Dear friend, what can the world add to you? May you open your heart tonight to drink into "one Spirit". He is here tonight to satisfy your longing; He is here tonight to satisfy your need. The early chapters of the epistle to the Romans speak of the Spirit in His grace and patient service, satisfying you about your need and all your problems, but His normal service is to lead you into the great system of the blessings of divine love. Open your heart, beloved, tonight. As I said in relation to Abraham, what can the world add? It cannot anoint you; that is one thing; it cannot offer you an inheritance among the sanctified; it cannot offer you anything that is going to last; but Abraham had the assurance that the Most High God, and the great resources of divine love, were all for him, and he said, 'You cannot add anything to me'. May we be satisfied, beloved; there is more than will fill our hearts; may we be drawn into the great system of wealth that is ours. May we make way for that anointing and move here in all the dignity of it. The world can only take away your beauty; that is all it can do; that is what it did with Saul as not anointed. May it be that the Spirit tonight in you and in me has more uninterrupted liberty to form us in divine love, for His Name's sake.

BIRMINGHAM

13th September 1986



WHAT GOD HAS DONE

Matthew 22: 1-14

We are reminded in the glad tidings of what God has done. It is a very fine thing to open our hearts to what God has done. We are reminded all around us of what man has done. The glad tidings are something that man has had no hand in, no hand at all; it is God, in spite of the indifference that there has been in the creature, proclaiming something of what He has done. Oh how slow we are to open our hearts to what God is doing. Yet in spite of that indifference, as this chapter shows, God's invitation still goes out. How often it has been refused; indifference as to God seems built-in to the human heart. At the outset Adam sought to hide himself; sought a corner where he could be away from God, make his own arrangements. It may have suited Adam to find his own way away from God, but think of the feelings of God about Adam! He raised the question, "Where art thou?", Gen 3: 10. How many hiding places men may have sought out for themselves; yet God in the appeal of His grace would seek to call us, call us from our hiding place to come to see what He has done.

In this chapter it speaks of "a king who made a wedding feast for his son". The great theme of the glad tidings, beloved, is Christ, Christ. The glad tidings are all about Him, it is not about you or about me, the glad tidings are all about Christ. You and I come into it indeed; the invitation goes out to us to come. The great centre of all that God has, the great centre of our eternal blessing, is in Christ, the Man, Christ Jesus. It says, "The kingdom of the heavens has become like a king who made a wedding feast for his son". What great hopes, expectations, and joy, are centred in a wedding feast, and the whole centre of it here is the son "made a wedding feast for his son". What delight God has found in Christ! What delight God has found in the finished work of Christ; as having settled the question of our sins, and broken for ever the power of death over man—"made a wedding feast for his son" is the great answer to that pathway of shame; the answer to the down-

stooping movements of Jesus, is not only that God has highly exalted Him, but as it says here it has become like a time when He has made a wedding feast for His Son. He would like you to come and share His thoughts about Christ. The gospel has in view that Christ, and Christ alone, may be magnified. All your need and mine must be met if that is to be so. Think of God having a great end in view that Christ is to be honoured—"made a wedding feast for his son". What joy enters into this dispensation. This dispensation comes in in this parable when God is sending out to the highways and byways. Think of how Christ has been spurned by the Jews. Think of Christ, in all His beauty and in all His attractiveness and excellence, and yet they cried, "Not this man", John 18: 40. That was not said at the beginning of His pathway, that was said in Pilate's judgment hall. As Pilate spoke about Him, there were witnesses all around among them of what Christ had done. There would be some there that had seen dead raised, maybe in that crowd lepers who had been cleansed, and the voice goes up, "Not this Man". What a time it was, we might say ripe for judgment. The refusal of God's approach to man in Christ.

In some of these parables in the gospels the Lord almost excuses the fact that they had turned away the prophets; it says they beat one and killed another, but think of them refusing the Son. It says, "And at last he sent to them his son, saying, They will have respect for my son" Matt 21: 37. O, what a display of divine grace among men in the Person of Jesus—wonder of the universe indeed. The Lord said Himself, "If I had not done among them the works which no other one has done, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15: 24); there is no excuse. The Jew was left with no excuse, for there had been among them the Messiah whom Isaiah had spoken of and long proclaimed; Moses spoke about Him; all the prophets spoke about Him, and there He was in Person among them—refused, rejected by those He came to call.

