

THE WAITING TIME

AND

OTHER MINISTRY

BY

BERT TAYLOR

VOLUME 2



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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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THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 14: 15-27; 15: 26,27; 16: 7-16

1 Corinthians 2: 9-12; 3: 16,17

RT I thought there might be help for us in looking at the Lord's own words as to the Holy Spirit. He had spoken earlier of the Holy Spirit as water, and in other figures, but as leaving the disciples He speaks of the Holy Spirit as One to be loved and relied upon. I think it would be true to say that as the dispensation has continued, in the public body the Spirit has been more and more disregarded. It therefore becomes those who would seek to taste the vitality of Christianity to revere Him and to be impressed with the sense of His greatness. The Lord would make clear to those He is leaving that there was to be no loss; no lesser personage was coming to be with them. We speak regularly of the greatness of this dispensation—and rightly so—and of the greatness of the assembly as being the family that is nearest to Deity, but these things are so because the Spirit of God is here, and such a Person is with us. This dispensation transcends all dispensations because of the place that divine Persons have taken in the economy, but principally on account of the place that the Spirit has taken. The Lord says, "that he may be with you for ever". That was never so before, but it is true now, that there is a divine Person "with you for ever". What settlement that gives! There were times of great exploits in previous dispensations, but what a touch it gives to this dispensation that He will be "with you for ever". May we have some sense of the Spirit and the Lord helping us to be enlarged, deepened, in our appreciation of this blessed, holy Person.

DJH Would it be true to say that God is here?

RT Yes. As you look at these passages it is very affecting; the Lord says that He would beg the Father about Him. He says in chapter 15, "whom I will send to you from the Father". In chapter 16 He comes. "It is profitable for you that I go away", the Lord says, "I will send him" (the Comforter) "to you". He comes from heaven where the Father and the Son, and the relationships that exist in heaven, are known, and He

brings the wealth of that sphere to be our present portion. As you say, God is here: I do not know whether the fullness of that really affects us enough. We speak about decline and we feel the weakness. Some may say, What is going to happen? Well, God is here—another Comforter. They had known the assurance and the comfort of the presence of Jesus, but there is another Person here, and He will be with you for ever.

ECB In this section Jesus speaks distinctly of the Spirit as a Person, not, as you say, as water, or wind or otherwise, but as a Person.

RT Yes. We may tend to think more of Him in His services than as a Person. His grace through the dispensation needs to be contemplated more. There is room for expansion in our expressions of worship to Him, and as we think of what has been effected in the dispensation for God, it would help us in our response to such a One. He is to be worshipped.

HAH Is it your understanding that this is the only dispensation in which He is known as indwelling persons?

RT Yes. The Lord is speaking of something that was new to them. They had known something about the Spirit coming on David, and the Spirit of Christ in such persons, but think of the impact of this: “that he may be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth”! It gives the present dispensation, and the assembly, a wonderful status, that there is such a One—a divine Person—with us for ever.

WJRB What is implied in the expression “the Comforter”?

RT Well, you are glad of it, are you not? The Lord was leaving them and He knew what was coming in. Where is our comfort? Where is it? It is in the Holy Spirit. The comfort of the Spirit is to be with us; the comfort is in the fact that there is Someone here who is superior to all that is around—the decline, the decay, the breakdown, and all that is going on—there is Someone, a divine Person, who is greater than all that, and He is with us for ever. Is that not a wonderful comfort?

WJRB It would have that particular meaning in this present dispensation.

RT Yes. I have often thought of it in recent sorrows, that a divine Person has taken (not by mistake) this name of the Comforter, that He can bring in solace and what is needed to heal the wounds. Comfort is more than sympathy. You can sympathise, but comfort fills the void. There may be a great loss felt; sympathy does not quite meet it, but comfort brings things back to a normal, stable relationship.

SDKR Mr Darby has a note to verse 16, that ‘solicitor’, if it were not too common, just answers the sense. He is one who is managing for us and whom we can consult.

RT Well, what makes you go to a solicitor? Because you do not feel able to handle your affairs, and the solicitor is supposed to be somebody who knows all about things and is able just to fit you into the picture and do things on your behalf. You are the client, you are the important person. As you say, it is a very common word, but Mr Darby says it illustrates the idea of somebody who makes up for all the loss.

VEW The disciples knew what it was to go to the Lord Jesus day by day in every detail, but now they would have another Comforter.

RT Yes. You just feel that the simplicity of it should enter our hearts more: “another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth”. He says, “whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him”; but there are those persons who are loved by Christ, and He begs the Father that a divine Person may be here, as you said, in His stead.

DAB It was said here on a previous occasion in relation to the solicitor that he is charged to do his very best for you. Is that the thought here?

RT What a friend! It has often been referred to, has it not? A solicitor may be official (that is why Mr Darby hesitates at the word) but what a friend, as you say, who will do His best for you, and Somebody who has infinite resources. He has come from this area; think of the Lord’s love for His own, that He would beg the Father that Someone so great should come with the wealth of heaven to be at our disposal.

ECB The distinction from the solicitor is that the Spirit does not have to be briefed, does He? Romans 8 brings that out; He knows your case first.

RT Yes; you do not need to pay Him either. He says, "I will beg the Father". The Lord has taken up the matter of the cost. He says, "I will beg the Father". What an affecting thing that is! He felt the need we would have here in this dispensation, but He knew Someone who was great enough to see us through.

HGH He does know all things, yet He loves to hear us put our needs before Him.

RT He joins His help to our weakness; we do not know what to pray for as is fitting, see Rom 8: 26. These are real experiences and I think that many of the brethren in recent times know something about them. There are matters lying on your spirit that are more than you can handle. He joins His help to our weakness.

HAH Is it a blessed thing that these scriptures to which you have referred, apart possibly from the one in chapter 16, make no reference to moral issues or His restraint of evil? They are His normal blessed service to the saints.

RT Well, the moral questions are underlined in what He says in the latter part of chapter 14; He brings in His commandment and His word. Love for Christ and committal to Him gives the Spirit greater liberty. The lack of vessels has hindered the Spirit in His liberty, but the Lord here, I think, is engaging us with the grandeur and the glory and the greatness of the Personage that is coming in, and we need help in faith to lay hold of it.

CCI You have emphasised the matter of His being with us. Is that perhaps one of the most important scriptures in the New Testament, as to the Spirit being known objectively, to be prayed to and worshipped, and sung to? Is that the way that the Lord has drawn attention to the Spirit in our day objectively?

RT Yes. I think that the Lord here is opening our eyes to the greatness of the Person of the Spirit. He says not only He

will be with you for ever, but “he abides with you, and shall be in you”. I think it is to help us to be settled about the dispensation, that things are not oscillating or getting out of hand.

JM There are ups and downs, are there not, but the fact that He is with us for ever, in charge of the testimony, is the assurance that what is in the divine mind will go through to glory. That gives us a certain restfulness of spirit, though not causing us to be without exercise.

RT And as the greatness of the Person comes before us it would stimulate us to be with Him, because He is going through. Scripture says that He is guiding, so that you can hardly think of these scriptures without thinking of Genesis 24. The great matter with Rebecca is, “I will go”. “Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go”, v 58. Is that not what is to stimulate us, that we will go with Him? He is going through the dispensation, and as we are prepared to go with Him, we will come into all the blessedness and the grace of His service, will we not?

WJRB Is there a good deal in the Spirit descending on the Lord as a dove? He singled Him out in all His perfection.

RT That brings out the preciousness of that Man to heaven. Here is brought out something of the preciousness of the saints to heaven. He came, as you say, on Christ in bodily form. What a point of attraction to heaven there was in Christ as a man here, but now here it is the saints, the saints in those circumstances, and a divine Person has come forth from with the Father to be with us for ever, to abide in us.

EP I was wondering what your thought would be as to the fact that it is in the epistle to the Romans, right at the end, that “the love of the Spirit” is referred to (chap 15: 30), and the apostle exhorts them—which seems to me as if it was a known thing by those Roman saints—that they knew the love of the Spirit. Would you say something about that.

RT Do we not know it? The idea of the Comforter must involve love—“the love of the Spirit”. He speaks too of “the communion of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor 13: 14), that it may be

with them. I think it brings out the greatness of the Person. It is not (I do not want to say not only) the water aspect; it is a Person so great, and what love He has shown! But then it is to be working in the saints.

PM Does the distinctiveness of that Person come out in this reference, “ye know him, for he abides with you”?

RT Yes, what do you say about that?

PM I wondered if they had seen the character of the blessed Spirit here in the Lord’s own movements among them, but then “he ... shall be in you” would be distinctive too, would it not?

RT The same blessed Person. As you say, they had seen the Lord doing things in the power of the anointing, the power of the Holy Spirit. You can see how quickly they came into it in the beginning of Acts. “Ye know him”: they knew the power that had come in. Peter has no longer doubts as to the Person of Christ, doubts as to His work. The whole thing is set on in power as the Spirit comes to be with them and abide in them.

EC Would you say something about the Spirit teaching? We know the Lord as Teacher, but it is emphasised here: “he shall teach you all things”.

RT That has come out very markedly in the recovery, do you not think? You go to the meeting and you say, Well, Mr So-and-so is not here tonight and it is a difficult chapter. Well, I think the Scriptures would help us. It needs vessels, of course, but you are exercised in the morning about the reading at night, are you not? You are exercised about the chapter through the day before you go to the meeting. I think all these things make room for the teaching of the Spirit known among us, would you say?

EC It is very important, is it not? “He shall teach you all things”. I wonder how much we rely on the Holy Spirit for the teaching.

RT Well, if we do not we will lose it. I think that the Spirit teaching you makes the thing good in your soul and it develops manhood. “He shall teach you all things, and will bring to your remembrance”—who could remember?—“bring

to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you". Think of how much lies in the realm of the Spirit's operations. John, in this very book, says, "not even the world itself would contain the books written", chap 21: 25. Yet there is a divine Person who has the whole treasury in His hand, and He is leading us into it, teaching us all things.

ECB Would it be opening out the things which began to be spoken about by the Lord?

RT Yes; it includes what the Lord had said in the days of His flesh. "He ... will bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you". I think it leads on to Paul's ministry. It leads on to the opening up of what is in glory, but the whole thing is in Him. It is not in the books and it is not in any man. That was the confusion in Corinth—they had men before them, and it is not absent among the saints to make too much of men. Would that we loved all the brethren! He says, "he shall teach you all things". There is a divine Person here in charge, and teaching and setting things forward.

EC Does it help to remember that He Himself indited the very Scriptures from which He teaches us?

RT Yes, and the application. I think as you look through the recovery, certain Scriptures have a bearing today that they did not have before. "He shall teach you all things"—the Spirit gives a touch to scriptures that bear on the present, to comfort and to lead and to strengthen the saints in the circumstances in which they are.

DJH These very chapters are an example of the way He brought things to John's remembrance—written years afterwards, and yet the detail of what Jesus said.

RT Yes. Well, think of Peter; he says "having been eyewitnesses of *his* majesty", 2 Pet 1: 16. He did not say that on the mount, nor did he think about it before Christ went to glory, but you can see the Spirit teaching him as to that very occasion on the mount, that they were eyewitnesses of His majesty, bringing things to his remembrance. He was bringing before the saints a present, up-to-date touch as to Christ to strengthen them.

EO So as the Lord was patient in teaching the disciples when He was here, the Holy Spirit is continuing that service in His speaking to the assemblies. It is vital to cherish all that has come out, as you say, in the recovery. We shall make shipwreck, will we not, if we do not cherish what has been said to us?

RT Yes; and authority lies in the Spirit's speaking; the realisation of who He is would help us to come under His teaching, to be amenable to His leading. It is a very affecting word in chapter 16: "he shall guide you into all the truth".

DER Is the Spirit's service consequent upon the company who love the Lord and keep His commandments, and too the individual who loves the Lord and keeps His word?

RT Well, these are the persons who get the gain of it, are they not? But the setting of the chapter is that the Lord loved them. "I will beg the Father"; He was appreciative of their love for Him, but He loved them and felt for them in the conditions in which they were, and He says, "I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter". I think verse 21 has in mind the breakdown, that there is the need for being in the area where the flow of the Spirit is known, and the commandments help to keep us in the area where the Spirit is in liberty.

HAH So would you say that "If ye love" and "If any one love", is not an 'if' of doubt but is to bring in the consequence?

RT It is to encourage us. The Lord had no doubt about their love, but He says that things are very mixed. He says, "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me". He is helping us to get clear of profession, to get into an area where Christ is loved and the Spirit is free to take of the things that are His and show them unto us.

AJEW I was just thinking of the very interesting part that the Spirit has in Peter's adjustment in Acts 10 and 11. Peter has the vision of the sheet, but then later as to the men that came from Cornelius He says, "go with them, nothing doubting, because I have sent them", chap 10: 20. The Spirit was taking charge of the situation, linking it in the sense of teaching with

what had gone before, making it tangible, so to say, in the experience of Peter.

RT I think that is a very encouraging suggestion. So Peter says, when he was recounting it, “who indeed was I”, chap 11: 17. There was Someone greater than anything that is in man, a divine Person directing the operations, and that direction is still continuing through the dispensation.

AJEW That was really the critical time in the unfolding of the dispensation, was it not? The Spirit becomes the key to what you might speak of as the disentanglement of everything for Peter.

RT Very good. You can go through the Acts, and there are many difficult situations where, as you say, the Spirit was the key, as in chapter 15. But the Lord would try to help us here into the normal leading and directing of One here to be with us and in us, abiding with us for ever, to see us through at the heavenly level of what Christ is setting on from heaven.

DEB Had you any impression as to why verse 18 comes in in this context, why when the Lord is speaking about the Comforter being with them for ever He speaks about Himself “coming to you”.

RT Well, He says, “I will not leave you orphans”. I suppose they thought that was what was going to happen. He says, “I am coming to you”. Would the setting of the verses imply that He is coming to them in the Comforter, in the Spirit?

DEB I just wondered whether there was something there that could be opened up.

RT Well, they had known what it was for the Lord to meet their needs; think of them in the boat, toiling in the agitated sea and the wind contrary. It says, “he rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm”, Matt 8: 26. They had known that. I think the Lord was suggesting that the Spirit coming would bring that same calm restfulness of spirit. “I am coming to you”: in this Person being here the Lord’s grace and the wealth of what Christ is in glory is available to be the strength and support and encouragement of the saints.

JM Is one side of the Lord's coming in at the Supper that He actually comes in in confirmation of the saints in the testimony? He comes in in relation to the Spirit's operations among the saints, but does it not need the Spirit on our side to discern His coming in?

RT Say something about that for us.

JM I do not know that I can say very much but it shows, does it not, how dependent we are on the Spirit, even as to our recognition and our understanding of the movements of the Lord?

RT Yes. It is, I think, a bit like the women in the hill country, and also like when David comes in in Samuel: "Arise, anoint him; for this is he", 1 Sam 16: 12. There is something in you that you cannot define too exactly, but it rises up: "this is he". It is the Spirit working in the believer, and for the moment you are lifted beyond the small meeting, the sorrows of the testimony, all these things; you are lifted into a scene where Christ is held in your affections in all His supremacy.

ECB In this section we get not only Jesus Himself saying He will come, but Himself and the Father, "we will come", and the Spirit come. Does it fill out 'God with us'?

RT Yes, and it is not just coming; in verse 23 it says, "we will come to him and make our abode with him". There is something very precious about that, is there not? As I said, I think these verses are alluding to the breakdown, because it speaks about coming to one individual, but what comes to the individual is intensely precious—"make our abode with him". What do you say about that?

ECB Well, the disciples in the beginning of the gospel had asked Him where He abode and He said, "Come and see", and now He is pointing out that He and the Father will have their abode, their abiding place. They too will be with us for ever, will they not? One impression you get from this section, which seems to run with your thought, is the great readiness of divine Persons to come. "I will beg the Father, and he will give you", as if the whole divine system is engaged with the saints.

RT Well, the Lord loves us here in these conditions. Chapter 17 gives you an insight into His feelings about the saints continuing through the dispensation, and here the Spirit is answering that prayer, you might say—He is making good all that the Lord was requesting. He says, “My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him”; that is to be enjoyed today amidst all these things that may press in upon us.

CGH At the occasion of the Supper, when the Lord is discerned as having come in, we pass from the sphere of responsibility into the sphere of privilege, and there is opened up to us, as He leads, the whole aspect of the divine mind in purpose.

RT Yes, well, we are very thankful for the experiences of privilege, but the Lord is speaking here too about the course of the testimony. In the circumstances in which we are we are to know a divine Person abiding with us, and we are to know not only our abiding in Him—that comes in more at the Supper—but here it is divine Persons in the circumstances in which we are—“make our abode with him”. It brings out what a blessing there is to the lovers of Christ.

CGH Does that enable us to go through the circumstances in quietness and peacefulness of mind, knowing that all is in His hand?

RT The hymn which we sang (No.408) brought that home to me afresh, the rest that is to be tasted in the conscious sense of such a Person here to see us through. I think the encouragement of the Lord’s words about the Spirit would be to strengthen us in the confidence that there is such a Person available to us. He says, “he ... will bring to your remembrance all the things which I have said to you”. Think of the immensity of that, that there is a Person who is able to bring these things to us, at the moment we need them to strengthen the saints.

EP That is calculated to stir a response to Him in our hearts, is it not? I was thinking that, for example, there is the spirit of this in Psalm 103. The psalmist says “Bless Jehovah, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy

name”, v 1. Do you think that it is right to accord that to the Holy Spirit?

RT Yes; I think it is something that we should perhaps think about. There is room for more depth in our response to the Spirit of God. We sometimes speak in a way that is hardly suited to the greatness of the Spirit of God. His service is so precious, coming down to the weakness of the conditions in which we are, but what a mission He has in view, in the type to conduct Rebecca to Isaac. He comes down to our needs, but His great mission was to take Rebecca in all her freshness to be a comfort to Isaac, that is the assembly to Christ.

BWW It would go along with that that His service has spread over nearly two thousand years, and the number of individuals in whom He has been and in whom He has operated must be vast.

RT Yes, and what pressure, what opposition there has been! Yet the grace of the Spirit is seen in the lowliness that has marked His service, but this is not to becloud the greatness and glory of His Person.

ECB It is quite anomalous if response to the Spirit becomes formalised, because He is the great source of liberty.

RT Yes: I do not say these things critically, but there is room for expansion. Just think of who He is, and He was active from the creation. One particular feature of the Spirit of God is His feelings. The great point of His service now, amidst all the confusion, is that there has been formed a bride that is suited to the heavenly Man.

EFW Does this depend on how much we know Him? The Lord speaks of the world not seeing Him; we cannot see Him, so there is another way in which we know Him.

RT That is an interesting verse—“because it does not see him nor know him”; then He says, “but ye know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you”. What do you say about that?

EFW I would think experience is more than anything that we can say, to assure us of the Spirit dwelling in us. You

have spoken about His comfort, His support. There are so many ways in which He freshly assures us of His dwelling in us. You would encourage us that we might know Him more in that way.

RT Yes; His service is not only to bring relief into the circumstances but to endear Himself and the glory of His person to our affections.

CCI Rebecca says, “Who is the man?” Does that involve the rapture? The glory of Christ in manhood is a peculiar matter that has been unfolded at the end of the Spirit’s dispensation.

RT It is on the eve of union, is it not? “Who is the man that is walking in the fields to meet us?”, Gen 24: 63. Typically, the Lord was on the move, and the Spirit was on the same path, you may say. They were going together, eye meeting eye. “Who is the man that is walking in the fields to meet us?” It was very soon that she was in his embrace, was it not?

CCI So do you think we are particularly dependent on the Spirit to understand the humanity of Christ? Our natural minds are, we might say, unable in any way to appropriate that wonderful matter, the humanity of Christ in a new condition.

RT Oh yes, that is chapter 15; He says, “whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father”. In chapter 14 the Lord is speaking about His going away, and He is speaking about His going into heaven. In chapter 15 He says, “when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father”, speaking there of Himself sending Him from the Father, coming from that scene of the Father and the Son, and bringing the wealth of that to be within our reach. He says, “he shall bear witness concerning me”, and He says, “ye too bear witness”.

ECB I suppose the witness there is to Jesus glorified.

RT Yes, I think so. It is bringing into human hearts what exists in heaven, Christ received there,

Received in glory bright up there (Hymn 350)

How do we know the place that Christ has in heaven? We know it because the Spirit has come from that scene and taught us about these things.

ECB It is the only means by which we can know that Christ is alive and is glorified; not only that He is alive, but He is glorified. A lot of these scriptures seem to connect very much with Paul's impressions in Corinth: the Father and the Son abiding, "ye are the temple of God" (1 Cor 3: 16), and what you are referring to in chapter 15 seems to connect very much with 2 Corinthians 4: 6, the radiancy is in the heart.

RT Yes, I think that Paul, while not one of the twelve, is a vessel in whom the Spirit's service is very distinctively set forth. Through him, the Spirit brings out the things of Christ in glory, all that was in heaven and all that was to be worked out here in the assembly as a vessel that was suited to the heavenly One. I thought that chapter 16 brought us on to Paul: "he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself". Such a Person is here, and yet it says He will not speak from Himself, "but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming". The wealth of heaven is at His disposal; that is what He is bringing out.

ECB Announcing what is coming is not exactly what is spoken of as prophecy, is it? It involves the church, and the whole of the present dispensation, because that was coming.

RT Yes; it involves the rapture. Those verses about the rapture: "the Lord himself ... shall descend" (1 Thess 4: 16); how do we know that? Because the Spirit is announcing to us what is coming. We have comfort in these words that the Lord Himself will come for the saints. Too, He will come in the appearing. How do we know all these things? We know them as the result, not of ministry, not as scriptures; we know them as the result of the Spirit's leading, guiding and announcing to us what is coming.

AJEW It is very affecting that the verse of which you are speaking flows from the Lord's word, "I have yet many things to say to you"—many things—"but ye cannot bear them now". This carries, does it not, the definite inference that the Lord

will see that these things are conveyed to the saints? He would not allow them to be hindered from reaching the saints, but in the day of the Spirit it need no longer be said, “ye cannot bear them now”, because the Spirit is known by those to whom the precious truth is being conveyed, known by them in support and in constant application of what the Lord is conveying.

RT That is very comforting. The result of Christ in glory is that the counsel and purpose of God are opened out to us by the Holy Spirit. As the Lord says here, “It is profitable for you that I go away”. What a profit we have, that there is a Man in heaven, a great Priest there, representing us before the Father, and another divine Person come from that scene of glory, bringing the wealth of heaven and announcing it to us, and shedding it abroad in our hearts.

JM The Spirit of truth guiding us into all the truth is more than the opening up of it; does it involve His work in formation, an answer to the counsels and purpose of God?

RT Yes, and I think this verse would affect our attitude in the meetings. As I said earlier about coming to a meeting or a reading, “He shall guide you into all the truth”. The way to get the advantage of the Guide is to keep near Him. A guide usually has a lot of people round about him and if you are on the outside of the circle you do not hear too well. Well, you have to get near Him, He will guide you. You have to be near the Guide to follow and to apprehend the greatness of what He is calling attention to.

SDKR You have in mind making room for Him, for example in a reading. Would you say a little more about that.

RT Well, that was the exercise in Genesis 24, was it not? “Is there room ...?”, v 23. It came out that there was the acknowledgment, but there was hardly the room: let her stay ten days was not giving him room, was it? But the formation was in Rebecca; assembly affections make room for Him. I think it is a matter of faith. We tend to rely on memory, rely on experience, but that will not guide us into anything that we do not know. The Spirit is leading us into things that we

do not know, and could never know. It is only the Spirit of God that could lead us into them.

JW It says of the Spirit, “whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak”. Do you think we practically make room for the Spirit through hearing, hearing Him? I was thinking of the overcomer, “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says” (Rev 2: 7, etc.), and wondered if that would practically make room for the Spirit in our comings-together, if we are exercised to hear the Spirit speak.

RT Well, we come together to listen, do we not? Somebody has to speak, but even the speaker is to listen. So that you feel your way in a reading. Something you have not thought about before is usually the best part of the meeting. A fresh impression on a well-known scripture, or it could be a well-known doctrine, comes from the Spirit, and we need to hear for that. Then the setting here is “whatsoever he shall hear”. Think of the Spirit here listening to what is taking place in glory, listening to the Father, listening to the Son, and bringing that to be shed abroad in our hearts.

EP It is the Spirit that quickens, is it not? And that is a touch that we would look for, as we gather, in a reading. The Spirit quickens, something comes in that is really living, and you say, I have never seen that before.

RT I think that is verse 14: “He shall glorify me”. I think that is the great end, the great purpose of the Spirit’s service here. We think so much about what He does for us but the great end is what He is doing for Christ, what He is doing for the Father, bringing persons into sonship, securing a bride for Christ; “He shall glorify me”. We need to have that in the faith of our minds, that the Spirit will meet our weaknesses, He will meet present situations, but not just meet them. Are we exercised enough to get the gain and the end—“He shall glorify me”?

PM Does the Spirit glorifying Christ involve what He is forming in the saints that is in the features of that blessed Man? Must that not be consequent, or dependent, on our being guided into all the truth?

RT Christ will be glorified in a vessel which the Spirit has adorned and has had to do with us in the earlier chapters in this gospel, in new birth, and so on, all leading to assembly formation. Think of Isaac's admiration as he saw Rebecca, as he took her into that tent; it says he was comforted. What an answer to the Spirit's grace, that there is someone brought to be so near to Christ to be His bride.

ECB The Spirit is competent for the whole range of the glories of Christ, is He not? It struck me at the Supper recently that we sometimes feel limited in our response even to Christ, but the Spirit is competent for His glories from creation until finality.

RT I think we need to feel incompetent. It is not what we know, because we may say a very blessed truth and it just does not have a ring about it, but the Spirit gives a ring to things that are said. I think that is "He shall glorify me". Something rises in our affections that will only be satisfied with the heavenly Man.

DEB Being guided into all the truth: does that mean that at any time we understand all the truth?

RT No, we would cease to need a guide if that was so, would we not? All the truth is available in the Spirit, but I do not think we yet know it all.

DEB Well, I do not, anyway, but there is a certain link on with 1 Corinthians 2 as to "things ... which have not come into man's heart". That is always before us, is it not?

RT Yes, there is a divine Person able; "He shall guide you into all the truth", not just a section of truth. Guiding us into all the truth helps us to hold it in balance, to be heavenly persons in the midst of all that would becloud the glory of the heavenly Man.

HGH Could there be a dispensational part in the path of guiding you into all the truth?

RT Well, what do you mean by that?

HGH Before the dispensation is over it will all be out.

RT Yes, so that encourages us, that the Spirit is active all the time. He has not ceased; great personages have gone, but He is continuing His service to provide these adorning touches to the bride suited to the heavenly Man.

HGH So we want to be exercised as to what the Spirit has to say to us in our day.

RT Yes, and in relation to all the truth, not just to be specialists on Romans or Colossians or Ephesians, but “guide you into all the truth”. He has Christ the heavenly Man before Him, and He is bringing about, through His guidance and through His teaching, formation in features suitable to the heavenly One.

JM It bears very much on the place that the Spirit has taken in the economy. The truth as we speak of it is all out, but His service is particularly to bring the saints into it in a subjective way, do you think?

RT Yes, the truth is all out in the sense of Christ having gone in and the Spirit come, but it does not mean that I know it all, nor does it mean that the brethren know it all, but it means that there is a divine Person who has it all before Him, and He is anxious, and He is leading, and He is serving, that we may come into the joy and blessedness of it.

JM The close of the dispensation will show that there has been a full result from His service and a full answer to all that has come out from God, will it not?

RT What will be translated will be the fruit of the Spirit’s service, and Christ glorified in that, God glorified in it, the triumph of divine grace over evil and all that has come in, that there will be raptured a vessel that is suited to the heavenly One.

AJEW Is it interesting to think of the way that the type in Genesis 24 brings out the Spirit’s feelings in respect of what He (if I could use the word) discovers in the assembly, what is there which He can take on and bring into relation to Christ. The servant worships as He contemplates what is brought into view in Rebecca.

RT The divine counsel is unfolding before his eyes, you may say, and you see it here too, that “All things that the Father has are mine”. The Spirit, in type in Genesis, came with all the wealth of Abraham; bringing out these silver and gold articles, the clothing for Rebecca. He is bringing them out; I think that is all part of the guiding, bringing out these things that He brought from glory, and He is adorning the assembly with them. Are we prepared to put them on, dear brethren? When Rebecca accepted that heavenly clothing she had to follow the Spirit. What good would that adornment have been in the wilderness, or in Laban’s household? As accepting these things that the Spirit brings she had to go with Him, because they were all things that were only suited to Isaac.

PM Does the Spirit have them all before Him “as the truth is in Jesus”, Eph 4: 21? Is it in the most attractive sphere, and would He not in His service occupy us not only with the detail of the truth but with the character of it as it is in Jesus?

RT That is very much emphasised in what it says here: “whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak”. That hearing is from heaven, is it not? Then He says, “he shall receive of mine”. Think of the glory that Christ has been given! What honours the Father has conferred on Him, the heavenly One! He says, “he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”. What a link we have with the glorified Man in the Spirit of God, and He is bringing these things out that they may be substantially in the saints and be our present portion.

SJH In Genesis 24 it speaks in type of the Spirit having men; they were with Him, that is, they understood what He was about, as it were. That is where we want to be, is it not?

RT Yes. It may apply to the gifts in 1 Corinthians, the Spirit dividing to each in particular” (chap 12: 11), the Spirit giving all these gifts and all these things set for the helping forward of the formation that is suited to Christ. So there is a great system of help. The Spirit has vessels, and as you say, we want to be one of them, we want to be listeners, we want to be those who are receptive to what He is announcing, to what He is bringing of the heavenly Man.

SJH I think that somebody has said that, when we walk in the Spirit, Christ is paramount.

RT Well, there is no true walk for the believer unless Christ is before the soul.

Be Thou the object bright and fair
To fill and satisfy the heart. (Hymn 328)

How much we grieve the Spirit through being occupied with others and other things, but He is longing to produce this kind of affection that will not be satisfied without Christ. “He shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you”.

In Corinth it is all worked out in the local company. It says, “Do ye not know that ye are the temple ...?”. We should make room for that. “Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” The quotation is from Isaiah 64: 4—which says “Never have men heard”—it was not possible for them to hear—“nor perceived”—it was not possible. That is what Paul is saying at Corinth. It is not possible for the natural man, the natural mind, ever to entertain what is spiritual, but he says, “God has revealed (them) to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God”, I think, brethren, there is a lot to be opened out yet as to the depths of God. What do we know about the Lord’s burial? What do we know about Christ in death? The Spirit gives us some inklings about that. It says that He was loosed from the pains of death (see Acts 2: 24): what do we know about it? I think that is all part of the Spirit searching all things, the depths of God. May we not be complacent in feeling how much we know, but may there be produced in us a sense of dependence that we may know more the leadership of such a glorious divine Person who has come to be with us.

LONDON

19th March 1988

List of initials:-

W.J.R.Brodie, Ealing; D.A.Burr, London; D.E.Burr, Redbridge; E.C.Burr, London; E.Croot, Dorking; C.G.Hitchcock, Ealing; S.J.Hewison, Dorking; H.G.Holt, Chicago; D.J.Hutson, London; H.A.Hutson, London; C.C.Ikin, Southend; P.Martin, Colchester; J.Mitchell, Bexley; E.Oliver, London; E.Palmer, London; D.E.Remmington, St.Albans; S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon; R.Taylor, Barnet; B.W.Ward, London; A.J.E.Welch, Sunbury; E.F.Woodford, Dorking; V.E.Wraighte, Gillingham; J.Wright, Redbridge



“THE MAN CHRIST JESUS”

1 Timothy 2: 5,6 to “for all”

John 1: 14, 16-18

1 Peter 2: 21-25

Philippians 2: 5-11

Revelation 22: 16,17 (1st sentence)

It will be obvious that these scriptures all speak of Christ, and that is what ministry is, to endear Christ to the affections of the saints—the man Christ Jesus. That hardly needed to be said in the verse in Timothy; “God is one, and the mediator of God and men one”: it could have stopped there, but it continues, “the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all”. What a man He is! The scriptures bring out not only what He was, but what a man He is, the man Christ Jesus, great enough to be the mediator of God and men. Oh, what God has thought about Him! Moses was a type, but (I say it carefully) a very poor type. There could not really be a type of the Mediator, because Moses had sin attaching to him, but the man Christ Jesus was spotless, holy, harmless, a blessed Man, the One who could satisfy God about the sins of the universe. How qualified He is to be presented as the mediator of God and men! God in his holiness and righteousness could never pass by sin, yet loved the sinner; how was it all going to be met? In the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all. God’s righteousness was fully met, the holiness that God’s throne demanded fully satisfied in that blessed Man. Oh, how God loves to bring Him on to view! God is satisfied with Jesus. He fills the vision for time, for eternity. It speaks about God’s righteousness “in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before”, Rom 3: 25. Oh, what a volume of them! They are all met righteously in the man Christ Jesus, the sins that had taken place before, the volume of them from Adam right down. It speaks too of the sins of the present time, God perfectly righteous in passing them by because of the delight that He has found in the man Christ Jesus. The Mediator would never have been adequate if He had not satisfied God about everything. Far less might have done for us, but God has found His infinite satisfaction, yea His delight, in Christ,

the man Christ Jesus. He gave Himself a ransom for all. Does not that endear Him to your affections? You can speak to any Christian or anyone about Christ. We sometimes too quickly bring in other things, but the link we have with every saint of God is the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all. Oh, how full that ransom price which has been paid! The very day we are living in, the fact that the dispensation is continuing, is because there is a Mediator One able to uphold the rights, the holiness of God's throne, and yet able to put His hand upon you and me in all our need—the man Christ Jesus.

I have read of how Peter and John and Paul speak about Him. There is more in these verses than we can ever go over, and I trust the very reading of them, putting them together, may have endeared that glorious Man to our affections. John brings out His deity, the man Christ Jesus a divine Person, He says, “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”. It was His own action. What was there to call it forth? A history of shame. Yet think of that point in time when a divine Person, the Creator of the universe, (it says without Him there was nothing made that was made (see John 1: 3)) the Creator of all became flesh. Why? Why not an angel? Why should He come into such a condition? Just that He might be near us. He became flesh. He came within our reach. An angel would not be within our reach, but “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”. What grace! The man Christ Jesus: think of Him as John and the other writers of the gospels speak about Him. It says He took His place in the likeness of men, but how different! Day by day heaven saw in Him every divine thought and desire for man perfectly fulfilled. Oh, what a fragrance for God in the man Christ Jesus! What an odour went up to heaven in those days! It says, “we have contemplated his glory”: what a glory it was, a glory that attracted persons to Him! Somebody saw Him as He walked. “The Word became flesh”. He walked in those streets of Nazareth, took His place among men in perfect submission to what was suited to that condition. “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”. He never took Himself out of those circumstances into which He came, however great the needs. He was wearied with the way He had come;

He hungered. What He entered into in that condition is the subject of holy contemplation. Wearied with the way He had come, He sat on the well. At the call of a poor blind man He stood still. I find that a very affecting verse, a blind man calling out as He was passing by; it says, "Jesus stood still", Luke 18: 40. Oh, what work He had to do! How much there was to be accomplished, but at the call of a poor blind man the Son of God, the Creator, stood still, ready to open his eyes. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us". Oh, what grace was there! It says, "full of grace and truth". He brought it all with Him. It was not here before, but as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, He brought in every divine grace. In Him truth was perfectly expressed, "full of grace and truth". "The law was given by Moses": what did that do? It left men guilty, perishing. That is what the law did, it left them more guilty. "The law was given by Moses"; that had gone on for all these generations. Into that very area of things "the word became flesh", and He brought in with Him all that was needed—"full of grace and truth". It says, "of his fulness" (what fulness there was!) "we all have received, and grace upon grace". Grace upon grace: that will never run out, never. Page after page in the gospel: grace upon grace. From man's side hatred upon hatred; in Christ, grace upon grace.

These writers, John and Peter, are writing about a Man they knew here, but they are writing about Him as now in His place in glory, the Spirit giving them insight into who He was. They hardly apprehended it when He was here, but as they look back they say that was grace upon grace. Oh, what a flood of it! It has been likened to the waves of the ocean; they roll in one after another, the one breaks and spreads itself, another comes and fills it up—grace upon grace. It has never run out because of who He is—the Word. The law and the prophets all exhausted themselves from one point of view, but in the man Christ Jesus the whole matter is filled out. It is never exhausted—grace upon grace. It did not set aside the truth, but it was able to hold these things in perfect balance and, since the Word became flesh, grace is in the lead. You could not put truth before grace. If you did, we would all have stood condemned, lost; but grace is in the lead. You go to chapter 8, with that woman: grace and truth perfectly upheld

in the man Christ Jesus, the woman told to go and sin no more. Grace and truth prevails through the dispensation. You say, I thought it was righteousness. No; righteousness is the foundation, but grace is the operating principle. The law did not accomplish these things, but it says that grace reigns through righteousness (see Rom 5: 31). Righteousness is the foundation that has been laid, the righteousness of Christ; the righteousness of the man Christ Jesus has made way for a reign of grace that is going on through the whole dispensation.

Well, these things are set out from John's point of view. He is bringing out the glory, the majesty, the deity of the Person. Peter is speaking of Him as a holy sufferer. Peter is speaking of sufferings that even we in some measure are called to have part in. He says about Him that He has left us a model. Who is your model, may I ask? When we are younger we have heroes. Maybe as we get older we have some too, but who is your model? It says He has left us a model. You need to look at it; may I say you need to look at it oftener. We are so apt to get accustomed to things that are short of the divine ideal. "The mediator of God and men one". One and no other, the man Christ Jesus. He has left us a model. Well, let us look at Him. Peter knew Him, perhaps, better than any, and he was writing here as looking back by the Spirit, and the Spirit illuminating certain things before Peter's vision. You could go through the gospels—a very interesting contemplation—and identify these things about which Peter speaks. "Neither was guile found in his mouth": Oh, how often He was upbraided, how often He was maligned. "Neither was guile found in his mouth"; He was full of grace and truth. What cutting words He could have said. "When reviled, reviled not again". Had He not a reason? Could He not have just corrected them? Could He not have just presented His case? I think of the Saviour in Pilate's judgment hall when I read this. It says, "he opened not his mouth", Isa 53: 7. Oh, what He could have said! Where were the ten lepers that were cleansed? Where was the widow who had her son raised? Where were the five thousand indeed that were fed? Where were they when He, the holy sufferer, was maligned in Pilate's presence? Did He call any of them for witnesses? No, "he

opened not his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter”, the man Christ Jesus. Oh, how different! We ought to open our hearts more often, beloved brethren, to the intrinsic uniqueness of that holy Man. It says something else—He “gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously”. I would commend that to you. He did not answer Pilate, He “gave himself over”.

Have you ever been upbraided? Have you ever thought, Well, what they did to me was not quite right? Have you thought that? He felt that more than any creature could ever feel it. What He felt in the scorn and the shame that was heaped upon Him! By the Jews? Yea, by the whole world. Luke, writing about that scene, says that the whole world was there, see Acts 4: 27. There was Herod, there was Pontius Pilate, there were the Jews, the nations, all there, heaping ignominy and shame upon Christ. It says He “gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously”. Oh, what a model! What a model when you feel that you have been wronged. There is Someone who judges righteously. That was Christ, all through His path the righteous One. His resource, His retreat, was in the Father. You wonder where His resource was. It says in Luke “by night ... he remained abroad on the mountain called the mount of Olives”, chap 21: 37. John says they went to their own home, “But Jesus went to the mount of Olives” (chap 8: 1)—the man Christ Jesus, the holy sufferer, committing Himself into the hands of Him who judges righteously. Beloved, these verses are infinite, because of the Person about whom we are speaking. I only commend that one touch to you—He gave Himself over. He was at no disadvantage for that. It meant the cross. Yes. It meant the crown of thorns; it meant His being crucified between two robbers. But what is the answer? God has highly exalted Him. That is the effect of giving Himself over into the hands of Him who judges righteously. We will be at no disadvantage. Oh, what grace it needs, but may we be assured of the outcome as we look at the model. You will never get this in other books. No books of man in their education will tell you to proceed on this way, but here is the model, the man Christ Jesus.

In Philippians Paul speaks about Him as a bondman. Paul here is seeking to further unity among the saints. We speak a lot about it, and generally we mean other persons coming round to our point of view. That is what we think would be unity. He says here, “that ye may think the same thing”, and then he presents the Bondman. He says, “let this mind”, not your mind, my mind, or so-and-so’s mind, but “let this mind”, the mind that was in the man Christ Jesus. What a mind it was, what an attitude! I only say, Is it ours? Do we really want unity? Or do we want, as I said, people thinking the same as me? Paul says, “let this mind be in you ... subsisting in the form of God”, all that true and unique about Him, but it says He “emptied himself, taking a bondman’s form”. That is the way to unity, beloved, take a bondman’s form, go down. Indeed, I think you will find that, even in practical matters, a way out of a tight situation is to go down. There is usually room to get out at the bottom because everybody else is at the top trying to get out. Go down. He took a bondman’s form, “taking his place in the likeness of men”. I remember someone asking about a way out in a crisis. A beloved servant said, Well, you can always die. And that is the solution, you can always die. That is what the Bondman in principle did, He laid aside what belonged to Him, He “emptied himself, taking a bondman’s form”. The way out for Him was that He went to the cross. Disunity comes through each striving to project themselves and their own point of view, and the man Christ Jesus has gone this way, taking a bondman’s form. “Let this mind be in you”. He emptied Himself. Again you get the idea of giving Himself over into the hands of Him who judges righteously. His God has highly exalted Him, the Bondman. May we be exercised to take on His features.

In Revelation He is speaking about Himself. It is not now a Paul or a Peter or a John speaking about Him; He is calling attention to Himself—may I say, the only Person who has a right to speak about Himself, “I Jesus”. Very beautiful that He reverts to that name! Would it not have an echoing chord in every redeemed soul? “I Jesus”. What a book it has been, a book largely speaking of agencies being used—angelic and others—but here, ere the book closes, He speaks Himself

about Himself to appeal to the heart of His lovers—"I Jesus". Then He says, "I am the root and offspring of David". What a man He is! The scriptures we have read are very full about Him, but they could never exhaust who He is, the root of David, the beloved of the Old Testament, the man who was most attractive as he came in. It says, "he was ruddy, and besides of a lovely countenance", 1 Sam 16: 12. Everybody loved David. They were drawn to him in their need. He was always there, a great drawing centre. They went to him, "and he became a captain over them", 1 Sam 22: 2. Now here is the Root and Offspring of David. It refers to His deity, His majesty, and yet He is saying, "I Jesus". Beloved, the One who became flesh, the One who has come within our range, is a divine Person, the man Christ Jesus. There is nobody like Him. He is the Root; He was there before time began. He knew all about the happenings in this book. Then He says He is the offspring of David, come of that beautiful line. All that was attractive was set out in David. Here is his Root, here is his Offspring. But then He says something finer than that; He says, "the bright and morning star". Oh, what a man He is! "The bright and morning star" is shining amidst the darkness, shining there a great beacon, a token that the day is very soon to come. Nobody could put the morning star out, could they? "The root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star". Have you ever looked to Him like that? What does it mean, you say. It means that the day is very soon coming. It means that the day will soon burst upon our vision, and on those who are looking. And seeing that Morning Star. It says, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come". What a word! Persons looking, and seeing Him, seeing Someone arising there in His majesty, amidst all the darkness, amidst all the breakdown, amidst all the depression, see Someone shining there in His own brilliance. It says, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come". Someone has said about that that a divine Person and a creature vessel use the same language at the same time. How precious! Think of the Spirit looking at that Morning Star too, strengthening the affections of the saints, and there is only one cry—Come, come Lord to reign. Oh, the man Christ Jesus, no longer in humiliation, but He will come out to reign, He will come out to put everything in its place, He will come out to be

displayed. It says He will be “wondered at in all that have believed”, 2 Thess 1: 10. Oh, all that is conveyed now in the Morning Star. It speaks about the morning star elsewhere but only here it says the bright and morning star. The length of the dispensation all that has come in, has not obscured the brightness and the shining of the man Christ Jesus. May the Spirit of God keep Him before our affections, for His Name’s sake.