O, beloved, that is man's side, and as I said, we do not want to speak about what man has done, but I only say that to show the background to what God has done. And into that

black background God has come to invite you and me to a wedding feast—"made a wedding feast for his son". O, the delight God has found in Him! They said, "Not this man". Peter said in his preaching, "whom heaven indeed must receive" Acts 3: 21. On earth rejected, by man despised, but received up in glory. O, what a Person! What an answer to His down-stooping! What an answer to that time in the grave, three days and three nights in the heart of the earth; the answer to that is that He has been received up in glory, and given a name above every name. Peter's heart must have been full as he preached of what God had done. He says, "God has made him, this Jesus whom *ye* have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2: 36)—this same Jesus "whom *ye* have crucified"—that is what you have done, that very Jesus whom you put on the cross God has made Him both Lord and Christ. That makes way for the wedding feast. God has made Him both Lord and Christ, and in spite of our histories—never mind for a moment what the Jews have done—in spite of our histories, what we have done, God is inviting us to the wedding feast. He does not say you are to bring anything, He does not say you are too bad to come. I believe the enemy is active in every gospel preaching to remind souls of how bad they are. God does not say anything about that. He knew what the Jews had done to Jesus, and it is to them that Peter was preaching—"this Jesus", he says, "whom *ye* have crucified", God hath made Him "both Lord and Christ". Think of those guilty souls being invited to the wedding feast. Such is the grace of God, beloved, such the kindness and God's love to man. What a Saviour God that the very persecutors of His Son were being invited to the wedding feast. Did He not know how bad they were? Yes, He did. Did He not know that judgment lay upon that nation? Surely He did, but the answer to it is God's appreciation of Christ and what He has done. Though man refused Him He went to the cross of His own accord; He went that way, making His soul an offering for sin of His own accord, more precious to God perhaps at that moment than at any other time in His pathway. It says, "who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God" Heb 9: 14. Oh what God saw in that, the offering of Christ, offering Himself. He felt those

taunts of the Jews; He felt the refusal of man; even as He came in there was no room for Him, still less as He healed them and blessed them; there was still no room for Jesus, and yet, and yet, in spite of that He offered Himself to God an offering and a sacrifice. He offered Himself to make way for this invitation to go out. There was hardly the fulness of God coming out with an invitation for all men to come in in the Old Testament; it awaited the work of Jesus. That is why the invitation goes on; the parable the Lord speaks brings out man's indifference, it brings out man's hatred and yet the invitation goes on. God's invitation is based on God's valuation and appreciation of the finished work of Christ. Had that invitation depended upon anything else, it could not have continued, but in spite of men saying that they would not come, God's invitation goes out the wider, because of the delight that the King has in His Son. He invites us to enjoy the best, as I said, He knew their state. He knows how bad you and I may be, but he says, 'Come'. That invitation does not go out to any special strata of society, it goes out in the highways to as many as can be found, both evil and good. There is power in that finished work of Jesus; there is atoning power in that blood that has been shed to make us all fitted, suited, to enjoy the wedding feast. How attractive the king makes it; it says, "Behold, I have prepared". He does not tell them to prepare and get things ready, he says, Come, I have prepared. How rich these things would be if we understood them!—"my dinner; my oxen and my fatted beasts". As we come into this wedding feast, we find, I believe, how God is feeding on Christ—"my dinner". O, what God has for Himself that He would share with us. It says, "I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatted beasts are killed". What rich references to Christ, and what He has done; what He is as a Man who has satisfied God about the sins of the universe. This king is very propitious towards the subjects. There has never been a king like this. The invitation and all that is in the heart of the king is not affected in any way by what it finds. There is nothing judicial about the king's attitude in this early part; it is all the outgoings of his heart about his son. So he puts this in the invitation, "I have prepared my dinner"—what an enticement to come—"my

dinner". Think of making light of all that God has, and all that He would provide, as to what He has found in the Man Christ Jesus. What poor comparison! It says, "and went, one to his own land, and another to his commerce". What poor comparisons with what the king proposes in "my dinner" and "my oxen" and "my fatted beasts are killed, and all things ready". What a feast has been set on, beloved. This dispensation brings out how full and how rich that feast is; it brings out the fulness of all that is to be enjoyed, and God is inviting you today, inviting men today; not to think of themselves but to come, to come in submission to His call of love—Come, for all things are ready—all things ready. O, beloved, whatever we need, and what needs we have. These persons hardly thought they had a need; they preferred their land, they preferred their commerce. They laid hold of the bondmen. O, what pride and arrogance is brought out in the human heart. The incoming of Christ has made the world thrice guilty, it not only refused a man, a prophet, but it has refused God's beloved Son. This second group of persons would be ourselves: that is where we would come in. From the refusal of the Jews as a nation, God has widened out and would have all men to be saved—Jews, Gentiles, rich, poor. It says they "went out into the highways, and brought together all as many as they found". Think of God's feelings! He says to His bondmen the feast is ready, who is going to come and share it? Who would come to enjoy His thoughts about Christ? "My dinner"—"my oxen"—Who is going to come today? How many we pray and trust will be coming today; coming to enjoy God's thoughts about Christ; coming to enjoy a scene of unparalleled blessing and happiness, but everything is founded on the finished precious work of Jesus.