LONDON

19th March 1988



THE SPIRIT IN THE HOUSE

Revelation 1: 9-12

Genesis 24: 53

Psalms 45: 13,14

Ephesians 2: 18, 19; 3: 14-19

RT I was thinking of this expression that John uses, “I became in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”. We were speaking yesterday of the Spirit bringing of the things of Christ to us. I just felt that this morning there may be profit in thinking of the Spirit in the house—if I could use that expression—His activities in the house. If you look at the temple, there was a good deal of olive-wood and cypress. I think that these woods would have some reference to the Spirit, particularly in the doors and the porches, suggesting as you come into this divine area that the Spirit is known in His fulness. And as we apprehend who He is we would be helped in the service in the house where there is nothing to disturb. I was thinking of Rebecca; the Spirit there would help us in promoting affections for Christ, and in relation to the Father. He would help us in intelligence as to what is suited to sonship and the Father’s praise. These thoughts are very fragmentary and the scriptures maybe not too clear, but I believe the Lord and the Spirit would help us, as we go on, to get some impression as to what John means, “I became in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”—two things which seem to be connected. Maybe in our minds at times we have thought of this as something that was for John, and I have no doubt there is a distinctiveness about the matter as applying to him and in what was being opened up. It is very interesting if you look at the footnote; it will lead you to Simeon in Luke—“he came in the Spirit into the temple”, chap 2: 27. So it comes very near to us, perhaps nearer than we have thought about, the ability just to be, shall I say, transported (however short it may be) into a realm that is spiritual. I believe there is a need for it among us. The surroundings that we are in, as we see here, would be no drawback. We think of many of our brethren in very small companies, and many pressures, but they have no hindrance to becoming in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and maybe at any

time when we have entrance and access into the divine presence.

EP Would you say just a little more as to the matter of the house. I notice that in Genesis 24 it says, "I have prepared the house", v 31.

RT We may be more at home with the Spirit's activities in the wilderness, that is all I would distinguish. He comes down to our needs, He comes down to help us in these things, but His activities in the house are somewhat different. Our needs have been met and the servant is employing this clothing in relation to Rebecca. There are certain finer touches in the house. There is nothing to disturb becoming in the Spirit on the Lord's day. The disturbing elements are without, you may say, and the Spirit has great liberty in helping us in assembly affection for Christ and sonship's intelligence in relation to the Father.

EP In Genesis 24 it says, "he ungirded the camels", v 32. That would, so to speak, set the desert side on one side for the moment. Is that what you have in mind?

RT Yes. He has endeared Himself to us in those wilderness surroundings, He has made Himself indispensable to us, but then He has another service, and that is to help us in responsiveness and to fill the house. The fragrance of the Spirit's activities enters into the eternal praise of God.

DJH Is it necessary for us to be rightly with Him in the wilderness in order to be able to enter into this? I was thinking of verse 9 coming first as to John being there "in Jesus ... for the word of God", and so on.

RT Yes. I think that what we were speaking of yesterday would settle that side of things: there is a divine Person come here who is more than able for the wilderness and the circumstances that we may be found in. John would seem to be restful; he has confidence in divine love. He just says, "I became in the Spirit". It seemed to be a very easy transfer. These things may help us in all our assemblings. What burdens we carry, but the Spirit is able to transport us and help us into an area of things where sin has never come.

ECB The olive-wood does not belong to the wilderness; it belongs to the setting where there is finality, the ark at rest, the kingdom immensely rich, sacrifices immensely full, no evil or adversary. Does that fit with your thought?

RT Yes, we come into something that has been divinely prepared. The Spirit took on a different character as they came into the land. They came into a place where they did not need to dig, there were hills full of copper and iron, there were wells that were springing forth, there were houses that they did not build—Deuteronomy is a very attractive book to me—“cities which thou buildedst not”, chap 6: 10. How different from the wilderness with its toil and exercises; in the land they came into things that they had no hand in, and they entered in to enjoy them. I think becoming in the Spirit on the Lord’s day would be something like that. We come into a realm where we prove the Spirit’s grace to help us to be at home and function in liberty in a scene that is all divine.

ECB So in Deuteronomy 8: 7 he says that God has brought you into a good land, and immediately goes on to speak about the water-brooks and the springs.

RT A beautiful chapter that! It is wonderful to think of Moses speaking like that. He was never going to be living in it, but how he looked forward to the beauty of that land. He knew he would not dwell there but he made it attractive to the people so that they would want to go in. Do you think that becoming in the Spirit on the Lord’s day is something open to us, something that we should have our thoughts expanded about?

ECB I think it is something that is not a private experience to John, but it all connects with what we speak of as the out-of-the-world condition, and I think it is the only sphere where we touch real impressions of the assembly.

RT So we need to think like this, particularly on the Lord’s day. As was said, the wilderness matters have been settled; we do not go on in disturbances and matters that the Spirit is able to settle, in view of being easily transported. Ezekiel had a very trying life. He speaks about being lifted up by one of his locks (see chap 8: 3). He comes into an area of things

like John who “became in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”. What happenings there are through the book! What the Lord and the Spirit would lead us into as we set ourselves and seek to prove His grace in service!

EP Do you see a connection in chapter 4 where John says, “I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven”, then the word saying “Come up here” (v 1), and then verse 2: “Immediately I became in the Spirit”?

RT Yes, I think that is a helpful reference. He saw a door. Very fine that, is it not? You see a door opened, “a door opened in heaven”. It is beckoning us in, the Spirit is leading us into heaven and all that is current and active there. So that our service in the house is spiritual. It is not a question of our memories or what we are as after nature, but the service in the house is entirely spiritual, and it will be so in the day to come. Everything will be carried out in what is spiritual. It tests us, but it should strengthen us in the Spirit’s grace so that we know something of it now.

RWF It is difficult to think that there was any lack with John on the other six days of the week. Do you think that the Spirit provides a special access of power, and that in the setting of the house? There is a reserve of power with the Spirit to help us in spiritual things.

RT I think it means that in the six days, or any day, we have easy relationships with the Spirit; and He helps us as to these exercises; then it becomes an easy matter: “I became in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”. It is a door opened, drawing us into things in which we had no hand, and yet we are prepared and strengthened in view of functioning there in spiritual liberty.

GAP Does it relate to our feelings and affections, and our souls, in that regard, rather more than the mind?

RT Yes, I think so. It speaks of the inner man in Ephesians 3: 16. We all know what our bodies are like, and what weakness there is, and what limitations John was in here, but he became in Spirit; it is the inner man responsive to the Spirit’s leading to help us into this heavenly realm.

JAB There is communication, is there not, as there was also with Simeon: “it was ... communicated to him by the Holy Spirit”, Luke 2: 26? There is the voice here too.

RT Yes. Immediately John is ready for it. He is not worrying about what is going to happen tomorrow, and other things that may come up. These things may be allowed to intrude. I think we all know our weakness—at least, I feel it very severely at times—but the Spirit would help us to be sustained and have entrance into the realm that is spiritual. So John is interested: “I heard behind me a great voice”, and he “turned back to see the voice which spoke with me”. He is attracted into these things. We are helped in our souls, as well as in our minds, to follow the Spirit’s activities in the house, in view of being enlarged, and in view of the Father and Christ and the Spirit Himself having Their full portion.

ECB As to the other six days to which reference was made, you might wonder how one could get through the rest of this book without this experience. John is even able to say, “I saw a beast rising out of the sea” (chap 13: 1) and he is undisturbed.

RT Well, there is something he saw before that which I think gives a key to the whole book: he saw “a Lamb standing, as slain”, chap 5: 6. I think the key to the book is chapter 5. There was Someone worthy. “Who is worthy?”; it says, “no one was able” (v 3), but there was a Lamb, having all that was needed to deal with everything that was coming in in the book. The Spirit gave John entrance into that. So there was experience, experience on the first day of the week. The six days lead up to the first day, but also the first day gives character to the six days, that we are not only going in but we are coming out in the wealth and experience of our heavenly part.

ECB Just referring to Solomon’s temple, you come out from “the settled place of thy dwelling”, 2 Chron 6: 30, etc.

RT You come out to bless, you come out to be an overcomer, you come out in triumph. So the clothing and the things that the servant brought to Rebecca were all in view of her being responsive to Isaac. The verse in the Psalm—the

king's daughter all glorious within, it is within the apartments; the Spirit supplies what is suited, the silver and gold and clothing. It was all for Isaac's eye. It was in view of her being at home in the heavenly realm.

ECB Do you have in mind that these are not exactly travelling clothes; they are clothes for Isaac's presence?

RT That is right; that is what they are for; they would have been out of keeping anywhere else. The servant brought them forth. Rebecca had never seen anything like them before and she is drawn to the heavenly one, and the servant is showing her what is suited to being within the royal apartments. "Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart" (1 Cor 2: 9) we are brought into, and yet we are there perfectly at rest and at home to function for the divine pleasure.

EP We had a word this morning on John 16 where the Lord says, "he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you. All things that the Father has are mine; on account of this I have said that he receives of mine and shall announce it to you", vv 14, 15. "All things": that would be these things that the servant brought out. They came from the father, did they not?

RT Yes, and they were only for Rebecca. "He gave to her brother, and to her mother, precious things", but these things were entirely for her in view of Isaac's heart being satisfied. I was thinking that, in its application, it would apply to assembly affections being developed for Christ glorified.

DJH The next verse is, "Send me away to my master". Would that involve becoming in Spirit, going through that door that we were speaking of?

RT Very good. So she says, "I will go". It is a very exercising side of things: are we disposed to allow ourselves to go in? It is not in any fleshly activity but in confidence in the Spirit; we are drawn to Him and relying on Him to experience the liberty that is our portion in the house.

JSG I was thinking about what you said as to this young woman and the impression that these things would give her.

It must have given her a great impression of the one to whom she was to be united, that the elevation and glory of these things had come from where he was.

RT Yes. It is so beautifully presented that she said, “I will go”. What a journey she was going to take! She was going to leave her parents, she was going to leave her country, but the man had been so perfectly presented to her that without hesitation (I do not say without feeling) she says, “I will go”. That is becoming in Spirit, I think; the pull of these other things is overcome in the Spirit’s grace and the power of His service, and we are drawn in to find our place in union with Christ.

EP Are you suggesting that there is such a thing as committal to the Spirit?

RT Oh, I think it is at the threshold of spiritual experience. What do you say about it?

EP I think it is of all moment, especially in the light of the scripture you brought before us yesterday from 1 Corinthians 2. It seems to me that unless we are definite and specific in our committal to the Spirit, that realm of things of which you speak is not really open to us, because it is not understood except through the Spirit. Do you go with that?

RT Yes, and as was said yesterday, He is God; who He is, His deity and the greatness of His person are to help us to be committed to Him. But then He would lead us on to see what He has in view, and He would have us adorned. The king’s daughter is perfectly at home in the royal apartments. There may be a certain official side about the royal apartments, but I was only thinking of it in connecting it with Rebecca: “All glorious is the king’s daughter within; her clothing is of wrought gold”; she is entirely suited to the palace and the heavenly one, brought in in raiment of embroidery. There has been a great deal of spiritual expenditure in view of this clothing and those garments being worn and being for the eye of the king.

HAH Have you any thought as to why the silver comes first in the Genesis scripture? I wondered whether there was any

suggestion of what we have in Ephesians 1, that from our side “we have redemption through his blood”, v 7.

RT There are volumes in all these things, silver, as you say, reminding us of the glory of redemption, the wealth of it. It is not just a question of the settlement of sins; redemption is a great love matter, that we were loved so much that He paid such a price to have us liberated. The sense of that helps us to leave country and environment. The Spirit bringing the love of Christ into our hearts would help us to say, “I will go”.

ECB Does what you get in Genesis 24 and Psalm 45 remind us of Esther? It says, “she required nothing but what ... the king’s chamberlain ... appointed” (Esth 2: 15), and then she was fit for the royal apartments.

RT Yes, that verse came into my mind too. It just amplifies this service, the Spirit’s activities in view of developing assembly responsiveness. The clothing, and silver and gold articles, I think we could speak of as being developed assembly affection, things that are wrought in the bride in view of being responsive and in view of being at home alongside the heavenly Man.

ECB “Upon thy right hand ... the queen”, Ps 45: 9?

RT Yes, that is very touching, I think. One of the great points of Christ having the assembly is that He is no longer alone. He was once alone, but the Spirit’s activity has brought the bride to the Bridegroom and He is no longer alone. What a comfort to His heart! What a matter, that He has a vessel in the assembly that can be with Him in the whole sphere of divine administration, and He has one that can be with Him in view of the whole praise of God being eternally secured.

ECB Is it right that, while we apply these scriptures especially in relation to the assembly, some comparable service will be carried out in respect of Israel? “Let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us”, Ps 90: 17. I was thinking of the way in which the Spirit in different ways will have to do with every family to make them suited for the position they are to hold in relation to Christ.

RT Yes, I think there is something of that in Ephesians: “of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named”, chap 3: 15. Does the idea of the Father naming every family connect with what you are saying?

ECB Yes, I think it does. I have often felt myself the need for expansion in relation to what the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit have in relation to families other than the assembly. The assembly is intended to be intelligent about them, is it not? Ephesians 3 is about that: “my intelligence in the mystery”, v 4.

RT Do you think they will all come into their place as Christ has the assembly? The great thing in the Spirit’s service is that the heavenly Man may have, as you said, at His right hand the assembly. Christ has the assembly, and as that takes place I think the whole plan will unfold. Indeed, as you read through Revelation, you can see that as Christ comes on to view everything falls into its place. That is the new covenant. As Christ takes things up, every family will come into its place. But the great prime central thing, you may say, is Christ and the assembly.

ECB So we might say that the other families do not yet understand what the precious things are that have been provided for them.

RT No, that is right. So it is the Spirit’s day, and it is the assembly time. Rebecca appreciated these things, but others will yet come into the gladness and fulness of what divine love has purposed.

JSG In the Psalm, the language seems to flow on from kings’ daughters to “the king’s daughter”, as if on the one hand this glorious person is accustomed to elevated companionship, but there is one that is unique. Is that your thought?

RT Yes. I think verse 14 is very beautiful, and it just bears on what we are saying. “She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of embroidery”: that is one thing. “The virgins behind her” would be like the other families. They will be brought into their place; they will all have their own beauty and their own precious distinctiveness, but the great point of

the Spirit's activities at the moment is that "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of embroidery". You can help us.

HJT I think it is a most stimulating line. I was just pondering, earlier in Ephesians, the blessedness of the mercy that has reached us, that we are brought into these great and glorious things.

RT Yes, the Spirit has brought all these things. He has brought the silver—redemption, gold—the love of God; He has brought all these things within our reach, and it is all to stimulate us to come into the house, to be where the King is, to be His companion, to be in response to the feelings and longings of His heart.

BWW And is that particularly for the King?

RT Yes. Think of the blessed Spirit serving in view of Christ being satisfied. It reminds us of the mutual relationships that exist between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, serving in wonderful grace love to One Another. The Spirit's appreciation of Christ is something He would convey to us. It says, as the Lord came on to view from the waters of baptism, that the Spirit descended as a dove and abode upon Him, see John 1: 32. There is some reference there to the Spirit's appreciation of Christ, that glorious Man, that He would identify Himself so completely with Him. I think the Spirit would promote the glory of Christ in our affections in view of our being at home in His surroundings.

RWF In that connection, there is a fine verse at the end of Genesis 24: "the servant told Isaac all things that he had done", v 66.

RT Yes, very beautiful! As you visualise that, how it would enlarge Isaac's appreciation of Rebecca; it is not only what the servant had done but how she had responded. Think of him going over that incident when she drew for all the camels. Think of the Spirit going over how readily she said, "I will go", in the presence of elements that would hold her. How all that would endear Rebecca to Isaac's heart!

KJM I was thinking of this clothing. We perhaps are content with purely functional clothing, but this has some artistic work about it, has it not?

RT Yes; “raiment of embroidery”, I think, alludes to how the Spirit has been speaking about Christ. In the anti-type He brought it out from heaven. “Raiment of embroidery” suggests that a great deal of detail has gone into it. How the Spirit has served in this kind of detail, not in view of us being adorned here but of being adorned suited to be in the King’s palace.

KJM Is there any link between that and the wedding garment?

RT Yes, I am sure there is. Tell us more about it.

KJM It just occurred to me that it was not just an ordinary garment, it was something suitable for God’s presence.

RT Very good. So if there was somebody there without it, how out of place they were, and made to feel it. But here it is entirely suited for the heavenly realm: “All glorious is the king’s daughter within; her clothing is of wrought gold”; and then embroidery, everything there so that at the time of union there is no disparity, there is nothing inferior between the Bridegroom and the bride. The Spirit would help us to respond in that kind of affection, that we do not feel that we are strangers there, but we are brought in to have the feelings suited to the environment that we are in.

DJH It is woven into the fabric, is it not? It is really in the fabric of the assembly, you might say; there is something there substantially, woven in, which would be for Christ.

RT Yes; it reminds you of Revelation: “as a bride adorned for her husband”, chap 21: 2. It speaks about “Her shining”, chap 21: 11. It is undoubtedly a reflected glory that the assembly will ever have, but it says, “Her shining”. There is something there that is entirely suited to Christ, the glorious One. These things will help us to be expanded in our appreciation of the Spirit’s service, that Christ’s portion in union may be fuller and we may be stimulated and strengthened in it.

ECB Our brother used the expression ‘it is not just functional clothing’. I think we have to get beyond that even in the service—just to function. What we need is embroidery.

RT Yes, tell us some more about it.

ECB It is very easy to say the time to address the Spirit is come, so we address the Spirit; and, now we go to the Father—phase 1, 2 and 3—but we want embroidery, do we not,—what the Spirit has wrought in us, and we thus get some more personal expression in the meeting?

RT Yes. I think it all starts with being in Spirit on the Lord’s day. There is a certain preparedness to be in the flow, to be carried into the stream, and as you say, it is not an organised or man-made service that we are having part in, but there is a glorious, blessed divine Person who is leading us, strengthening us to be at home in these heavenly responses.

RWF Does “let a man prove himself” (1 Cor 11: 28) have to do with the fine work, the embroidery? There is what is negative that has to be seen to, but “let a man prove himself” is in view of what is positive, do you think?

RT Yes, I think that would all have in view the material that can take on an impression. Embroidery, I think, requires impressionable material. The exercise is that we are to be impressionable, and that is just what Paul was saying to Corinth—“fleshy tables of the heart”, 2 Cor 3: 3. There is something there that is divinely impressionable in view of the Spirit leaving His own mark. Embroidery is very skilful work; it is for the King’s eye and in view of our being suited to this heavenly realm.

JRW There is much detail in this psalm. I wondered what the companions would represent.

RT Well, they all have their place, and the Spirit would have to do with every family; I thought it would bear that application. “She shall be brought unto the king”: it is obvious that she is the bride, to bring it to our language. But then the whole scene is adorned in perfect suitability; the virgins, her companions—these various families, perhaps we

could read into it, but they are all suited in their own place. There is nothing jarring about it, every one is suited in its own place to the heavenly realm.

ECB Would they correspond to Rebecca's maids, a company which is as willing as she is?

RT Very good, and each has the Spirit's service to fill out their own place. The virgins suggest the protective service of the Spirit in view of persons being preserved through a dispensation perhaps not so enlightened as ours, yet persecuted perhaps more than we have known. These families will all be there, a tribute to the Spirit's own work, but there at home in the presence of the King, that He may have everything suited to His taste.

HAH There is one family mentioned in Revelation 14, that "they are blameless" (v 5), this thought of purity entering into that, do you think?

RT Very good. You can see that that is a very distinct tribute to the service of the Spirit to that family, as it will be to all the families. What pressures these families will go through! But the Spirit will preserve what is virgin and what is suited to Christ.

In Ephesians I thought it might just help us as to sonship's feelings and affections in view of the Father. It says, "through him (Christ) we have both access by one Spirit to the Father". It reminds you of the olive-wood doors, but it is not only a question of passing through the door and leaving it. The idea of access, I think, is that we are made suitable, "access by one Spirit to the Father". We are to have sonship's intelligence and sonship's feelings in view of the Father having His portion from His sons.

HAH Those doors were folding doors, were they not? Is the idea in that that there is room for expansion?

RT Yes, they will expand to bring in the virgins, the companions. The doors will expand to bring the whole thing in to God's own abode. "The Spirit of his Son" (Gal 4: 6) is not just the title to sonship but the Spirit of His Son in our

hearts. He gives us the feelings which are suited to being sons of God.

JSG The idea of qualification for access comes in in the book of Esther, does it not? Does this mean that neither Jew nor Gentile is at any disadvantage at all? There is total liberty through God's grace in that the Spirit is given in view of liberty in the Father's presence.

RT Yes, all that is characteristic of Jew or Gentile, or any other nation, is overcome, is it not? The Spirit's grace has overcome all that and has produced a personality in sonship that has access by the Spirit to function in the Father's presence.

RWF You could understand that the Gentiles have a greater appreciation of the Spirit's service because of the distance involved; Gentiles are those afar off. You spoke of the Spirit as power for transport. Do you think that we of the Gentiles should have a particular appreciation of the power of the Spirit, to the point of the most privileged access?

RT Yes. "Remember that *ye*, once nations in the flesh ... strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; but now in Christ Jesus *ye* who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ", Eph 2: 11-13. What impressionable material for the Spirit to take to clothe with sonship's feelings, that we may function before the Father's face! So it says, "to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man", to be before the Father to apprehend things that were purposed before time began, and yet able to serve acceptably in the feelings of sonship in the presence of such glory.

BWW Does your expression 'before time began' bring out the greatness of God Himself? There is what is being worked out in the time scene, what has been worked out, what is being worked out and what will yet be in relation to those families for which the end is going to be very glorious. If we could take it in a little more would it help us as to patience in time now?

RT Yes. I think one of the great features, as was said earlier in the reading, is confidence in the Spirit; confidence

in Him as to matters in time, as you say, because He has eternity in view. Here it is “strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man”. I think the inner man would refer to what is divine workmanship—that is suited to be conducted into this area to be functioning intelligently in sonship’s feelings before the Father.

DJH It is “according to the riches of his glory”. Is that like the wealth—“All things that the Father has”—the riches of which we have been speaking, all now in view of the Father?

RT It reminds you of the scripture to which we referred yesterday, the Spirit searching the depths of God (see 1 Cor 2: 10); they are all under His control. He would strengthen us with power, He would give us the words the feelings, expressions that are suited to the activity of sons in the presence of the Father.

DJH These expressions are meaningless in the world, are they not? They are spiritual, conveyed by spiritual means. “The riches of his glory” is a wonderful expression; it is understandable only in the spiritual realm is it not?

RT Yes. “The riches of his grace” (Eph 1: 7), “the glory of his grace” (v 6); such expressions cast us on the Spirit of God for help to understand them. Here there is the suggestion that persons are strengthened divinely strengthened to be at home and functioning in the Father’s presence.

ECB Is the inner man what will ultimately go through into the actuality of these circumstances? It is not here, as in Romans 7 and 2 Corinthians 4, contrasted with the outward man; it is just the inner man. Is that what goes through?

RT That is what will take on glory, because the service eternally will be spiritual and it will be connected with the inner man, I think.

ECB I wondered that, in connection with “there is ... a spiritual one (body)”, 1 Cor 15: 44. Flesh and blood does not inherit this realm.

RT That is substantial. We are apt to think of spiritual as being something that is not substantial. I think that the

experiences with the Spirit produce something that is substantial, and yet it is spiritual, and it is at home in the presence of divine Persons. Think of a divine Person, the Holy Spirit of God, being alongside of us and strengthening us in view of the Father's name being praised with suitable feelings and suitable expressions. So we do not go back to formality, things that are right but which may not be just what is proper to the Father's name and the feelings of the house at that moment. We are very cast on the Spirit that right things are said at the right time, and they have a right ring about them.

MJS Do you think that we do not value enough the power that is mentioned here that is available to us? I was thinking of the way the Lord sent His disciples out with power.

RT Yes; it says, "to be strengthened with power". You feel you are not able to get up sometimes, but the Spirit would strengthen you with power in the inner man, so that we may—and I am sure we have experienced it—that as you are on your feet something else comes into your mind; that is the Spirit strengthening with power; He knows what is suited to the Father's name. Are we amenable? Do we become in Spirit on the Lord's day? Do we come into a realm where the Spirit pervades, so that we can prove His service as inside, strengthening us, that the Father's name is praised?

LONDON

20th March 1988

List of initials *(All local unless otherwise stated)*

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LODGING PLACES

Joshua 1: 10, 11; 3: 1-6; 4: 8, 9, 19-24; 5: 2-6, 10-12
Colossians 2: 9-13; 3: 1-4

RT As the brethren well know, a tremendous amount of ground is covered in these passages, which we would not have time to compass even if we could; yet the scope of it may be in our minds. What I was thinking about was these lodging-places which are referred to in Joshua. In chapter 3 it says, “and lodged there before they passed over”. In chapter 5 in Gilgal, they lodged there after they had passed over. There may be a need for us at times to lodge and take a review, be consolidated. In the first one there is a need to be strengthened; they lodged there with these victuals—they had never gone this way before, and it is divinely ordered that they were to lodge there before they passed over. There were other times when they stayed too long in a place and had to be told to move on, and yet other times when they moved without direction: all these things we would find in our histories. But here there is specific direction that they should lodge, that time should be spent to prepare victuals to strengthen them; it all has in view, as we read in chapter 1, that they were to pass over to enter in “to take possession”. That is something that is always to be in our minds—to take possession. That is what the book of Joshua is; taking possession is more than knowledge or light; it requires exercise. In Colossians there were similar exercises; they were needing to be consolidated in view of going on, going on to the heavenly places. So may there be encouragement as we speak together about these things.

SDKR I was noticing the venison: would that be enjoyed during their lodging?

RT It was a very necessary part of the direction it seems—“Prepare yourselves”; it was something they had to do. We do not go this way without exercise. The manna, up till now, was there for the gathering up; you went outside your tent door and there was the manna—just bend down and pick it up, as much as you want, food for the day and food for the journey. But now there is something additional: it says, “Prepare yourselves”. Venison would involve hunting, exercise,

roasting; it involves preparation. So if we have a heart for the land, brethren, it is going to test us, there are going to be exercises. So there is food provided that we might be strengthened to pass over. It says, “ye shall pass over ... that ye may enter in to take possession”. If we just stay in the wilderness, content with justification, our sins forgiven, we are not enjoying the possession, we are not possessing the land that has been promised.

We would seek to stimulate and encourage one another in the exercise to enjoy our heavenly part. The Lord, very consistently through His pathway, reminded the disciples of how He was going to suffer; He spoke of the Son of man going up to Jerusalem and that He would be killed and crucified. The disciples were very slow to take that in, very slow to apprehend Christ's death. All that would enter into the victuals, I think, and the lodging place. We may be slow not only to apprehend Christ's death, the way He went, but to be with Him; our death with Him is the teaching here.

VEW I was thinking of the way the apostle had to bring the moral glories and greatness of the Person before the Colossians.

RT Yes you read in Colossians 1 that there is nobody like Him and that is what comes into this section, I think. I believe there are more references to the ark in this variety of names in this section in Joshua than in any other part of Scripture—the ark of the covenant, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth, the ark of the testimony, there is the ark; there are all these names that would endear Christ to our hearts. We will never go over save as He is enshrined in our affections, will we? I suppose that is why the apostle begins Colossians with these glories, to endear Christ to our hearts. Where He has gone is to be our place, it is where we want to be. It says in Joshua 3, “When ye see the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God ... go after it”. Well, where has He gone? He went by death, but He is gone into heaven; He has gone to glory and there He has prepared a place for us. Colossians tells us that our place is above, and seeing where He has gone we would want to follow Him.

JM It says, “Every place whereon the sole of your foot shall tread have I given to you”, Josh 1: 3. Do you think that these lodging-places are necessary in view of our actually experiencing what God has given to us, to take possession of it?

RT Yes, I think so. We have a great deal of light and we may treat it very lightly, but the lodging-place brings the thing into your soul. Think of that holy ark! “In all their affliction he was afflicted” (Isa 63: 9); that indicates the way that He went through the wilderness; and here the ark is facing the Jordan, and the lodging-place, I think, would give us to see that only as having our eye on Him are we going to get through. And it would encourage us to put our foot down. These meetings would be, and all such meetings should be, to help us to put our foot down, to claim things as our own; not only to have them as light but to put our foot down for possession.

FCM We all enjoy meetings locally and of this character, but they should be followed, should they not, by time with the Lord in exercise as to what He has said to us in our comings-together?

RT Yes, I thought that was chapter 1; “Prepare yourselves”. It is not only what is provided in divine grace and what others may suggest to us, precious as it is, but it becomes our own—“Prepare yourselves”. We used to be reminded often that you had to roast what you took in hunting. Maybe there is not enough roasting; there is the need for preparing for ourselves. What is the food that I am enjoying in my soul that is going to help me to put my foot down and take possession of this good land to which Christ has gone?

FCM It helps me and encourages me to see other people enjoying it, but I am to enjoy it for myself in conscious possession.

RT Yes, it is “Prepare yourselves”. I suppose there would be a household aspect to it, and there would be an individual aspect to it; there may even be a local aspect to it. There is a need in relation to these things to be exercised about them, because it says, “for ye have not passed this way heretofore”. What a scope is opened up for us! What times are ahead!

There is a need for being strengthened with our faith in Christ, and our links with Him in view of enjoying this good land.

ECB The inference here in chapter 3, as in Numbers 10, is that the ark moved out of its normal travelling position. It has been remarked in regard to Numbers 10 that the ark took the initiative, and Christ has taken the initiative in this way through death.

RT Only He could have done it. "What ailed thee, thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou turnedst back?", Ps 114: 5. Death was there, and it was in the enemy's hand, the power of death was in the hands of the devil and it held man in bondage, but here Christ in type is moving forward and He is annulling him who had the power of death. He has taken the power of it out of the hands of the devil that we may, through identification with Him, come into these glorious thoughts of divine purpose and divine blessings. So it is, "When ye see the ark". How He would be endeared to our hearts in the way He went invading these waters of death!

ECB It speaks in the transfiguration in Luke of His accomplishing His departure, as if there was something to be done and He triumphed in it.

RT I thought the disciples were very slow to come to it. I do not say that derogatorily because you can well understand it, but I think they are samples of ourselves who are very slow to come to Christ annulling him who had the might of death; because at the crucifixion where were they? The Lord was crucified but I think Mary of Bethany had some sense of having prepared these victuals. The Lord says about her that she has anointed My feet in view of burial. So in Mary there was somebody who was picking up these references to which you have referred and she saw Him as One who was able to go right through; it says about her that she had been sitting at His feet and listening to His word. I think what was said about individual exercise is seen in her, the heart strengthened in confidence in Christ as the One who is going to carry things through for the will of God.

JW Would the way the Lord is presented in John's gospel particularly bear on what you are saying? In that gospel,

persons had to move toward Christ to get what was in Him, did they not?

RT Yes. He said in the garden, “Whom seek ye?”, then “I am he”, and “they went away backward”, John 18: 5, 6. The Ark was moving of itself in divine majesty and, as you say, in John there was exercise in view of finding Him. What more would you say about it?

JW I wondered whether if we are to enjoy the land, the way the Lord is presented in that gospel has a particular appeal to us. It is the greatness of the Person we have to go after; it is not like Luke exactly where everything is brought to us of the grace of the Lord. That is one side, but we have to go in for it, do we not; we have to go after the Person in that sense?

RT Yes, chapter 3, “remove from your place”. Well, these places may test us; whatever the place may be, it says, remove from it, and go after it. It is moving of itself in majesty. Jordan was full over all its banks, the great barrier between the good land and their enjoying it was death; and here Christ in the majesty of His Person, is entering in. Yet there shall be a distance. We need not only to be exercised but we need to be alert; there was a good distance between them and it. He stands alone; He is there but He is to be followed with our eye upon Him in view of passing over.

CCI You referred to John 18; it says, “if therefore ye seek me, let these go away”, v 8. Do you think that the Lord had His disciples particularly in mind in relation to His death? Yet there is the greatness of His Person who they have to pass by the ark to get into the land?

RT Yes, He took the initiative, as was said, He moved of Himself—“When ye see the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God ... then remove from your place, and go after it”. He has gone before. Divine love had in mind that we should enter into this good land and all that has been prepared, a land where we will at without scarceness, a land of great blessing; but it requires these movements and this exercise, and being consolidated in our appreciation of Christ and His distinctiveness in moving into death.

JM There is power in the ark, is there not? But then there is also need for power in the people. Do you think there is some strong reference to the place that we give to the Spirit in view of following the ark over?

RT Yes. Just think of this incident; how else could they have seen Him? The teaching follows from Numbers 21, does it not? They are a people who have already given place to the Spirit, and I think the Spirit would be necessary to cover this distance. Think of this great company of people and every eye beholding the ark! By the Spirit we behold Him, and in that power we are strengthened to go forward.

SDKR It says in verse 13, “when the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of Jehovah ... rest in the waters of the Jordan”, then the Jordan became dry. Would that indicate that the ark touched the waters itself?

RT Yes, it would seem to be; He tasted death, tasted it. It is a scripture that is full of a great deal of meaning and may yield a lot to us as we think about it. It was not just that He met death in His power, but He tasted it. What was it? How bitter it must have been to Christ! It says, He tasted death for everything, see Heb 2: 9. So that it is not only a question of His power; death could not stand in His presence—that is one thing—but He tasted death. But here it is His power, the power of Christ over death; it says that the waters were cut off. Death still exists, people are dying, but the power of death has been broken. The way that He went has removed the barrier that stands between us in the conditions in which we are and our enjoying the good land that divine love has prepared. Things which eye has not seen God has prepared, and the exercise to follow Him is going to bring us into these heavenly things.

JM Does the antitype embrace both the ark and the priest? They are all one, are they not? So the soles of the feet of the priests refer to Christ going into death.

RT I think so.

EP It says, “Jehovah will do wonders in your midst”—He will do it. Do you think that when the Lord went into death, and especially in this aspect, He went in like an invader, and

in the greatness and the glory of His Person to accomplish things for God in view of the people?

RT That is to enhance Him to our view. There is one blessed Man who has gone this way. We sing that hymn,

Death had on Thee no claim,
Thou sinless One! (Hymn 152)

- that is the Ark and the Priest. The sinless One touching the waters of the Jordan, death had to bow. In the lodging place they must have looked at the river, and you can just visualise them saying, Well, it is higher today than it was yesterday, the river seems to be getting deeper and bigger, and yet there is the land ahead of us—how are we going to pass? A blessed Man has gone that way, and when we come to it the power of death is broken. The waters were not even in sight, they were driven back very far; the very ground was dry. Oh, what He absorbed! What He met in the power of His Person that the ground was dry! The ark is going over in power but going over in leadership to make a way that we may come into these thoughts of divine love.

HAH The allusion which you made to the scripture in Hebrews should affect us, that it is by the grace of God that He tasted it. As you say, it had no claim on Him.

RT No: He tasted death for everything. It is a wide matter, but here it is for us, to encourage us. The whole section is full of trying to attract the people over. Deuteronomy is full of that too; and Joshua's ministry, his mission, was to cause the people to inherit; and that should come into our assemblings, to encourage the people to see the ark, as we have said, to see by the Spirit where He has gone and the way He has gone, that we may follow Him in these movements.

ECB Would you say more as to His tasting death? I think we speak of the Lord's power and of His Person, but His entering into death was not without feeling—one looks for a word. Gethsemane brings it out. This cup, and the tasting of death, does it?

RT Yes, what you say is what I feel; you look for a word, because it is very difficult to describe something that is almost

infinite in a sense—Christ in death. I think there is a lot of food in it for our souls that we could well think about; His death and His burial for example. He was unique in it, but it was not something that was only His power, there were the feelings of the soul of Christ as tasting death. It was not possible that He should be held by its power, the holy One in death. I think all that would enter into the lodging-place, what He met in view of our passing over. I think it is to encourage our hearts to follow after Him, to promote confidence, confidence in the presence of this great terror, you may say, because Hebrews speaks about it like that; we are held in bondage by the power of death, but we see One who has broken its power so completely that here they went over on dry land.

ECB The fact is, is it not, that death meant infinitely more to Him than it could ever mean to us?

RT Yes, oh yes, because of His holiness. Then it speaks about the pains of death, see Acts 2: 24. I do not know that I can speak much about it, but there is a lot of food there for our souls as to all that He went through. But, when we come to it, it is dry ground because of the glory of the One who went this way before us.

FCM He says to John, “and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages” (Rev 1: 18); it is inscrutable.

RT It is very affecting—He became it, it was His own action. The footnote says to that word elsewhere, ‘What He was not before’. Death did not apply to Him, and yet He came to die, and “he became dead”. That is the ark moving of itself, is it not? It says, “When ye see it”. Coming into the lodging-place our hearts are affected by the One who went that way, and death had to bow. He tasted death; He absorbed these waters, you may say; He drank them up, He met it, so when we come to it, it is dry ground.

RWF Are the feelings of Christ, which extend beyond ours and which we cannot reach, brought out by reference to “the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of Jehovah ... rest in the waters of the Jordan”. As to the people it says that

they went over on dry ground. It brings out the uniqueness and the depth of His feelings, do you think?

RT Yes, well, in speaking of these things there is to be the two thousand cubits; we are speaking adoringly as we speak of Christ, and we are affected by the way He has gone. Does it draw our hearts? Does it cause us to move from our place? The place may have a great claim on us, but it says, when ye see it “then remove from your place, and go after it”. Well, you know, it did not stop until they were in Gilgal. They went after it; He went before. I suppose the great end was David; “go after it” would lead them straight on to Hebron, Jerusalem—“go after it”, the ark in its place. That would be the going after it. What exercises came in that deflected them, but I believe the lodging-places would have in view our being strengthened that we may go after it in a more steady way.

VEW We see with Saul of Tarsus that he was told to go into the city, like a lodging-place in his spiritual history; he went after it did he not?

RT Yes, very good; he spent a few days there, did he not? Then it says that “straight-way ... he preached Jesus that he is the Son of God”, Acts 9: 20. What an effect of the lodging-place! Maybe we have suffered through neglect of allowing the truth to affect us in our inwards, constitutionally, that we may be the more amenable to divine leading in view of entering into the good land.

SDKR The Lord called His own aside to rest awhile. That would be on the line of a lodging-place.

RT Yes, there is instruction in it. Officers went through the camp. “When ye see the ark”, when the Lord moves, then there is direction, but in the lodging-place He strengthens us in confidence, I think. As I said, the waters were getting deeper but every eye was caused to look at the ark and there was no other to depend upon save Christ, Christ magnified in the eyes of the people.

SBH At the end of John’s gospel the Lord said, “Follow thou me”, chap 21: 22. That takes on a greater significance in what you are saying, does it not—through Jordan, through death?

RT Yes, that is very good—"Follow thou me". "What of this man?". Peter would have looked at John. In our place we may look on one another, may look on many things, but what you have said is good—"Follow thou me"—and that was to be their salvation, they are brought on to this new ground; that is what the Lord would bring Peter on to as well. "Follow thou me" brings us on to new ground.

JAB Do you think the lodging-place is intended to sharpen our vision? It is "When ye see the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God". Occupation with Christ would sharpen our vision so that we are ready to see Him, every movement He took.

RT The Lord may bring certain exercises that cause our vision to be sharpened, because we come to exercises where He alone can help us. There are matters that we are shut up to Him about. All that would enter into the exercise of the lodging-place; as you say, our vision would be sharpened—"When ye see the ark"—it is not what somebody is saying or any other matters, but "When ye see the ark"; it is what Christ becomes; as we have said: "Follow thou me".

ECB This lodging-place is a place to which they never returned—"remove from your place". I was thinking of your word 'confidence'; they had confidence to leave this place and they never returned to it.

RT Well, that is the intention of divine love; He took the people from Egypt, from the world, that He may bring them into the place that divine love had prepared. I think what you say is good; the lodging-place would consolidate matters in our souls so that we would not want to return. I think it is to change our taste. "When ye see the ark". It was impossible for them to return from one point of view. The two-and-a-half tribes returned—a very solemn word for us; two-and-a-half tribes were going through this and yet their mind was that they would return—they did not remove from their place in the full sense of it—but I think the exercise of the lodging-place is that we would not want to go back. We are occupied with the heavenly One; we are prepared to enjoy the good land, to appropriate what divine love has furnished, all leading us into what we speak of as our enjoyment of the service of God.

JW Is it in this lodging-place that the fact that Christ has been into death is to be appropriated by us? I was thinking of John 6 as to feeding on His flesh and drinking His blood; there is stimulation to go forward, is there not? Some went back there, but some went forward and Christ became indispensable to them.

RT I think that may connect more with chapters 4 and 5. In removing from your place your eye is to be on Christ and who He is in His uniqueness. Two thousand cubits has been referred to Colossians 1, the personal glory of that One, Creator of all. In Colossians He is before all; He has the place of pre-eminence. All that enters into the lodging-place, I think, that He fills the soul, that we follow Him in these movements, a way that we have never gone before, but we are drawn to Him, blessed glorious Man, so that we follow as having confidence in Him where He is going.

JM Our life now is in Him, is it not? That is very wonderful, that He becomes everything to us.

RT It is very challenging and very testing, but it is what He wants to be to us. In Colossians there was a danger of complacency and allowing certain things, and maybe just going back a bit. I think in our exercises, brethren, sometimes we may tend to go back a bit, we just tend to allow things, whereas this exercise of the lodging-place is that we would not want to go back. Things have been met, things have been judged, why do we want to go back? Is not what is before far better than anything that we could turn back to?

JM You spoke of the leadership of Christ here; He is actually leading over the Jordan, is He not, in type into the purpose of God? Then there is the leadership of the Spirit as well. So there is great encouragement for us to go forward and seize hold of what God has given to us in His purpose.

RT Yes, there is a great deal in that; and there is Joshua too. It says, "And Jehovah said to Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel", chap 3: 7. Moses was dead, but He magnified Joshua in the eyes of the people, so there is a great deal of encouragement to go on, to go forward. Jesus says, "Will ye also go away", John 6: 67. Think of the

Lord's feelings! "To whom shall we go?": I think that would be the effect of these lodging-places, that the ark, Christ, is enshrined in the affections so that we want to be where He is. Your mind is on the things above where the Christ is; Christ is to be our life. It would test us, but may our hearts be encouraged to have our eye on the ark, on Christ.

GWE Would you say something about verse 3 of chapter 4, please?

RT Well, they have gone over. What joy would fill our hearts as we experience that the power that held us in terror has been broken; great things now lie before us, the power broken by Christ. In verse 3 there is to be a memorial. All this is to help us from turning back, as was referred to; it was a witness. I think we have to be the stone, to be the witness ourselves that we have been raised with Him. Not only have we been identified with Him in death but we have been raised. That is the normal Christian position; circumcision goes on to that, baptism goes on to it; in Colossians we are not only baptised but raised with Him. So it is an advance on Romans—baptism in Romans hardly goes that far—but in Colossians it speaks about being raised as well. That is the basis, you may say, of our life, that we have been raised with Him. What do you say about it?

GWE And also it is a lodging-place, not to stay but to go on in the light of all that has been accomplished.

RT Yes, it says that they came up out of the Jordan. The waters returned to their place, but there is the witness in the stones; there is the witness in the saints and the way we live, in what we enjoy in our life, that our life is hid with Christ in God, that we are having our mind on the things above where He is.

EP Do you think it would bring a touch of triumph into our spirits—not our triumph but His? We rejoice in that, and I have wondered whether it would be contributive in the service of God.

RT Yes, there must have been a Hallelujah when the last ones came out. The previous time they had contemplated the barrier, but think of them on the other side of the barrier; what

a note of praise must have arisen in their hearts! These things are to touch our experience, that we have some sense that not only has Christ broken the power of death, but we are so drawn to Him that we want to be identified with Him in His death that we may enjoy something of living with Him in that life beyond the power of death.

EP The psalm celebrates this that happened: “What ailed thee, thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou turnedst back?” (Ps 114: 5), and we can provide the answer to that, can we not, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Himself? He is the only answer.

RT Yes, He is the answer and then the answer is in the saints, the twelve stones which they had taken are set up in Gilgal, and it says that they are there to this day; so there they are. So, long after, there is testimony in the saints that the power of our life is in Christ’s life. The resources that we draw from are in Christ’s life. So it bears on the way we do things. Colossians brings up the way things are done; it is in the power of the life of a risen Man.

FCM Is it not an important point in soul history to lay hold of the fact that I have an entirely new origin and a new life? I was thinking of the hymn,

Out of Thy death has sprung
A wondrous living throng (Hymn 152)

RT Yes, I think it is of all moment, and that is the import of these lodging-places, that we are to be consolidated, that what marked me before is no longer to mark me. The twelve stones were lying there buried in Jordan; all that the enemy may raise about my history is covered for ever in the death of Christ, and all that I am, I am as being raised with Him in the power of His life.

ECB These twelve stones taken out of Jordan do not represent knowledge, do they? I wondered if that is something of what you had in mind, that we are to get beyond knowledge into experience. It is God who says that stones are to be taken out; He does not tell Joshua to put twelve back, Joshua did that. God will have something in reality that exhibits a life that can be enquired about.

RT You distinguish between knowledge and intelligence?

ECB Well, I would distinguish between knowledge and intelligence, but what I am thinking of is that we can all find out what these stones teach by reading the ministry, but that is not what these stones represent.

RT Oh no, these stones represent persons who had passed by the ark in the bed of the Jordan, persons who had seen those other twelve stones placed in the bed of the Jordan and who have followed on to this ground through being drawn to Him in His personal worth. It brings you into the beginning of Acts, I suppose. He appeared again, coming in, coming in through those doors in John 20 as well. I think it brings them on to new ground entirely; all that marked them before was gone and they are now living in the power of a risen ascending One. Do you think so?