O, the soul peace in knowing Christ glorified, a Christ who has met the whole question of our sins, so that through that blood which has been shed God is able and ready to forgive; He is able to pardon those who would come. We see in the passage we read some who would not come who fall into judgment, but in the second lot he sends out he says everything is ready, whatever you need—and who would not

but feel their need being invited to such an occasion, the need of forgiveness, the need of our sins being met, for that is what stood out between God and man. It was the question of our sins. I believe in that invitation God is saying that all things are ready, He is saying that the work has been done.

No need now to labour, the work has been done;
To be in God's favour, believe on the Son!

(Hymn 324)

O, beloved, the work has been done. That is all conveyed in the invitation. The sin question and all that kept us at a distance, God has settled it all. The invitation is, Come. Those invited were not worthy, but it says, "as many as ye shall find invite to the wedding feast". God is no respecter of persons; He is not looking for any special persons: it says, "all as many as ye shall find invite to the wedding feast". That is what goes on today for the whole world, they are all invited. Very few may respond but they are all invited. O, what a God He is! Man's invitations are very limited, necessarily so because he cannot meet all the needs that may arise, but God, beloved, has provided for everything, all are invited—invite as many as ye shall find, "invite to the wedding feast". That is how the gospel goes out today. There is no soul who is outside the reach of the invitation to Come, Come to the wedding feast. It says, "And those bondmen went out into the highways, and brought together all as many as they found, both evil and good; and the wedding feast was furnished with guests". That is what is coming about in this dispensation, beloved; if there may be some refusing, the wedding feast is being furnished with guests. That is a very fine word—"the wedding feast was furnished with guests". It was not so at the beginning of this chapter, the feast was all there and God wanted to share. The Lord is saying the kingdom of the heavens has become like this today. This is the time when God is extolling Christ, exalting Him, and now the wedding feast is furnished; it does not say with sinners, it does not say it is furnished with lame or any of these kind of persons, it says it is "furnished with guests". They have added something to it, the feast could not go on

without them. What a wealth has been secured through the glad tidings being proclaimed—the wedding feast has been furnished with guests. It is not an empty place. The whole house may be there but unless it is furnished it is very empty, but here it is furnished, with guests, forgiven sinners. Persons who were once in the highways, persons who were once far away, lost and undone. We were speaking today of persons once being strangers and foreigners; well, they are not that here though they once were. The gospel found us in all our need, met our sins and all our liabilities, but now ‘guests’ as this passage shows, involves that the persons are dressed; it involves that they themselves have been clothed in all the worth of God’s beloved Son. There is no disparity, may I say, between the Son and the guests, no disparity. It is a very odd thing if somebody comes in who is strikingly out of place. The wedding feast that was furnished with guests means there is something about them that is suited to the wedding feast, and to the King and to His Son.

That is what the gospel is about. There is power in the glad tidings, beloved, to meet our every condition, to meet all that we are as lost and undone as sons of Adam’s race. What a transfer from these thoroughfares and highways, what a transfer to be taken from that to a wedding feast and to be one of the guests, not just an onlooker. The gospel does not leave you outside the house; the gospel brings you into the house—furnished with guests. The joy of the wedding feast may be heard afar off, but the guests are the persons who are participating in the glory and blessedness of the occasion. In the glad tidings that is what God is securing; He is furnishing the occasion with guests.

It says, And the king went in to see the guests. O, what a delight that must have been! You can think of the expectancy of the king. If you just speak simply of this parable—the expectancy of the king going in—it does not say to see his son, though that would be in his mind, but it says, “And the king, having gone in to see the guests”. What would he see? He would see each one with some appreciation of Christ, it is somewhat like the inn we were speaking about,

everybody in that inn would be telling of their own appreciation of the Samaritan. So here all the guests would be speaking about the son, the Son. They would not be speaking about what they were wearing or what some one else may be wearing, but they would be speaking about his son. That is what God is looking for, the great effects of the glad tidings; that instead of men being engaged with themselves and with the world where Christ has been rejected, the gospel transfers us into a scene where persons are engaged with Christ. What an occupation! “Having gone in to see the guests”. Think of the king’s delight as he saw one and another, come from afar, come from great liabilities, those liabilities gone, and they are there clothed with a wedding garment—except one man, and the king says, “My friend”. The king’s attitude is still the same, friendly, the king’s disposition is still there towards them even though they are there in indifference—“how camest thou in here not having on a wedding garment?”. It points to a man’s indifference, how self-centred man is. I think this person was very self-centred, instead of taking on the spirit of the glad tidings—God’s appreciation of Christ. Well, there is no room for that kind of man. God, in spite of all that is going on is sending out his bondmen that the wedding feast may be furnished with guests. May we enjoy, beloved, our place as a guest, a guest of the King, a guest to honour the Son. May our hearts be filled with something fresh of His beauty and His glory and His charm for His Name’s sake.

CROYDON

23rd November 1986