ECB Yes I do. If I may say so, I think there is a great need among us to get beyond the knowledge that we get from reading—you can trace in meetings knowledge that comes from reading—into the experience which comes from the life of these things. The children will not enquire about what you are quoting from a book; they will enquire about what comes out in your life.

RT Yes, that is right. While there is nothing wrong in trying to prove things from ministry, it is far better to point to Scripture that you have gone through experience with Christ and the Spirit. I think that this time spent at Gilgal was all in view of that, in making them enter into the meaning of these stones that were taken up, that came out of the Jordan, and they are a witness on dry land that Israel came over this Jordan because God dried up the waters. How much He had in mind for us! And these stones are to be a witness that our life is now in Him.

CCI Do you think the forty days the Lord spent before His being received up into heaven would be like a lodging-place for the disciples so as to get into their minds a new position and a new condition of things into which He is entering and which we are to enter with Him?

RT Yes, I think it links with what we were saying earlier as to inducing confidence, that He had not only broken the power of death but as risen He was identifying them with Him in the power of that risen life. Think of Him coming in in these days among them! It has been said that it was to accustom them to spirituality, and that is what these exercises are doing, they are helping us to be more spiritual, to remove from our place, helping us to have confidence in Christ and the Spirit that we may be doing things spiritually rather than by natural power which may mark us.

SDKR What has been said would not in any way discourage us from reading the ministry, because it keeps our minds occupied, does it not?

RT I think it would encourage us to read the ministry because you begin to think about something and you say, Well, what did so-and-so say about that, and the ministry leads you forward. I think that is all part of, “Think of what I say”. That would all connect with the lodging-place—“Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things” (2 Tim 2: 7), and the Spirit very much enters into the lodging-place, and it strengthens us in a formative way. As has been said, it is formation that is marking these stones, it is something that is formed, formed in His death, and they are a witness now to the power of His life.

SDKR Would stone bring in the thought of permanency?

RT Yes, and divine workmanship; no man had any hand in it. They are a witness. So it is to be in the saints.

RHB I was wondering how the truth is made good in us as you have been saying. We would all desire that; to what extent is that God’s sovereign work, and to what extent can we facilitate it?

RT I think it is primarily the basis of exercise. God’s sovereign work is always there. I think that the soles of the feet being put down on the land involves exercise, but exercise that is promoted through being attracted to Christ. What do you think?

RHB Yes. The matter of Gilgal in chapter 5 was another thing that they had to do, was it not? That was necessary for their entrance, and it was a very painful matter, yet Joshua was influential in getting all of them to do it. I was wondering if you had some thought about it.

RT It does not seem that anybody objected. As you say, it was a painful matter, but I think the place that Christ has in our hearts encourages us to go all the way. There had been neglect—we did not read it all, we read a great deal, but we could get help as we read some more about it ourselves—but some of them had not been circumcised. We might find that among us as we look in our own histories, that there has been neglect about something and that has hindered us from going the whole way; we went part of the way, but what is going to help us to full committal? It is the appreciation of the One who has gone through death, the One who has annulled the power of death, broken its authority, and we beholding Him in the place He has beyond death for ever.

HAH One feature of the feet of the priests was their firmness. Does that link with the reference in Colossians, “the firmness of your faith”, chap 2: 5? I wondered if that matter of firmness would enter into what has just been asked.

RT Yes; it brings up this matter of stability and confidence that we are speaking of. That would be begotten in our souls in the lodging-place, that nothing could shake Christ. The whole power of the enemy was against Him; the whole power of the devil was there, yet it could not shake Him—death had to bow. The waters were driven back, there was dry ground. That is to encourage us. Circumcision is a painful thing, but do I want the man that has been ended? These things test us and we do not say them lightly but to encourage us all to follow the Man who has opened up the land of divine purpose. What they come to eat after the circumcision is the old corn of the land. Nobody had the right to eat the passover who was not circumcised—you see that in Exodus 12; the males should have been circumcised to eat the passover. Possibly things are kept with us, as it was with them, very formally and very casually, but circumcision underlay the eating of the passover

and the manna and the old corn of the land. What an inducement there is to be strengthened in the power of His life!

JW In Philippians Paul speaks of the concision. I suppose we do not go the full way, but he says we are the circumcision. Then he speaks of himself as a man who had gone the whole way, he had suffered the loss of all things that he might gain Christ. It is a challenge, but he had come into something far better, had he not?

RT He is a beautiful example. We were speaking about it through the week, how much he had to lay aside. He definitely set aside his powers and ability as a man; he says, “but what things were gain to me these I counted, on account of Christ, loss”, Phil 3: 7. Well, he had a lot more than any of us have in the way of ability and he deliberately set that aside that he might gain Christ. As you say, we are the circumcision. I think these lodging places would create a desire in us that we want Christ, we want to follow, and we want to live in the place that divine love has prepared for us.

EC What was the failure in the matter of continuity in this matter of circumcision, for those who came out were circumcised but the children were not? The truth of the cutting off of the flesh and the fact that in my flesh good does not dwell is to be continued, is it not? Is Joshua’s intelligence in setting up those stones making up for this because he says, When the children enquire there is an answer (see chap 4: 6); there is going to be continuity then.

RT I think we would very simply and humbly have to feel that there have been failures with us; there may have been the allowing of certain things, but in spite of that there are the stones. How do we measure up? Children may see something not in keeping with the stones but the stones are there. So we are to be a testimony to a risen Christ, and that involves the disallowance of all that man is after the flesh.

FCM Linking with what has been said as to Paul’s former self-confidence, every feature of Egypt has gone. That is a fine thing, is it not?

RT Yes, it is very impressive the way that it puts it here. It speaks in verse 9: “this day have I rolled away the reproach of

Egypt from off you". Think of that, the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away from them! The people no longer wanted Egypt; in the wilderness they were hankering after it, but in the experience of Christ becoming, I was going to say, all to me, the reproach of Egypt is rolled away. What attaches to that system of man's ability is not to mark us; we are now identified with Christ, the heavenly One.

CCI Does this involve for us the new man?

RT Yes. That is going on to Ephesians, but, as you say, there is the old man: but there is the new man, and the new man needs to be nourished. There is the nourishing here in the passover and the old corn of the land. So, what is our taste? Is it taste for something that is suited to the heavenly land? We spoke about reading the ministry; have we a taste for heavenly food, the old corn of the land—Christ, not only the Saviour who has met our need, the same blessed Person, but the heavenly One? We had no hand in the old corn of the land; it is something of the Father's thoughts about Christ strengthening our hearts that we may be able to walk in this new life. It says, "Put to death"; and, "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above"; that would be the old corn of the land.

ECB It has been said that eating the old corn of the land is collective, just as the new man is collective. Is that right?

RT I think that this whole section is very much collective. There is what enters into our individual experience, but what enters into our individual experience is to put us together. There are twelve stones, made up of one, two and three; but the twelve stones, I think, look on, as does eating of the old corn, to our being set together on heavenly ground and enjoying the inheritance together. We need one another for the inheritance; there is nobody who enjoys it to the full themselves; to get the full gain of the land and the heavenly position that is ours we need the brethren.

CROYDON

7th May 1988

List of initials

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ENCOURAGEMENT

2 Corinthians 1: 3-7

Romans 15: 4, 5

Hebrews 3: 12, 13

1 Thessalonians 4: 15-18; 5: 10, 11

It will be obvious from these scriptures that the idea of encouragement is in mind. It is something which we always need—to be encouraged, encouraged of God. It says He is “the God of all encouragement”. How able He is to do it! Paul speaks elsewhere about the God who encourages those who are brought low. He has His own way of doing that. He does not encourage us in our ambitions in the flesh; Paul says He encourages those who are brought low (see 2 Cor 7: 6)—brought low, but never too low. God is always ready with encouragement; even from the outset when He met Adam after the fall. He did not say only, Where art thou? He did not only speak to his conscience but He also made coats of skin. When He spoke to Cain He said a sin-offering lies at the door, God would never leave a soul in despair, never. He would never leave a soul overwhelmed by its state, He is the God of all encouragement.

I would like to speak of it in the different ways in which it comes into these scriptures. Here in the first scripture it is Paul speaking of his sufferings. As you read this passage, he almost says that the sufferings were worthwhile because of the encouragement that God brought in; that is virtually what he says. I do not know that many of us could speak like that, but that is how Paul is speaking. In chapter 4 he speaks about some of these sufferings: in one of them he says “persecuted, but not abandoned; cast down, but not destroyed”, v 9. There is always encouragement, our way not entirely shut up. What sufferings there were, and Paul was going on from this scripture to be a prisoner, I suppose; but here he is speaking about these times that he had passed through, and he says what a result there was: the “God of all encouragement; who encourages us in all our tribulation”—“in all our tribulation”. What times we are in, times of reduction! I think times of reduction are particularly meant to make way for God to encourage us, to encourage us in Himself. God is very ready

to do it. You think of Gideon—he was brought low, he was in the midst of the breakdown, and he says, Where are all these things our fathers spoke about? Where are all the big meetings? It is the same God. Gideon could hardly take it in. When God speaks to him, Gideon says, There is the fleece; if the fleece is wet, I will be encouraged, and he began to doubt again and said if the fleece is dry, I will be encouraged. Well, God comes down to all these matters. He is ready to encourage us. He came down to Abraham's way of thinking; it says, having no greater to swear by He swore by Himself. He is ready to encourage the believer in the path of faith. Doubts there may be in your heart, exercises and questions about matters; God would seek to beget your confidence through encouraging you, encouraging you to trust in Him, to have faith in Him.

So the tribulations did not overwhelm Paul. Paul and Silas were in prison. What a great encouragement that earthquake was, the doors of the prison opened! I suppose the greatest encouragement was in the jailor, a man and his house saved for the testimony. Think of God working through these tribulations of Paul, what power it gave to his ministry! He speaks about it here: "through the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged of God". None of us could, I suppose, speak about it like Paul, but he is speaking about it himself and he would seem to be encouraging the Corinthians into what he is saying, that, "even as the sufferings of the Christ abound towards us"—that was particularly the apostle, I suppose—"so through the Christ does our encouragement also abound". They were commensurate, indeed the encouragement was greater. We may think of the tribulations being greater, but Paul is saying that the encouragement also abounds, it is greater than the sufferings. What encouragement God is giving to His saints! While there is tribulation, it is all to affect us in bonds of sympathy, to affect us that we may be able to encourage one another. But in the sufferings, may we be helped, dear brethren, to look for the encouragement. The clouds, how heavy they may be, what clouds may come in and press upon us, but they are balanced—balanced. You look at these clouds up there, some days it looks all clouds, but they are balanced. It speaks about that in the Scriptures: He who balances the clouds, see Job

37: 16. The whole thing is balanced; there is encouragement. The clouds were a great encouragement to one man, he saw a cloud the size of a man's hand and he says, Well, God is going to come in in a great time of rain, see 1 Kings 18: 44. So let us look for encouragement, dear brethren. May we be strengthened. Paul was never without looking for it. It speaks of a door of hope being opened to him; and in these sufferings that abounded in the apostle's case it says, "so through the Christ does our encouragement also abound". There is a blessed, glorious Man who has met every matter, met it in His death, met it in the way He has gone in His sufferings. He has taken the power out of the enemy's hand; the enemy is ever ready to discourage, but Christ, in the way He has gone, has taken the power out of the enemy's hand. Think of the ark in Dagon's house, see 1 Sam 5. In the morning, what was there? The stump. They put it back up thinking there had been an accident, I suppose; next morning the whole thing has crashed again—the God of all encouragement.

What encouragement it must have been to these saints, as it was to Gideon in his exercises, that God is greater; God is greater than the surroundings, He is greater than the pressure. But then He may be in the pressure, He may be in the sufferings to give us to prove the encouragement, "encouragement of God"—"through the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged of God". And it abounds through Christ, that blessed glorious Man, the triumphant One. May our hearts be strengthened in Him in His priestly grace, but encouraged in the place that He fills, the place that He fills under God's eye, the One as to whom it says, "For whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him the amen" (2 Cor 1: 20)—whatever the promises of God. Men say, Where is the promise of His coming? Where is the promise? These thoughts may not be outside our own hearts—Where is the promise? Well, it says, they are all in Him, He is the yea and the amen, the assurance of them all is in Christ, Christ in glory. But then that is to be in my heart, as the apostle says, it is to be for your encouragement. What an encouragement he must have been! Think of a man bound with a chain, somebody going to visit him would come away encouraged. Paul says that he was encouraged. I think that

those who visited Paul in prison were encouraged. You say, What encouragement was that? The great vessel of the testimony was in prison not able to visit all these localities which he loved; bound with a chain, restricted, and yet he says he had been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. He said that from the prison; beautiful things you would have heard from Paul in prison, we have some of them in the Scriptures. So he was able to encourage, encourage those who would visit him. May we be helped, dear brethren, in some measure, as having proved the encouragement that flows from Christ, to be an encouragement to one another. It is something that is open to everyone. Christ is available to encourage you, as He would, as He does about our exercises, and He would have it that you may be an encouragement. Would that that desire was in all our hearts, the very youngest, to be an encouragement to the brethren. Some people have been discouraged, and we would have to feel a sense of shame that we may have discouraged some. I do not say that to lighten their responsibility because they each have their responsibility to be encouraged as we have spoken about, but there have been matters that have discouraged some; we should feel the shame of that. Paul would never be a discouragement to anybody. He wrote the first epistle but he did not discourage them and he told them what had to be told. He spoke to them about what they had done wrong, but he did not discourage them: interwoven through these corrective epistles there is the glory of Christ. Think of Paul writing to the Corinthians from that point of view, that Christ “has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption”, 1 Cor 1: 3. He closes the epistle by speaking about the grace of Christ—“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen”, 1 Cor 16: 24. Paul had confidence in the work of God, and that is what we want to encourage, dear brethren, the work of God in one another. Paul’s assurance here was that the work of God would prevail in the saints. There may be other matters, those that need to be attended to, but in it all there is to be the encouragement of the work of God. We are not all in the same depths of sufferings at one time, the clouds are balanced—matchless

grace! And there is encouragement abounding from Christ, through the saints, for the encouragement of the saints.

Well, in Romans it speaks about the “encouragement of the scriptures”. The Scriptures themselves are a great encouragement. No book has been more maligned, no book more set against by the devil than the Holy Scriptures, and here they are in their blessed purity in our hands today—“encouragement of the scriptures”. God has seen to it that they are available to be read for our encouragement. To get the encouragement of the Scriptures you would have to read them. It says, “For as many things as have been written before have been written for our instruction, that through endurance and through encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope”. I commend it to you, dear brethren; it is a very real matter. Many have proved in the midst of pressures that the Scriptures have their own encouragement. “And when ye turn to the right hand or when ye turn to the left, thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isa 30: 21)—just a verse of scripture brings its own encouragement. The encouragement of the Scriptures is even greater than reading ministry, but, as I say, you have to make way for them, read them, read them often, read them copiously, because a great deal of the encouragement of scripture comes through the setting in which it is. So that we do not just read a verse but read them copiously and see what God is saying. Daniel was a captive, a young man, who proved the encouragement of the Scriptures. It says in the midst of one of his great exercises that he understood by the books. There he was, shut away far from Jerusalem; I suppose he wondered if he would ever see it. He felt the breakdown but he was reading—I suppose it would be the Scriptures—and it says, “I Daniel understood by the books that the number of the years ... was seventy years”, Dan 9: 2. What a ray of hope came into his soul: things are not going to be always like this; there is the encouragement of the Scriptures! He understood by what he read, and the Spirit of God giving His own touch to the Scriptures, that God had everything in hand. The book of Daniel finishes: “But do thou go thy way until the end; and thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days”, chap 12: 13. I think he is a very striking example to us of the

encouragement of the Scriptures. There are other prophets too. They did not have much in the captivity to guide them, but there was the encouragement of God's word. May we, dear brethren, prove it, that through endurance and through encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope, that we might see that the Scriptures are all leading us on to another day, from the very outset of Genesis they are leading on to Christ and the saints in glory. So you need to read them through, not just one verse, but you need to see the bearing of Scripture, that it is leading on to finality. As you read Scripture more you see how God has everything in hand. Man's days are measured; what arrogance and pride mark him! But God has it all in hand—"through encouragement of the scriptures" we can see that, though man will have his day, the end will be Christ's day and the saints with Him. It says, "we might have hope". "Now the God of endurance and of encouragement give you to be like-minded one toward another". There is a great deal that crops up and hinders through dissatisfaction; it spreads very quickly. That would perhaps come more into Hebrews; dissatisfaction and complaining gives room to the devil. We need to encourage ourselves, dear brethren, not only depend on one another. The psalmist says, "Why art thou cast down, my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" Ps 42: 11. Do you ever say that to yourself? Why are you cast down? Why? What is the reason for it? Dissatisfaction leads to a great deal of murmuring, discontent, sorrow. This chapter speaks about it, the discontent that marked the people. The writer of this chapter says, "see, brethren, lest there be in any one of you a wicked heart of unbelief ... But encourage yourselves each day". We need to have faith. God would encourage and stimulate faith in the believer so that you are able to encourage yourselves. Just look at your history: is there not a great deal to be encouraged about? The God who took you up, His own sovereign choice, God moving of Himself in His own sovereign ways in selecting you; He is not going to let you down. He is not going to give up. He called us in His grace. Oh, what there is to encourage ourselves about, dear brethren! "But encourage yourselves each day"—something you have to keep at. Dissatisfaction spreads very quickly, it is like a weed, it grows very quickly—"encourage yourselves each day, as long

as it is called To-day". Do not go to bed without being encouraged, finish the day with Christ, encourage yourselves each day, "as long as it is called To-day"—To-day. It is measured, you see—twenty-four hours measures the day—but do not finish it without encouraging yourself; you will sleep better and you will wake up a great deal better too—encourage yourselves. There are a great many ways of doing it; read the ministry and go to the Scriptures, you will find something; God is ready to give you a touch of encouragement. Encourage yourself; you make way for it, you make time for God to bring in His encouragement, maybe through a letter, maybe through the word of another, but encourage yourself; do not let the day close without seeing that you have been with God about matters. God has a great deal to encourage you about. So encourage yourself each day so that you do not get hardened. If you go on in discouragement, the next day it builds up a great deal more; you become a discontent, a complainer, and these things give the enemy great advantage. So it says, "that none of you be hardened". It is very easy, dear brethren, in pressure and in suffering to be hardened. The enemy is ever active to bring in hardness; encourage yourselves to-day "that none of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin". Well, what a wealth there is Just to touch and prove the encouragement that comes from God!

Thessalonians speaks of the great hope that the saints have, speaking of the Lord's soon return in this parenthesis. It says, "the Lord himself": what an encouragement that is! Who else could do it? That same blessed Man who has annulled death has broken the power of it, "the Lord himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God"—what a Personage, but what a power is going to accompany Him! You think of the powers of evil that are working against the coming of Christ; think of Him meeting them all—"the Lord himself ... assembling shout ... archangel's voice ... trump of God"—What majesty! The whole power of man, of the devil, sin, will have to give way. What is it all for? It is to raise the saints to be with Christ. The archangel's voice, the trump of God: think of these things invading death; think of the assembling shout and archangel's voice penetrating the realm of death and the tomb. Then "the

dead in Christ shall rise first”; no power shall hold them, they are His, dear brethren, He is going to claim us all to be eternally with Himself, the dead in Christ all belong to Him and He knows them all. What a company they are, the dead in Christ! He will have them all, no power will hold them when the time comes; “the Lord himself”. Where then the discouragement, dear brethren? These things of time—pains, sorrow, sufferings—are all measured. There will be a time when we will be for ever with Him; it says, “to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord”—

For ever with the Lord,
For ever like Him then,
We'll see His face ... (Hymn No 12)

Oh, what an encouragement! Then it says, “So encourage one another with these words”. How much do you speak about it? Do you ever speak about it to persons who are in tribulation? What a thing to encourage yourself with and be able to encourage the brethren about, that we will soon be for ever, for ever, with the Lord. Before that it says that we shall meet Him in the air. You look up sometimes and you think about that, we will rise to meet the Lord in the air. What a distance He is coming; He is coming far further than we will travel when we meet Him; He is coming to meet us in the air, and He will take us to His own abode, to the place where He is supreme. We will have bodies of glory, it says; what a comfort to us in these bodies that we will have bodies of glory. What will they be like? We will be like Him—when we see Him we shall be like Him—“So encourage one another with these words”.

In the next chapter it says, “Wherefore encourage one another, and build up each one the other”. Paul, in the confidence he has in the work of God and in the saints, says these words, and I would close with them—“encourage one another ... even as also ye do”. May we do it more for His Name's sake.

CROYDON

7th May 1988

THINGS GOD HAS PREPARED

2 Corinthians 5: 18-21

Romans 3: 21-26; 5: 1, 9-11

2 Samuel 9: 1-2, 13

I count on the service of the Spirit at this time to bring into our hearts something of the great things that God has prepared for them that love Him. He has operated from His own side when all was lost, when man had forfeited everything.

God gave man time but then came in Himself with the resources of His love to provide everything for man, in a Man who was able to do it, blessed be His Name! “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself”, and He established a righteous basis so that He was able to operate in blessing. It says, “not imputing their trespasses” (KJV). Oh how wonderful! What guilt lay on man—had not the law proved it? The law had but magnified how guilty man was, but God coming in in Christ said, as it were, I will set that aside for the moment. The Lord did not raise the law with men; He was not imputing their trespasses. Think of that scene in Simon the Pharisee’s house. It says, “he forgave both of them their debt”, Luke 7: 42. As sent He said, “He has sent me to preach to captives deliverance, and to the blind sight, to send forth the crushed delivered”, Luke 4: 18. Whatever state was there, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. What a heart He had! Nothing of all that had come in in man’s history turned Him away, but He came in a Man so approachable, who came so near to the circumstances in which men lived to bring men back to Himself, whoever they were. Luke loves to record the outcasts of society, and God in Christ bringing them back to enjoy the resources of His love, and that is still going on. God was in Christ: that was who was there in spite of what they said about Him. In disdain they said, “Is not this the son of the carpenter?”, Matt 13: 55. They would mock who He was because of the lowliness that was there, but yet God was there, my friend, and that was irrefutable. In spite of the circumstances and the surroundings God was in Christ operating by Himself on His own behalf irrespective of what was found in humanity. This is what the glad tidings brings: it brings what is needed into the circumstances of the present

day, and I pray that the Spirit of God will bring something into your heart of the resources of His love to be enshrined in your affections, the great things that He has prepared and would bring you into. He comes in Himself from His own side to do things, I may say, in His majesty. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their offences". As I have said already, He was there to dispense, not to receive, and how richly those resources flowed when He was here! Oh what a matter that God came in in such a way introducing this great dispensation of blessing to which we belong that has gone on for nearly two thousand years, unfolding as it has gone on the great blessings that God has in Christ for humanity!

In what we have read here in Corinthians it is presented that God has operated in reconciliation, that however great the distance He has come in to remove it, and when Jesus was here, God found a spot in Him where He was pleased to dwell. He stood out from the race, so much so that the heavens were opened upon Him declaring who He was. There was heaven expressing its pleasure in Christ here with all the grace and all the resources that man needed to bring him back. How attractive He was, to heaven at least, and to some others who found everything met as they came to Christ. It says, "him who knew not sin". If the work of reconciliation was to be effected it required that He, my friend, as He alone could, took upon Himself the whole question of sin and sins. He did not know sin, that is why as we read in some of those readings earlier His holy soul shrank from it. It was foreign to Him, yet how His feelings were moved as He saw it all around Him. "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us". There is God acting to establish the work of reconciliation immutably in the death of His Son, taking away what had come into the race. Can you fathom it, my friend? There is the way God has acted to establish a basis in righteousness, to come out in the blessings of His love to fill your heart and to bring you to be at rest and at home in His house. That is what God has in mind in the glad tidings, but that required a basis in righteousness and it meant that the Holy One in whom God was operating when here was made sin for us. See the love of God in that, that He should reach out to those rebels, that He should reach

out to those who were afar off, and He has made Him sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. What thoughts God has for you, my friend, far greater thoughts than you can ever conceive about yourself! God wants you not only to be forgiven but He wants you to be God's righteousness in Him. What a wonderful plan God has in His mind, what wonderful thoughts He has for you, that He wants to look upon you, and what will He see? He will see Christ. I think that is what it would imply. That is God's thought for humanity, that He can look on men and see them clothed in all the precious worth of His beloved Son; but if that was to be, His Son had to be made sin for us, to take away from God's sight all that we were and the whole principle of sin in which man lives. He measured it and He met it in the death of Jesus. "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us". That meant—we were speaking about it in those readings and we can never speak about it except worshipfully and in very measured terms—it meant that He was forsaken, forsaken for us. What a God, that He would spare you and spare me, guilty sinners, and forsake His own Son as He took our place. It is what the race should have been, it is what you and I would have been as of Adam's race without God and without Christ, having no hope, but God forsook His Son. I often think of that scene in Jerusalem, Christ on the cross and God coming in in blessing on all around. If ever the world was ripe for judgment, it was when they crucified the Lord of glory, but what did God do? In a few days He blessed three thousand souls. This is the kind of God He is. He could do it in righteousness because sin and all that had come into the race was met on the cross in the forsaking of Jesus. But ah! my friend, there was more to it than that. It says, "that Christ died for our sins ... and that he was buried; and that he was raised the third day" (1 Cor 15: 3, 4)—glorious matter! The work was completed to God's eternal glory and praise and satisfaction, completed in finality. He was forsaken of God, He died, but He who bore our sins was buried and was raised by the glory of the Father that a new day might dawn, a day of blessing, a day, my friend, when forgiveness is preached in the name of Jesus. What a day it has been! Have you started to enjoy the blessings of it? To the woman we spoke of in Luke in Simon's house He says, "Thy sins are forgiven", chap 7: 48. That is the first step, that God, because

of what He has established in righteousness in the death and rising of Jesus, is able to come out in forgiveness to those who put their faith in Jesus.

I just want to speak of some of these steps of blessing. Romans brings us into it. If in Corinthians where we read God was acting on His own side and in His own way to establish the matter, we see in these verses I have read in Romans how the believer can come into the blessings of the house through being justified by faith in Jesus. These things are wonderful, you have heard them often. Have you put your faith in the Lord Jesus? You have heard the story of God's boundless love, everyone in this room has many, many times. My friend, I ask you again, Have you changed your man? We used to hear that expression often. You see that in the scripture we read in Romans, where all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. That man can never be reconciled, nor can ever come into the blessings of God's house, but by putting your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and in the work that He has done, your sins can be forgiven, you can be justified through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These are the things that God has come out with, because through the death and rising of Jesus, God has come out with the wealth of His house and He is proclaiming it tonight in the gospel for faith that you may come in to enjoy the blessed fulness He has in mind for you. So it says now the righteousness of God is manifested. He is perfectly right in doing it. Man's righteousness is as filthy rags and, my friend, all that you can do is of no avail in God's sight, of no avail whatever, but righteousness of God is manifested, proclaimed in the gospel, the righteousness of God that He has condemned sin in His Son, He has made Him to be sin who knew not sin for us. There God established His righteousness to come out to forgive the sinner. Nay, more than that, friend, He established His right to justify the ungodly, persons who put their faith and trust in Jesus. What does it mean? It means, my friend, that God has cleared the whole matter completely, righteously, and as you put your faith in Jesus God looks on you as in Christ, He looks on you as belonging to that family of faith. What a family they are! Are you one of them, are you one of those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus, seeing there was no hope outside of

the Man that God has brought in? God says here that He would justify him that is of the faith of Jesus. It is a very fine thing to have a sense that you are justified. We may speak in more detail about it in Mephibosheth, but there it is, God has operated to bring you on to entirely new ground, and He is just in showing forth His righteousness. I want to emphasise that because you can never enjoy being justified if you do not see that God has been perfectly right in doing it, because He has paid the debt to the glory of His own throne and majesty, so that He is perfectly just in justifying those who put their faith in Jesus. I say again, Have you changed your man? Have you still faith in the man who can do works, have you still some hope that things will come right some day? My friend, I appeal to you tonight to forsake the path of man's independency and scheming and put your faith and trust in what the Lord Jesus has done. "That he should be just, and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus". He does this individually, each person is justified individually. God would speak to you tonight where you are, that you as an individual may come to know what it is to be justified in the sight of God. It says here that having been justified we have peace with God. I know of no greater thing than to be at peace with God. Think of the world we are in, think of the uncertainties of life, of all that lies ahead upon humanity, terrible things, but having been justified on the principle of faith we have peace with God. You think of Martin Luther, and the great forces and power of Rome that were against him: he says, 'Here I stand'. There was a man who knew that if Rome would condemn him, God would justify him. "Who is he that condemns?", Rom 8: 34. It is God who justifies and He is perfectly righteous in doing it. I ask again, Have you put your faith in the finished work of Jesus?

It says here, "Therefore having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ". See how that name comes into all these scriptures. It is not in a creed, it is not in a text, it is in a Man, "through our Lord Jesus Christ", the Man of God's appointing, the Man of God's choice, the Man who could say while here on this earth, "I have glorified *thee* on the earth", John 17: 4. In answer to that God has glorified Him and given Him a name and preached salvation in no other name so that those who

put their faith in Him have “peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ”. The hymn writer says—

I stand upon His merit, I know no other stand

Anne R Cousin (1824-1906)

That is a man justified. Let persons accuse, let the accuser of the brethren bring up matters to you, my friend, as he will—I am justified through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, we are not justified now fully, or for things here, but the full extent of it will be that we will be raised from the dead. God is going to raise that whole glorious company who have been justified through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So it goes on here: “having been now justified in the power of his blood”. It is irrevocable, you know, the power of the blood which has met God’s holy throne; and it has met my conscience too. It has met all that can come up in my history, “the power of his blood”. God speaks about the blood in these passages as having met His eye and at the mercy-seat the sinner is standing upon it. There it is, sprinkled once upon the mercy-seat meeting God’s eye, but seven times before the mercy-seat that the sinner may stand in God’s presence and have his heart opened out to hear the unfoldings of His love. He goes on: “having been now justified in the power of his blood, we shall be saved by him from wrath”. My friend, is that all you want? There are many, many persons today and that is all they look for, and there are many gospels preached that stop there, that you will be saved from wrath. It is a marvellous thing, a wonderful matter to be settled about your sins and never to be condemned, but God has far more than that in His heart for you, far, far more. He has come out with these blessings and that is one thing settled, that we will be saved from wrath in the power of His blood, but then it says, “For if, being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son”. Reconciliation, you know, is something more. It brings you in to be in the enjoyment of God’s glorious thoughts. The younger son in Luke 15 is often spoken about; you see those steps that he took, you see him coming into some sense of being justified. The Father came out to do it, as He has come out today in the gospel. He has come out with the best robe, the ring and the sandals to clothe the younger son.

There he is being reconciled, being made fit for the house, not only saved from wrath. There he is with the robe, the ring and those shoes that he may come inside and enjoy sonship. Now these are the things that God has come out with in the blessings of His love in the gospel. Friend, are you prepared to take the step? Paul pleads in Corinthians where we read, “Be reconciled to God”. God has come out with the resources of His love, He has done the work, He has made known His attitude, and in the gospel Paul was saying he was an ambassador and, as going on today in the Holy Spirit’s grace we beseech, Be reconciled to God. Take the step, my friend, of confessing your sins, take the step of owning how far away you are as away from God and allow the blessings of His love, as faith operates in your heart, to clothe you with justification and reconciliation and the blessings of His house. It says that here: “For if, being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son”. How often God brings up the righteous basis for it, the unchallengeable way that God shows that He can do these things for His own glory and for your blessing through the death of His Son. It was all a love matter, my friend. Who could measure what it meant, the death of His Son, save it conveys this, how much He loved men. The kindness and love to man of our Saviour God has appeared. There it is in the death of His Son. “He who, yea, spared not his own Son” that you may come to be reconciled. That means that you are brought in suitability to be in the presence of God through the death of His Son. Let us never, whatever blessings we enjoy and however glorious they are, forget the foundations, and as we think of the way that God has done it, it endears Christ to our hearts. Then it says, “much rather, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in the power of his life”. What things God has in mind that you should be here in the enjoyment of! These are glorious matters but they are very feeling matters. They are wonderful things to be enjoyed. May I ask you, Do you enjoy what it is to be justified? You may give out hymns in the meetings, you may say many things, but you will never enjoy being a worshipper until you know what it is to be justified in the power of His blood. Reconciled through the death of His Son: what power it gives to the worship, what praise it invokes in the human heart that God has brought us so near that we may enjoy the fulness of what is in His heart

for us. It says, “we shall be saved in the power of his life”. That same Man that died for me, He lives for me. He lives there at God’s right hand above. “Saved in the power of his life”: one part of it is His priesthood, that He is serving you in daily grace that you may not become enslaved, that you may not become burdened in a world that is without God and without Christ. There are many temptations on us all, on the young people I know, there are many temptations in various phases of the world, but you can be saved in the power of His life. The appeal of sport, the appeal of pleasing yourself with your time, the appeal of business, the appeal that the world would insidiously enslave you in its system—there is a Man at God’s right hand above to save you from being ensnared in the bondage of this world. Blessed be His Name, you will be saved in the power of His life. Friend, are you taking this step tonight? Are you going to allow the wealth of God’s love to come into your heart, to respond to the appeals of His grace that He would set you up here in the body that you are in, in the circumstances that you are in, saved in the power of His life, a life that can never be assailed as He is there at God’s right hand above serving you in all your weakness? Do not be afraid to speak to Him about your problems, for that is how salvation and the power of His life comes in. Do not be afraid to speak to Him when you are tempted by the world of sport, or commerce, or whatever. He will put His hand upon you and He will say, My son, I have something better for you listen to Me, I have something better to bring you into. And so Mephibosheth did just that.

Mephibosheth was one who was there an outcast of society. The tribes were coming up to David, and he was not able, for he was lame, a son of Saul. You say, it would not have mattered. Friend, you may think at times, what do I matter? Now God is sending out the appeal of His grace to you where you are, in Lodebar or wherever you are tonight. David says, “Is there yet any that is left?” Is there one still in this room that has not come into the joy of Christ on the throne? It says he sent and fetched him, and what did he do? He gave him the blessings of his house. Mephibosheth there says, I am but a dead dog. I think you can see in Mephibosheth’s life a man who was justified. He was misrepresented, persons told lies about him, but he says, What does that matter?—

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

What does it matter what Ziba said about him, or how he maligned him, or would seek to deceive him? He says, My lord the king. There was a man who was reconciled, who was justified. He was justified as he came by the grace that shone in David, and there David brings him into all the wealth of his house, he brings him in to eat at his table as one of the king's sons, perfectly suitable. If you went into that room, you could not have told which was a natural son of David or Mephibosheth: he was there as one of the king's sons. He had the same robe, he had the same blessings, he had the same meals at the table: there was the wealth that he was brought into. We sang this morning:

Brought to rest within the circle
Where love's treasures are displayed.

(Hymn 136)

Think of God bringing us into His house to display His treasures. Think of the table being set, forgiveness, justification, reconciliation all spread on the table, and that is only the start of the meal. Think of God's house and all the wealth that is coming into that table, all the dishes that were carried in and Mephibosheth enjoying them all, eating them as one of the king's sons. My friend, I ask you, Is that your happy portion, settled peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ? You see Mephibosheth later on. It says he had neither trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes during the time of David's rejection. That was him in the world, that was Mephibosheth in the circumstances of reproach. He identified himself with an absent lord because he enjoyed justification and reconciliation and sonship. He says, David is not here, it is not the time for me spreading myself. Every man that looked at Mephibosheth would see that he was loyal to an absent lord, he was waiting for him to come again in peace. But when he came in he took those clothes away. You do not bring these clothes to the meeting. These are the clothes outside, the way we conduct our lives as justified persons; he neither washed his clothes nor trimmed his beard. He walked in a separate path and that is salvation for us, society would not want us. They would not want Mephibosheth, he would always be

speaking about his absent lord, and they would not want him. But there as the king comes in peace, he comes into the king's arrangements. He comes there ready for when David comes, to eat at the table, which is like the local meeting. As the Lord comes in there he finds a company of justified reconciled persons who are enjoying what it is to eat at the king's table. May we be encouraged, every one of us, to take these steps in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may eat at the King's table as one of His sons. For our blessing?—Yes, but for God's glory and praise. What a joy God has in seeing those persons eating together in those glorious circumstances. Think of Him coming in, in the wealth of His love and enjoying their company. This is what reconciliation has in mind, not only that you are blessed, set up before God, but that God can enjoy your company. Do you ever think of that? Do you ever give Him some of your time, do you ever give Him some of your company, do you ever tell Him how glad you are that in His sovereign mercy He reached out to you, to justify an ungodly far-off sinner? He loves to hear you speak to Him about the greatness of His love. You say you are busy, but it does not take moments to lift your heart up to God and praise Him for the resources and richness of His love, and so God has His portion too. He has His portion in His people. He will soon have it eternally when the whole praising company are there in heavenly circumstances praising the glory of His grace, but may it flood our hearts tonight for your blessing. Make sure it is yours tonight, my friend, make sure you do not miss out on the great wealth and blessings that God has that you should be justified, reconciled and find what it is to be here as one of the king's sons. May it be so, for His glory.

GLASGOW

16th August 1988

At three-day meetings with Mr Jim D Gray

THE WAITING TIME

Philippians 3: 20, 21

2 Corinthians 5: 1-10

2 Timothy 4: 6-8

2 Peter 3: 8-18

I wish to speak of the waiting time. It is a very testing time, and yet is to be a very blessed time. The first scripture and the last we read refer to us as waiting, and what we wait for will require new conditions for its fulness, yet it is to regulate us in the present time. I feel the importance of that, dear brethren. God has brought His choicest thoughts within our reach, and we have been given the earnest of the Spirit that these things, which as to their fulness are yet to come, should have a regulating influence upon us now. I think you can see that in the ways of God it has always been so. Enoch, in a difficult day, had the light of the Lord coming judicially, and the effect of that was that he “walked with God”, while the rest of men were living to themselves. Enoch was thus regulated in his walk; he did not go where the rest of men went or involve himself in what the others were involved in. It says, “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him”, Gen 5: 24. God was pleased to translate him because he was already walking with Him.

It brings to my mind a Christian who at the end of his life said, ‘Death does not hold any fear for me. In death I shall change my condition, but not my company’. He was already enjoying Christ’s company. Enoch did not change his company; he walked with God, and God took him. I wonder, dear brethren, at the rapture, will you and I change our company? When the Lord comes to take us to Himself, what will the change be? In Philippians here it says it will be a change of body; He will “transform our body of humiliation”, a change of condition. Will it be the same company? How often we have proved His patient grace; then we shall see His face, we shall be like Him. What about being like Him now? What about that great matter of the rapture having a bearing upon us now? Paul says “we await” a well-known Person. We do not look for an event; we do not search through the calendar to see what date it will be; we await a Person, the

Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour—that Man—what a title!—the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul’s heart is full of Him here, the One who has been here in lowly circumstances, who has taken up the question of our sins, ministering forgiveness, maintaining us by His priestly grace and service—we await the Person. Are we ready? Are we looking for the Person who “shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory”? What a body it will be! John says, When we see Him we shall be like Him. Oh that there could be stirred, by the Spirit, some deeper longings in our hearts for Himself and what it will be to be with Him. The rapture is presented so often as a matter of deliverance and comfort, which it is, and will be, but Paul is speaking here about the Person so engaging his affections that he was longing to be with Him. It says, “who shall transform our body according to the working of the power which he has even to subdue all things to himself”.

We know from 1 Thessalonians 4 what a time of power it will be; the dead in Christ shall rise first; they will hear His voice. How can you explain that? It brings the glory and the power of the Person before us, that nothing shall hinder the Lord as He comes in those movements of power; then, ‘So shall we be ever in heaven?’ No—“and thus we shall be always with the Lord”. The Person is to be before our affections. I think it should have a very regulating effect during the waiting time. I only leave the question—Do we regulate our lives in relation to the early return of our Lord?

In Corinthians Paul is still speaking about the change. What is here in this earthly tabernacle house, a treasure, housed now in mortal weak conditions, will go through to glory. “Now he that has wrought us for this very thing is God, who also has given to us the earnest of the Spirit”. Not only the light of it, not only the doctrine of the Lord’s coming, but the earnest of the Spirit means that a divine Person is here to maintain alive in our hearts a longing for Christ in the waiting time. What grace! He says, “I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you” (John 14: 18), and He has also given us the earnest of the Spirit. The earnest of the Spirit means you have the thing in its essence, not yet in its fulness, but you

have more than light, you are able to live in the joy and assurance of hope now.

Another thing that is before us is “the judgment-seat of the Christ”. This is very sobering; I know of nothing more sobering. I feel a lack of power to speak about it. Why are some things so prolonged? Why do exercises remain unsolved? May it be that we are not walking in the light, or not allowing the bearing of the judgment-seat of Christ to be with us? May we each take it home to ourselves. Things will be reviewed then. All believers “must ... be manifested before the judgment-seat of the Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, according to those he has done, whether it be good or evil”. There is no sense of penalty, but some will suffer loss. Would it not be a sobering thing just to think about our present exercises, and have them reviewed, as they will be at the judgment-seat of Christ? We are so easily influenced by other persons and circumstances, which may hinder us from getting Christ’s view. I am sure matters would be much more quickly settled if we allowed the bearing of the judgment-seat to be regulating us now in our exercises.

It is not a question here of penalty, not at all; it has been said it is a review. The things I have done; the opinions that I have expressed; the kind of personality that I have exercised that may have influenced others, rightly or wrongly, will all be reviewed. May the bearing of it just rest on our spirits, dear brethren—“according to those things he has done, whether it be good or evil”. I feel a lack of power to speak much about it, but I would encourage us that the bearing of it may come home to us now. Are we not meant to be intelligent? Are we not meant to be able to exercise judgment? It starts in self-judgment, in being able to distinguish in myself what is good and right, and what is wrong. Dear brethren, it is a matter of great sorrow that there are things that might have been solved, but now they are left until the judgment-seat of Christ. Some who have been wronged have gone to be with Christ; some things cannot be repaired; they await that time when Christ will give His view, and we shall be adjusted in view of entering into the joy of our eternal home. Would it not have been better if they had been adjusted now? There are things lying among us, I say with

deep respect, that we may well allow the bearing of the judgment-seat of Christ to apply to us now, to ourselves, our localities, the things we do, the opinions we voice so freely, the judgments that we offer—sometimes so profusely—are they in accord with the judgment-seat of Christ? Well, may He have His own voice to us in that.

At the judgment-seat of Christ we shall already be in bodies of glory. It will not be there a matter of shedding tears. It will work out in view of the kingdom. You get some idea of it in the parable of the kingdom in Matthew 25. The lord of the bondmen reviewed with persons how they had used the talents, some received praise and other suffered loss. What did you do when the Lord spoke to you? Perhaps your conscience was alerted. You maybe allowed somebody else's opinion to sway you. It will come up at the judgment-seat of Christ. You maybe allowed yourself to be governed by somebody else's personality or by your links with someone who may not have been in the full light of the truth. These things will be reviewed at the judgment-seat of Christ. As I say, Why not have them reviewed now, in view of praise to God? Paul says, "we walk by faith ... we are confident, I say, and pleased rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord". There was nothing in him that he knew of that was left unsettled. He was looking forward to being with the Lord; the judgment-seat of Christ was an up-to-date matter with him; he was "zealous, whether present or absent, to be agreeable to him".

In 2 Timothy 4 Paul is looking for the appearing. He speaks of "all who love his appearing". What a day that will be, dear brethren, what a day! Do you long for it? Tomorrow morning, if the Lord will, we shall remember Him in the Supper. I like to think as I remember Him at the Supper of His appearing. When He appears the whole scene will change. Do you not long, beloved, to see Him honoured? He will appear to a world whose last words were, Away with Him; crucify Him; we will not have this Man! Ah! as He appears the whole world will be subject to Him; indeed there is the suggestion that the whole scene will arise in tribute to Him, the Lamb that had been slain. We long for His public vindication. We long that that One who has done so much,

that One who is so great, may be publicly adored. It says, “all who love his appearing”; we bear the rebuffs for the moment; the Lord bears them; how He feels them! Paul is speaking here of what will be in that day in the way of reward “to all who love his appearing”.

May the bearing of these things affect us practically in our circumstances here. Peter was affected by them. He had already seen the Lord in His glory. He speaks in chapter 1 of some “having been eyewitnesses of his majesty”, 2 Pet 1: 16. He saw something of that glorious One. It says His garments became white, and as he speaks about it in his epistle Peter says, We have not followed cleverly imagined fables. We are tested as to the substantiality of these things, beloved. How substantial are they to me—the rapture—the judgment-seat of Christ—and the appearing? Peter says they had not followed cleverly imagined fables; the Person was enshrined in his affections.

So as Peter closes the epistle, he says all these events are going to take place, “Wherefore, beloved, as ye wait for these things, be diligent to be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless”. There is the bearing of the judgment-seat of Christ; there is the bearing of the rapture, and of the appearing; the bearing of new heavens and new earth, upon the saints; “as ye wait for these things, be diligent to be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless”.

May the long-suffering of our Lord not be taken advantage of, as it has been publicly, but may we be diligent as we wait. The certainty of them, beloved, is maintained in our hearts by the Holy Spirit of God. We could never be maintained apart from that. Apart from the Spirit’s grace and power in our hearts we would say, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? Things are pretty much as they always were’. But by the Spirit we wait in hope, and as we wait let us “be diligent to be found of him in peace”.

Peter’s final exhortation to the saints is, “Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things before, take care lest, being led away along with the error of the wicked, ye should fall from your own steadfastness: but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be

glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen”. May it be so with us, for His Name’s sake.

BUCKHURST HILL

31st December 1988



SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD

2 Peter 1: 10-19

Revelation 5.: 4-10

Jude 17-21

We were speaking of Joseph in the reading. There are three interpretations of his name; He was the Saviour of the world, the Sustainer of Life and, if you read the footnote in Genesis 41: 45, the Hebrew means the Revealer of secrets. These are some of the glories of Christ that we could well dwell upon.

The Saviour of the world—what a Man He is! Is He your Saviour? The fact that the world needs a saviour was never more manifest than in the present day. Job longed for “an umpire ... who should lay his hand upon us both”, Job 9: 33. Have you ever had those feelings? The need of a Saviour—someone to take the load. That is what Joseph did. The whole scene was lying in death, with famine all around. They were all soon to perish, but Joseph was raised up as saviour of the world. The Saviour of the world can be your Saviour. It has been so beautifully said that if all the souls in the universe came to God tonight in repentance, the blood of Jesus would be enough for every one. That is a stupendous fact. There will be new heavens and a new earth founded on the blood of Jesus. It will be sustained in the power of His life. But we begin with the question—do you know Him, the Saviour of the world?

There is no hope for the world; that is very evident. Jesus did not come in to change the world. In the world apostacy is rising, things are getting worse and worse, but in the midst of all the darkness a Saviour has appeared. He will help you through the world, He will help you with matters at school, with the matters of your life and your circumstances. But finally He will take you into another world. Peter tells us that the present heavens and the earth are all going to be removed, but there is another world to be brought in of which Christ is the glorious and blessed Centre. Oh beloved: get to know the Saviour, get Him into your heart. He is a Man to fill your affections. John says about Him that He is the

propitiation for our sins, but not for ours alone. The work that He did in shedding His blood and in being buried and rising again, has laid the foundation for God to bring in a whole new universe. The new heavens and new earth are not going to be empty; they are going to be peopled with the redeemed. Will you be among them, will you find your place there through being drawn to this blessed Man, the Saviour of the world? If you have not yet come to Jesus in the faith of your soul, come to know Him as your Saviour. Lift up your heart to Him today and say, "Lord be merciful to me the sinner". In simple faith draw near to Jesus, just where you are.

But He is much more than a Saviour! I did not mean to say much more about that. I wanted to speak about how the apostles in their lifetime, looked down to this very day we are in and they saw that things were going to be broken. They saw the breakdown and the apostacy. But what did the apostles do? Did they give up? Did they say, 'Well if things are going to go like that, need I suffer, need I go through these exercises?'. Paul had the light that things were going to break down. Corruption was going to come in. But was that all he saw? No, beloved, he saw that there was something going to go through go through in glory. The Lord is the Sustainer of Life—He is greater than the breakdown. He is greater than all that will ever come into the history of time. He is greater than all that the devil will introduce, even into what bears the name of Christ. He is the Sustainer of Life.

I want to speak about Peter and John in that regard. Although they saw the breakdown and the ruin, they left the saints with an impression of Christ that would see them through until the rapture. Indeed they speak of things far beyond that time. They look right on to there being a new heavens and new earth where God will dwell eternally with men, based on the work and the glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Peter speaks about His majesty. I would like to convey some impression about the humanity and the deity of Jesus. Peter is speaking about His humanity. There are few, if any, who speak about Jesus like Peter. I think he knew Him better than most, and, as he reflected on that Man that he knew day by day in the circumstances of Galilee and

Palestine he says, “who did no sin”—was that enough? No, it says, “neither was guile found in his mouth” (1 Pet 2: 22)—what a Man He was!

I love to think of Peter going over those days of Jesus reflectively. How He was reviled—Peter goes on to say, He “reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not”. Then, this is perhaps the most beautiful of all, He “gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously”, 1 Pet 2: 23. There is the humanity of Jesus; a Man with confidence in His Father. Could He not have answered for Himself; He who calmed the troubled waters, who fed the five thousand yet answered, not when falsely accused in Pilate’s judgment hall? He reviled not again, but gave Himself over—oh what a Man! What a Saviour!

Peter then goes on further than that—“who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree”. That is a very beautiful touch. It brings Him very personally home to us. Are your sins still troubling you, beloved, are they still on your conscience? What a Man to trust about your sins, to entrust with your soul’s eternal welfare. Will you do it now? Your sins can be gone, gone forever through the grace of this precious glorious Saviour.

I wanted to come to the way in which that Man bears majesty. He was not only the lowly Nazarene, but Peter had another view of Him—“having been eyewitnesses of his majesty”. He was a lowly Man, no different outwardly from others; they came to take Him as a robber with swords and sticks, and He says, “I am he”, John 18: 5. There was majesty. Could they do anything; they went away backward and fell to the ground.

Well, Peter knew Him day after day during these three and a half years, but here was a day when he got a different view. The lowly Nazarene received from God the Father honour and glory. Oh how precious He was to heaven. He was disowned, His precious Manhood was set aside by the Pharisees and all around, but how precious He was to heaven. That, beloved, is the foundation of the dispensation. It is the foundation of everything that is going through—the Father’s delight in Jesus. That is how things will go through, in “my

beloved Son". Have you noticed the "*P*" in that verse? It is different from all the other "*I*"s in the page by its emphasis—"in whom *I* have found my delight". God's delight in Jesus is the theme of this dispensation. It is what makes it so different from every other dispensation that has gone before. There is teaching about that as to fulfilled responsibility which is very instructive. The dispensations before failed, but there is something in this dispensation that is going through to eternity, because of a Man in whom the Father has found His eternal delight and the presence of the Holy Spirit here. The breakdown shows the kind of material we are as in flesh but the character of the dispensation, the triumph of what is going through, is dependent on and upheld by this Man, and the Father's delight in His Son.

Well Peter got a view that day that he never had before, a view that remained in his soul for the rest of his life. Jesus was the revealer of secrets. You need to have a secret. You will never get through this life, with all its exercises, without a secret in your soul. You get these secrets through being in the presence of Him who reveals them. Peter was taken up into a high mountain apart and he comes into the secret of the Father's delight in Jesus. The voice from the excellent glory—"This is my beloved Son, in whom *I* have found my delight". What stability was brought into his soul. There was a very important remark made in the first reading today. 'The only point of stability today is a Man at the right hand of God'. What will happen to your career, what will happen to your plans? There is nothing secure, but there is a point of stability presented to you today, and that is in a Man at the right hand of God. It was a secret that Peter came into here. He "received from God the Father honour and glory". That has filled out this dispensation. I love to think of this dispensation beginning with three thousand souls converted in one preaching. What was that—it was the Father's delight in Jesus. The floodgates of heaven were opened, and a rush of grace and mercy flowed out that day upon a guilty city which had just crucified the Lord of glory. But the Father's delight in Jesus was so great that He says, 'I will flood the whole city with my mercy'.

It says that they were eyewitnesses of His majesty. It is fine to hear from an eyewitness, and that is what the apostles were. There has been nothing added since the time of the apostles. Jude refers to that. What came out in the apostles was enough to see the dispensation through. The Spirit's grace has been with us, and we have had it opened out to us, but there has been nothing additional to what came out through the apostle. Indeed beloved, anything different from what the apostles said is false. Get back to that; what came in so early in the dispensation in the apostles' ministry is enough. What men they were—eyewitnesses.

Peter is saying that he was about to depart, he did not expect apostolic succession, nor persons to claim they were succeeding his line of things and his authority. He is really saying, 'After my departure, you will have this, that I was an eyewitness of His majesty'. The lowly Nazarene, blessed lowly Man. But the veil was drawn aside; He was God's glorious Son,—“over all, God blessed forever”, Rom 9: 5. My friends, never read the gospels without a spirit of worship. He came so low, but that never detracted from His greatness, it enhanced it.

It says, “His majesty”. He is upholding the whole scene and if there is a King then there is a kingdom. Peter is attracting these scattered brethren into this everlasting kingdom. It says, “use diligence to make your calling and election sure”. Do not have doubts about things; as Christ is enthroned in your heart, doubts fly away. What can He not do, what can He not compass? He is greater than the difficulties, greater than the exercises that may come in. How real they are, but you can have Christ enthroned in your heart. Any kingdom takes its colour and its character from the king, and He is giving character to His kingdom.

Peter is exhorting the brethren to make our calling and election sure. You may say, 'Is it not sure if I have put my trust in Christ?' It is; every blood-bought saint who has put his or her faith in the work of Jesus will be in glory with Him for eternity. But what about time? What about the present time? Is the joy of the kingdom not to be known now? Peter's choice of language is so beautiful. He was a lowly fisherman,

uneducated in the language of the day, I suppose, but he uses the choicest language as he writes. When he is speaking about the kingdom, he says the “everlasting kingdom”. It is no ordinary kingdom you come into. Think of coming into an everlasting kingdom now, amidst all the confusion, amidst all the disorder there is; think of being attracted into an everlasting kingdom! You may ask, ‘Is it not going to break up?’ No, it is going on, it will go on until we are with Him in glory. He speaks of more than the everlasting kingdom; he could well have said, the kingdom of our Lord, or the kingdom of Jesus, but when Peter speaks about Christ or about divine things, he uses superlatives. He says, “The everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be richly furnished unto you”.

Well, beloved, the way to make our calling sure, the way to stability, is to come to appreciate His majesty. The majesty of the Man who was once lowly, despised and rejected, as we sang in our hymn, but crowned with glory. Does your heart not go out to Him? Is He crowned in your affections? Does He have a place there that could be enlarged as we speak about Him? Peter’s appreciation of Christ grew. We are tested about that; is your appreciation of Jesus growing? Perhaps we are more familiar with a historical Jesus than a glorified Jesus; is He historical to you? Is it just a matter of history that some time ago, maybe long-ago, you came to know a Saviour who dealt with your sins? Is He alive in your affections today as a Man in the glory, who will see you through, ready to reveal secrets? As Revealer of secrets you have to be near to Him. A secret is usually whispered, it is not broadcast. It is something that you will get on your knees with Christ, that He is enough, He has majesty. So Peter is saying to these dispersed people that Christ will see them through, bringing them into an everlasting kingdom. Peter is bringing out the compensations of coming under the rule and the influence of Jesus.

There is nobody higher than Jesus in His majesty. One of His names when He came in in Luke’s gospel was “Son of the highest”. Peter is saying to these poor suffering saints, ‘there is nobody higher, nobody greater, His majesty will never break down’. There can be no question of it being

passed to another; there is not another able to bear it, but this lowly Man bears the majesty. He received from God the Father honour and glory, never to be transmitted to any other. He is the Man who is seeing the dispensation through, in His majesty. May we have our hearts filled with reverence for Christ, may we be the more drawn under His influence, under His guidance.

Peter is telling them that the secret that he is passing on is enough, until the day dawn and the morning star arise in their hearts. It has risen, beloved; has the morning star risen in your heart? The morning star is a name of Jesus which He uses Himself. He says, "I am ... the bright and morning star". Is He in your heart as the Morning Star? We said already that most of the dispensation is past. Not that there will not be testing times, but if the morning star is there, it is easier to see your way through. It is a point of reference. The Christian is never left without a point of reference. The children of Israel were never left without a point of reference; dark the days may have been, with sand all around them, but there was always a cloud and a pillar of fire, and the cloud was ever ready to guide them. The godly Israelite, in his tent, might wonder what he would do. He might say, 'Is this all I have come to—this vast howling wilderness?' But he would look at the cloud and he would say, 'There is something fine here, something to guide us'. The cloud moved on and they moved on; the cloud was more ready to move to Canaan than they were. The cloud tarried, it was detained because of the state of the people. In patient, suffering love and grace, the cloud tarried and it is tarrying today. There is always a point of reference. Get on your knees and look to the Lord in His majesty. Men may oppress you—what powers they assume. It may not be so much known today, but it is not very long ago that they put people out of work. Some men in this very area were persecuted about their employment, but the Lord came in in His majesty and gave them a way through. There was suffering, but there were tributes to His majesty. The government of the day would have compelled persons to be in unions, denying them the right to work, but the Lord exercised His right in His majesty and He saw them through.

These things are very real and very practical; expressions of the majesty of Christ. There is no authority above Him—He has been given a name that is above every name. Oh, get in touch with Him! Get to know the secret of His love. It is not a majesty that is official; what Peter is speaking about is the Man that bears the crown and there is no authority greater than His! John speaks of that same Person. Perhaps he is affected for the moment by the weakness of the position. He says, “And I wept much because no one had been found worthy to open the book”. Had he forgotten about Christ? You may think that there is nobody able for the difficulties, for your situation, but He is not only worthy, He is also able! That is what John comes to see. It is fine for someone to draw near to you in your problems, your difficulties, your exercises, and remind you about Christ—He has been through them all; tempted of the devil forty days and forty nights, but the devil left Him. What a Man in whom to have our trust—a well-tried, well-known Christ. This is what the apostles passed on.

So John speaks of things even beyond our dispensation, happenings in the world after the church has gone. Do you know the point of reference in Revelation? It was not any place on earth, it was in heaven. John was looking on the earth, he looked round about and saw how terrible things were going to be. He wondered how things could continue. The voice says to him “Come up here”, Rev 4: 1. The point of reference is always heaven, because it is where Jesus is. He has been crowned there with glory and honour, awaiting the time of His public rule and public display. There is only One able to handle the affairs of the nations, the affairs of the universe. He will handle it, but for faith it is already settled. So John is brought to see something of His deity. He is brought to see the suffering love of Christ in the Lamb standing as slain. the Man, who was here in lowly grace, has been exalted as a Man in heaven; in His Person He is “God over all blessed forever”.

I say again, we should never think about Christ without a spirit of worship in our hearts. An elder now speaks to John about the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David. There is more about Christ than we have ever seen, more than will

ever be expressed. But the sense of His greatness adorns what has been displayed. The Man in whom grace has been displayed is the root of David. It brings out His deity, and there are no happenings in heaven or on earth outside the control of Christ, nor will there be.

This refers to a day yet to come, when it will be seen that only Christ will be able to meet the needs of the universe, and deal with them all, that in the end God may have His dwelling eternally with men in a new heavens and a new earth. But John is brought to apprehend His greatness, that the One who suffered once must reign! “One of the elders said to me—do not weep”. The breakdown is very severe indeed, but there is what is going through under the influence and rule of Christ, and there are persons going through in whose hearts these secrets are enshrined.

So John hears this new song. What a triumph it is as Christ fills your heart, what a tone it gives to the singing. Not now just singing by the banks of the Red Sea, but singing a new song, a fresh impression of Christ finding spiritual poetic expression, so they sing “Thou art worthy”. You may say that has been said before, but oh, it will be forever new.

Hark! Ten thousand voices crying
“Lamb of God!” with one accord;
Thousand thousand saints replying—
Wake at once the echoing chord. (Hymn 14)

That poem of Mr Darby’s, ‘The Endless Song’, is beautiful. “To him who loves us!”, Rev 1: 5. What a song the new song will be; the echo will be taken up through the whole vast creation—‘Praise the Lamb’.

These persons, in singing this song, speak of the Redeemer, who has “redeemed to God”. Oh what a price He has paid, but what a purchase He has made. The summation of it all is seen at the end of the book in the bride, the heavenly city. Think of John having that view. Despite all the confusion, he finished with a view of that heavenly city, the Lamb’s wife, the bride. May we never lose sight of that precious view. May we be brought to see that things are never out of control, that things are in good hands!

Jude exhorts the saints. He says, “remember the words spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ”. What God has placed in the apostles and their teaching is enough. It is no wonder that they will be in the foundations of that holy city. For nearly two thousand years, the assembly has been under attack and yet the light of it is still enjoyed and practised today. What a tribute to the Holy Spirit of God! I do not think that the dispensation will close in poverty. You speak to certain persons, and they say that we will all be together in heaven; that is true, they say that the Lord will soon come—that is very true. But the coming of the Lord is not a rescue operation! He is not coming to take us home because the path has become too difficult. No. He is coming to receive to Himself His precious bride, a tribute to what the Spirit has done through the dispensation.

I might mention in passing to the young people here that the older people are very apt to reminisce, and they speak about the earlier days as if there was something greater then. I am not sure that is true. I understand what they mean but the best days are yet to come! I think that before the rapture, before Christ comes, there will be a sweeter note in the service of God than ever there has been in the history of time. And that is happening now. Let no one say otherwise! The service of God today has a beauty about it, and fulness about it, that was not there before. Not that I can say much about earlier days, but you only need to read earlier ministry to see how much had to be corrected. The finest hour is now. Oh come and have your part in it, come and find your happy part in these closing days of the testimony.

So Jude is exhorting us to cling to what the apostles have brought in. He is speaking about the apostacy, maybe in the strongest way in which Scripture speaks about it, but he says “But *ye* beloved”. Amidst all the confusion, there are these beloveds. He says “But *ye* beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith”. It is not only faith, but it is most holy faith. The darker the day, the more precious the truth becomes, like these vessels of copper in the Old Testament; they were as precious as gold. So the faith is not only faith, it is “your most holy faith”, the link you have with God. Build on it, beloved; it is most holy, it is imperishable, it will stand

the test of time and all the exercises that will come in; Build yourselves up on it, and think on these things. We are so apt to think about things that are not faith. Troubles among the saints, personal feelings that have come in, have been among the most destructive things that have happened in church history and they are not “your most holy faith”.

Jude also speaks of “praying in the Holy Spirit”; not just praying, but praying in the Holy Spirit. Would that I understood these things more, but there is a divine Person who comes into your prayers. You not only speak to God, but you have the sense of a divine Person with you in your prayers. It says that “the Spirit joins also its help to our weakness” (Rom 8: 26), but this is more; praying in the Holy Spirit gives you access into the Holiest, into the very presence of God. I think that you feel a sense of your Father’s hand upon you. He would say “I know, my son, I know”, Gen 48: 19. He would put His hand upon you as you pray in the Holy Spirit, that you may be strengthened in your spirit. Asaph of old went into the sanctuary and he says, “Then understood I their end”, Ps 73: 17. He did not understand before he went into the sanctuary. You might be troubled about how some people get a better job than you do, how they have more money, a better house and car than you do. Something like that might have troubled Asaph but he says, “I went into the sanctuary of God”. He saw in type that he had everything in Christ, everything in that glorious Man. That is what praying in the Holy Spirit would bring us into.

Jude goes on to say, “Keep yourselves in the love of God”. That should not be difficult, it is all around you. Could you get out of it? No, but you may get out of the joy of it. The prodigal in the far country was not outside the reach of the love of God, but he was in poverty in his soul, he was outside the enjoyment of the love of his father, but he came back into the love of God—

If clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, eternal Lover,
Towards me, as e’er, Thou’rt bright.

(Hymn 51)

How much there is to go in for, how much there is to go on with.

I would just conclude with a further verse in Jude: “But to him who is able to keep you without stumbling”, v 24. What an end to an epistle that has taken account of the apostacy and the darkness. What a standard!—“and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages”.

May we close these meetings with such a note of doxology and praise to our God. Go on in faith. I would just leave these three words: go on in faith; go on in prayer; keep yourselves in the love of God, for Christ’s Name’s sake.

GRANGEMOUTH

18th May 1991

At three-day meetings with Mr Brian M Deck



HEAVEN'S INTEREST IN THE DEATH OF THE SAINTS

Revelation 14: 13

1 Thessalonians 4: 14-18

These scriptures speak about heaven's interest in the death of the saints. Death itself is a most solemn thing, it solemnises the bravest and the boldest. It is a matter that has affected God beyond what we could ever feel or measure; it says He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, see Ezek 33: 11. Yet through the work of Christ, through the preciousness of that Holy One having been into death, God has made it a servant, He has brought spoil out of it, by the resurrection of Christ.

In the book of Revelation which contains a good deal of woes, there are certain times the word "blessed" is used and this is one of them. It says, "I heard a voice out of the heaven saying, Write, Blessed the dead who die in the Lord". It is heaven speaking here, amidst all the calamities, and while the setting of the passage is referring to another day, the application of it would remain—"Blessed the dead who die in the Lord". It could not be said of every believer, but it was true of our brother, he died in the Lord. The expression means to die in harness; he could have retired, he had much cause to sit back, but he was an overcomer. May we be encouraged to do that, dear brethren, that however dark the days, however much the opposition, however great the breakdown, may we set ourselves to die in service; die in harness! Naboth in the Old Testament (1 Kings 21: 3) who would not sell his inheritance, while under great pressure to settle for something less, he died in the Lord. Many others we could speak of; Urijah the Hittite, told to go to his house, he says, Where is the ark? Where is the testimony? Where are the servants of my lord? There I want to be, see 2 Sam 11. May we be committed; dear brethren, to the work, committed to what heaven is interested in, the testimony here that is precious to heaven.

Think of all the sorrows of this book, and heaven's pleasure in saying, "Blessed the dead who die in the Lord".

Then the Spirit answers, "Yea, saith the Spirit". Not only heaven, but the Spirit of God is here, it says, "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours". There will be a resting time, it is not at the moment—"that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them". What an encouragement, dear brethren, that heaven is so interested in the death of the saints, interposed like this in this book with this precious "Blessed". Well, may we be encouraged to be committed to His interests to be among those who die in the Lord. The testimony is still here beset by foes, with much weakness in the way we do things, but there are the things of the Lord, to be attended to, I would say the things of our Lord. Can you say, The things of my Lord? Our brother took them up like that.

In Thessalonians there is another expression. It is very beautiful the way that heaven is interested there in the saints. It speaks of them as "those who have fallen asleep through Jesus". Think of that precious touch, which can be applied to our brother too; the One that he loved, that Name so dear, he has "fallen asleep through Jesus". "The dead in Christ", that is another expression; it would include every believer; every one who has put their trust in Christ. Even in death they are distinguished from unbelievers, "The dead in Christ", it says, "shall rise first". See how the Lord has control over death. We have proved His sympathy, His succour and priestly grace and mercy and love in our lives, but even in death it is not absent. He is still there—"asleep through Jesus", and now "the dead in Christ"—they are well cared for, dear brethren, the most already with Him. Paul says about that portion that it is very much better. Our brother is already there; his spirit already with Christ, which is very much better. It says, "and the dead in Christ shall rise first"—a very precious experience for them. There will be those that are alive who will be caught up, but the dead in Christ will make a very precious contribution to the assembly. They have passed through another experience that will add its tone to what the assembly is in its preciousness to Christ. He is in control of the whole matter.

It says, "then we, the living who remain". I would just like to speak of that word, "the living who remain"; that is all

of us here. How are we going to remain? Pleasing ourselves? I think the word has application directly of course to remaining till the coming of the Lord, but, How do we remain? Do we remain in the testimony? May it be so that we will, and find comfort in the love that is not only interested in us in life, but is there present at the very moment of death. He will keep them till that hour of the Father's own direction when we "shall be caught up together" that very precious word, "together with them ... to meet the Lord in the air". May this hope be kept brighter in our hearts for His Name's sake.

REDBRIDGE

12th June 1991

At a burial meeting



DIVINE MOVEMENTS IN BLESSING

Luke 15: 4, 5, 8, 18-24

I want to make some application of the movements that the Lord speaks of here to how God comes out to bless. When sin came into the world through man, what man sought to do was to hide himself; he tried fig leaves, and man might have been content to leave things like that, but it was God who raised the question, “Where art thou?”, Gen 3: 9. He would raise that with you—Where are you? Where are you in relation to God, who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, see Rom 8: 32. Where are you in your soul’s history with God? Perhaps you are trying to hide, maybe not too far away, maybe far away; however great the distance the sheep went, the shepherd covered it. So divine love is going out to find you—wherever you are. I do not know what kind of a hiding place Adam had but God found him. I do not know what kind of a hiding place you may have; the world is full of them, bolt holes they call them; they think they are safe from all that may happen. God will find you; He can find you out wherever you are, perhaps by just a word in your conscience.

This sheep went away, it maybe did not mean to go too far, it just saw a green field and went there, then it saw another field and went there. The world has many ways of appealing to you, it could be your work or maybe sport; different things appeal to you from what appeals to me. You do not mean to go far away, but you just go after something that you like, something that appeals to you, and it soon becomes your all absorbing object. Now, friend, if you do not feel you have got away from God, let me tell you this, He misses you. The shepherd missed this sheep before the sheep missed the shepherd. You may go into circumstances where you can surround yourself with friends and fill your time, but God misses you and He is prepared to go after you, as it says of this shepherd, that he went after it until he found it. May He find you tonight. Do not put up any more barricades; may you allow the charm of the glad tidings and the appeal of divine grace to come into your heart tonight—Come to the Saviour! Come to know something of that grace that has gone

so far; what a journey He has taken. Think of Him coming from heaven! It is not only that Jesus went a journey from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. He came from heaven: He came from glory, from conditions that the mind of man can never penetrate or fathom as the hymn says—

From heav'n the Saviour came. (Hymn 245)

Think of His coming here as Luke would present Him. O, what He brought in, the angels saw it; they saw there in that Babe a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. He had to take that condition if He was going to find you. He had to come into circumstances of flesh and blood if He was going to reach you where you are. I would say again, the journey was not only from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, it was from the glory to the cross. What a journey! What steps that shepherd took to find that sheep. It involved for him a condition that was, may I say, strange to him. It involved circumstances that were not His home. What feelings He felt as He trod that way. He said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven roosting-places; but the Son of man has not where he may lay his head", Matt 8: 20. He is the Saviour, the Saviour of sinners, treading His way through this world; putting up with those circumstances where there was nothing here in which He could find His home or minister to Him, that He may find you, as the sheep that was lost. Was it worth it? He made that calculation. That is the value He placed on the sheep. You may say, well there are ninety and nine there, that may do. No, my friend, He wants you. Perhaps all in your family have trusted the Saviour, but He wants you. Where are you? Again I ask, are you lost? May the appeal of the journey of the Shepherd come home to you. Open your heart, my friend, to the charm of His grace and allow the love of Jesus to fill it—Oh come to the Saviour! This sheep, I believe, became weary. You will get weary, if you have not proved it already. One who leaves the circle of divine love will get weary but the Saviour would seek you. Oh, allow the wealth of grace to lift you, as it says, "he lays it upon his own shoulders, rejoicing", and brings it back to the house. How great that journey, but Oh, the strength of the Saviour! The Shepherd is able to carry you on His shoulders in the strength of love that has been proved in the journey He took. It says that we who partake

of blood and flesh through fear of death were all our lifetime subject to bondage, Heb 2: 15. But He, that blessed glorious Man, came into these conditions that He might break that bondage, that He may lift you on to His shoulders beyond what death could do. The fear of death holds man in bondage, sin holds man in bondage; but He, that blessed Man on the cross has broken the power of Satan, He has broken the power of death. We preach a risen glorious Saviour able to save. Has He found you? Are you still making it difficult? Are you still seeking to find something to appease your conscience? Oh allow the charm of the Saviour's love to come into your heart!

This piece of silver had got out of the way, but it had some value. The Lord values every one. The valuation is measured by the journey that He took. So there is this coin but it is lost. It was out of circulation; it was not available. He wants you to be in circulation. So, it says the woman lights a lamp and sweeps the house and seeks carefully until she find it. Maybe there is sweeping tonight for you. The lamp has been lit, the light of the gospel of the glorious risen Saviour is shining in all its lustre, and the sweeping is going on. Often when you lose something it goes into an awkward corner, maybe under a piece of furniture where the cleaner does not reach. Maybe you do not miss it this week, but there comes a time when you miss the article, and you say, Where is it? Perhaps we have to move the furniture and sweep carefully. Oh, how diligently He is searching for you tonight. It is an individual matter, one coin. There it is in an awkward corner. Maybe you have got into a corner that is not often looked at. He is searching tonight to bring you in, to realise your full value. Oh, the Lord will make use of you. He is seeking tonight to bring you into circulation among the others. Why remain away? What a circle He would bring you into.

Then we come to the son, he had gone away as well, gone away maybe further. It brings it very much closer home to us, but he was never out of the father's thoughts. Perhaps you have not prayed very much lately. Maybe you were brought up to pray, but you felt you could get along without it. God has missed hearing your voice. You may have

thought that it has not made much difference to your life that you have not prayed. I will tell you this, He has missed hearing your prayers. He has missed hearing what you would have to say. This son, I suppose, began that he did not pray and his father missed him every day. The father would be saying, every time he went home, 'Has he made any contact?' If the son did not feel it, how the father felt it! Well, friend, what has the world got to offer you? He began to be awakened with some remembrance of the father's house and the father's grace, and he says, "I will rise up and go to my father". He is making his way back. Will you make the first step now? Do not wait until the end of the meeting; resolve to make the first step now—"I will rise up and go to my father". He is still his father. His father's love never waned towards him, he was longing to enfold him in his arms; his love was still there for him although he was in the far country. So he comes to prove the blessedness of that father's love. He says, "I will rise up", I say again, Rise up now! Take these simple words into your heart—"I have been hiding long enough; I have been out of circulation long enough'. Come to the Saviour! Come to know the fulness of divine grace that is shining. I tell you this, the son came into blessings beyond his imagination; he came into a place of favour beyond whatever he was worthy of, beyond whatever he could have expected, he came into the father's embrace and the wealth of the father's house. The journey was not so long because the father covered it. What a journey Christ has covered; what a price He paid on the cross. That holy, perfect, sinless One, His blood was shed, as the hymn says—

Shed for rebels, shed for sinners,
Shed for me. (Hymn 167)

Can you say that—"Shed for me"? God fully values that blood and on account of it can righteously forgive repentant sinners. The work has been done, the price has been paid. The blood can atone for all that has come in in your history, it has satisfied the just claims of God's throne. Now through confessing and believing in the name of Jesus you can be saved—"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved", Rom 10: 9.

May the verity of these words ring in your ears if you are still at a distance from God. May they ring in your ears if you have not yet come into the joy and blessedness of God's house. As I said, the blood of Jesus enables God righteously to cover the distance. It enabled Him righteously to say, Bring out the best robe. You say the son had not said enough; you need to say less than you think—"if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart", is all in one verse. The son here would have made a speech; that is all part of the devil's schemes, it is all part of what is drawn up as a hiding place. You are not worthy—of course you are not—but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son is my standing. The hymn writer says—

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

That is the ground for God to bring out the best robe and clothe the repenting sinner. Oh, the father's joy as he said, "Bring out the best robe". It is there waiting for you, my friend, you do not have to be measured. The work has been done by Jesus and He has been raised from among the dead; the work has been done, and the best robe is ready for you. Come into the circumstances where you can wear it. You cannot wear the best robe in the far country; you cannot wear a ring on your hand and shoes on your feet in circumstances of debauchery and sin, what use would they be? Come into the blessing through confessing Jesus as Lord, into the wealth of divine resources. Oh, I would have liked to have heard the father saying it! He said it with exultation, there was not a voice of dissent. The prayers are answered, "Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it". You like to think of the son's feelings as he saw that robe. He might have said, I am not worthy of this, but he would only have to look at the father's face to know that everything depended on and was flowing from the father. The father's joy was in the son clothed with the robe. That was not only for the son, although it assured him undoubtedly of the father's changeless love and favour, but the robe, and the ring, and the shoes were for the father too. God wants to see you at your best, not in those circumstances of sin and what sin may do to you. He has provided everything that you may be seen at your best. I do not go into what these things speak of, they are very beautiful

in their meaning, I just say this, they speak of Christ. When God sees a sinner having confessed his sins, what He sees is your appreciation of Jesus. Oh what a change from being lost! The father says, “put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry—for this my son ... was lost and has been found”. The whole of heaven is ready tonight to praise the Lord for every soul that comes to Him.

Oh, what a Saviour! What a God! What joy there is in hearing of a soul coming to Christ. Would it be for a poor sinner coming back?—No, He says, “for this my son”—Oh, what He thinks about a repenting sinner! What God thinks about you is more than ever you could think about yourself. You do not work up to it, but allow the wealth of divine grace to arrest and come into your heart. He does not say anything about his being a sinner, he says, “this my son was dead”. How unresponsive he was. How far from God we were, dead in trespasses and sins, but He would bring us into blessing—“this my son was dead and has come to life, was lost and has been found. And they began to make merry”. God does not just forgive our sins. The sheep, the piece of silver, and the son, were all left in the house. He brings a repenting sinner into what He has provided. He does not say, ‘Well your sins are forgiven, go and do better’. No, He says, ‘Come and enjoy what I have provided and stay in it’. Friend, come into divine blessing and enjoy it, in the name of the Lord Jesus.

MALVERN

1st September 1991



THE LOVE OF GOD

Ephesians 3: 14-19

John 17: 23, 25, 26

I would seek the Lord's help to speak a little about love, something that is learned from God alone, and has come into display in this dispensation as never so fully before; for God has become known in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Not that it was absent in the previous dispensation, but for God to make His love fully known to us it required the incarnation, that a divine Person has taken His place in manhood's form, that love may shine in its blessed fulness as neither creation, nor law, nor prophets could ever express it. In that blessed Person God is commending His love to us. It is a wonderful thing that God should commend His love to us, as it says, "but God commends his love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us", Rom 5: 8. It has been expressed in its fulness in the death of His Son. What a God! In that He should move like this towards us when we were sinners, guilty, and hell-deserving; He commends His love to us in the death of Christ. Now that is not all, but He shed His love abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It requires divine Persons to express love, and to bring it within our range in all its blessed fulness. So it shines for us today in all its fulness. Had it been in any less a personage, it may well have been diminished, but in the Person of Christ it still shines in all its fulness, in spite of all that has come in.

Paul speaks of that too, that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, see Rom 8: 39. So I believe the Lord would encourage us at this time to grow in a deeper sense of His love, that we may be more formed in our appreciation of Himself. Paul speaks of love in 1 Corinthians 13, as a quality in itself that never fails; he says that other things are to be done away, but now abide these three things, faith, hope and love, three characteristics of the Christian life, but the greater of these is love, see 1 Cor 13: 13. Faith is essential in these days, and hope to strengthen and sustain us, but when the need for these is done away love will remain, and will shine in all its blessed

fulness in God's eternal home. So Paul says to follow after love as though it is to be our leader, it is to direct us and to guide us; as we said, it has its source in God alone, and we learn it as it has been displayed in Christ. We appreciate God's mercies that reach us in all our need, but His love is behind all that. We appreciate His care for us and His wisdom, but these things are the way love has taken to commend itself to us in His wisdom, and in His grace, and in His mercy. We may say it is love adapting itself to our needs and our circumstances, but behind all these activities there is the greatness of His heart of love. I think He would encourage us to come to know love in its fulness in Himself. Love in its fulness was not exactly learnt in the wilderness, although it was there, but what shines in the wilderness is His mercy and His grace and His patience. As Mr Darby says—

In the desert God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found—
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy;
All His grace shall there abound. (Hymn 76)

But I think to know the love of God in its blessedness the people had to come into the land, and what did they find there? Not exactly manna to meet their need, but they found there trees that they had never planted, houses they had never built, wells and springs flowing in all their blessed fulness. Typically, in the land God is shining in all His fulness, but the hindrance to enjoying it is on our side. So I think God in His approach to us commending His love in the Person of Christ, meeting our sins and our need on the way, is all to bring us to Himself, that we may know Him and the fulness of His love.

That is what Paul speaks of here in Ephesians, "being rooted and founded in love". This passage and John 17, are both prayers. I think there is an insight into the affections of the Lord Jesus and of Paul in these prayers. Paul is not exactly ministering here, he is bowing his knees to the Father. We would have liked to have heard the Lord Jesus and heard Paul pray; you like to hear brothers pray; there is liberty to speak to and with God that we may not have with one

another, and in our prayers our hearts and our motives are all laid bare. That is what Paul is doing here, he is bowing his knees that they may be “rooted and founded in love”; great minister is he was, he realised that only God could endear Himself and establish the saints like this. We often, and rightly, pray in deep exercise before meetings like these, but I believe there is more need for prayer and exercise after the meetings, that is the idea of being rooted and founded, it takes time; as going over matters in the presence of God that the seed may not be lost; that the cares of this life may not spoil what divine love would sow in our hearts. That is what Paul is doing here, he is praying that the ministry may be effective in the hearts of the saints.

So I think “rooted and founded”, is, as we speak, in the land. The children of Israel were never meant to dwell in the wilderness, they were there far too long. As we take root, we grow and are strengthened in the present enjoyment of the love of God. It is not so easy to upset a lover. We know in practical matters we can be very free where love is; we can say things that in other circumstances may give offence, but where there is bond of love and understanding, the bond is maintained in spite of what may need to be corrected. That was Paul’s great exercise for Corinth that their hearts should be expanded. It was the one thing, I may say, that was needed most at Corinth. They needed help as to public order and what they were allowing, but the great deficiency at Corinth, as so generally, was love. That is why Paul devotes a whole chapter to it, because the whole thing can be corrected where love is in active enjoyment and expression. So Paul’s exercise is that being rooted and founded, they would not be easily moved. Many exercises come into our lives and experiences; God Himself may bring in ways of discipline as He needs to, but in all His ways is His hand of love. So there is a need to know the Father better, that we may not be grieved through His necessary disciplinary ways with us, nor be rebellious and murmuring, but that we may understand that behind all His ways is His heart of love. He speaks of chastening us, but chastening us as sons, see Heb 12: 5. He speaks of leading the saints with His eye upon them, see Ps 32: 8. He would

leave an impression in all His ways of the greatness and strength of His love.

Paul, as rooted and founded in that love, says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?", Rom 8: 35. Some of the dear brethren here have known some of these things, but what sustains us in it all is the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. So God would lead us to be rooted and founded in love, that we may rise beyond the circumstances which so readily overwhelm us, to dwell in His love. Jude writing in a very dark day, says, "keep yourselves in the love of God". However bad the clouds may be on my side, the love of God is always shining in its blessed fulness in Christ Jesus our Lord. Mr Darby again says—

Still sweet 'tis to discover,
If clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, eternal Lover,
Towards me, as e'er, Thou'rt bright.

(Hymn 51)

The clouds may come in on our side, but there is no cloud upon Christ; love is still shining there in its fulness however long and dark the night may be. The bright and morning star has already arisen, bringing hope, and longing for His coming. Paul's desire here as to being rooted would result in the saints being more fruitful, there is no fruit without roots, and I believe there are no roots without proper feeding. The soil may be poor, as it is with us, but the plant can take root from good food. Part of the food of the priest was the breast of one of the offerings, reminding us of the love of Christ. As feeding on that love we become rooted and able to stand the storms of the present time. There was that in the offerings speaking of Christ that the priest was to make his food, that he might be able to carry out his service, that the system might be maintained in its fulness; and that is how things are going on today as we are feeding on Christ.

I think John was like that, he was the one who was leaning on the breast of Jesus in John 13; he was dwelling in

love. One thing you get as you lean on the breast of Jesus is a fresh view of the brethren; there you see the saints in all their glory. That is what you have in John 17, the breast of the high Priest with the saints upon it. Think of how He speaks about them, When I was with them I kept them in Thy Name, these that are in the world, I sanctify Myself for them. What a place they had on His heart! I think John had his view of the brethren as leaning on the breast of Jesus. As there he had a peculiar advantage that Peter did not have. When Peter wanted to ask a question he made a sign for John to ask it, showing the simplicity and sweetness that love gives to one that was leaning on His breast.

I commend that to you, that on the breast of Jesus we see the saints, and we see them shining in their beauty and lustre. Each one of the stones in the breastplate had a particular colour and character. It says they were in settings of gold, and they could never be removed. Many days in the wilderness journey, some would be almost overcome with difficulties, but that did not alter the shining of each stone on the breast of the priest. However I may view the brethren, that is how God views them, shining there in all their glory. I love to think of that chapter, Exod 28. The high priest went in with his garments of glory and beauty, as described there, and the light shone from the candlestick and illuminated the brightness of the stones. As he comes out, perhaps Judah or Dan may have to be corrected, but he had a view of them there shining in all their particular beauty. That is how love works, not ignoring the circumstances, nor what has to be taken account of, but handling the situation in love. I think that is how John writes his epistle. So he writes that remarkable verse, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren", 1 John 3: 14. That is a priest writing.

Here as we read in John 17, the Lord's desire is that the Father's love for the Son may be in them. On the holy mountain, He said, "This is my beloved Son"; the love of the Father for the Son shone in all its peculiar lustre, as it will for all eternity. Peter comes to see that and says, We were eyewitnesses of His majesty, see 2 Pet 1: 16. He has a glory that is His alone. You can understand that love resting there

in all its complacency, but Oh what grace, as He says in verse 23, “thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me”. That is love shining in all its blessedness. The Lord, in praying here, shows how much the saints mean to Him and desires that they may come into the enjoyment of that love. He says in verse 26, “And I have made known to them thy name ... that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them”, not only shining upon us but “may be in them”. It involves that the blessed Holy Spirit is in our hearts, being able to negate the features that would hinder and to encourage us to live in the blessed shining of His love. It says, not only that the love may be in them, but “I in them”. You see Christ will thus be in expression. As we said before, our measure and our formation is in love. Much as we need light and teaching, our measure and formation is love. Love, as I said, shines in all its fulness from God alone, but come near to us that it may be in us, that we may be marked by love. That is what Paul is saying to the Corinthians, whatever I have if I have not love I am nothing, see 1 Cor 13. A servant of the Lord used to encourage us to read that chapter substituting the word ‘love’ with ‘I’. So can I say, I have long patience? Can I say that I never fail? Can I say, I am kind? These things test us as to our formation, as feeding and leaning on the breast of Jesus. Instead of the character of hardness that marks us naturally, there is a new nature formed in the believer, and that nature is love. Peter says, “ye may become partakers of the divine nature”, 2 Pet 1: 4.

May we be encouraged to lean on the breast of Jesus, to understand in a better and fuller way the love of Christ; so that as formed in it we may be pleasing here to our Lord and Master, and provide some answer to the great expenditure there has been upon each of us. How much love has expended itself, but in the Spirit’s grace it has not been in vain. There is a present answer in the saints coming into the enjoyment of divine love, resulting in praise and glory to the name of God; coming to know God in His own blessedness, not only appreciating the mercies that have been bestowed upon us in our wilderness path, but coming to know God in the arrangements that He has made for Himself. It is like the people, typically, dwelling in the land, enjoying divine

provision, and enriching what is for His own glory and praise. It has often been spoken about, love away from home and love at home. Love comes out in mercy and grace and wisdom and kindness, coming into our circumstances, only to draw us to Himself to His own home of love, so that as formed in love we may be to the praise and glory of His name. May we be encouraged, as Jude says, To keep ourselves in the love of God (Jude 21), for His glory and praise. Amen.

BAD ENDBACH

12th October 1991



THE HOUSE OF GOD

Psalm 122: 1-9

Hebrews 3: 3-6; 10: 19-25

I trust there may be help to say a word as to the house of God. It is something I find very difficult to speak about without being misunderstood, because on the one hand we have today what would claim to be the house of God, in which is housed what is corrupt, and even what is infidel finds a place; on the other hand, we have persons who say that everything is broken down, that the house does not exist, that everything today is on an individual basis. Both these are wrong, and yet they are propounded quite widely. In the midst of it all there is what is to be experienced, although not claimed, as being the place where God dwells, where He is loved, and where He is served. May we all have grace to find our happy and blessed part in it. The epistles to the Corinthians and Timothy particularly give us instruction, so that in spite of all that has come in by what men have done, "Yet the firm foundation of God stands", 2 Tim 2: 19. What a comfort for faith! Whatever men may do or have done and are doing, the firm foundation of God stands. God's house is His building where, as I said already, He is loved and where He is served. Every exercised soul would seek to find their place in it. There is a place for you in God's house. The psalmist speaks about the swallow and the sparrow finding a place there, the most restless and the most worthless of birds, and yet they find a place in God's house, Ps 84: 3. What a blessed privilege it is to find a place where God has made the arrangements; where God has things according to His thoughts. I only say again, Have you found it? Have you found your place where God is loved and where He is served?

We could hardly speak about the house of God without speaking about Jacob. His history and exercises show us how we may come into it; and how we may find our lives transformed from labouring under the bondage of a master that would change our wages ten times and give us nothing, to find our place in the house of God where He gives us everything. Perhaps, like Jacob, you have gone your own way till now, with your own ideas and your own standards, yet

God may in His ways bring you to a point where He speaks to you about His house. Jacob says at first that it was a dreadful place, that exposes his heart; it exposes your heart and mine if we do not want to come into God's arrangements. You say that surely it is much happier, much easier for us to make our own arrangements and find our own ways, in a system where man's will and man's ways find free expression. Jacob was like that, he says, This is a dreadful place: I do not want to be restrained; I do not want to be always hearing about Christ, I would like to make my way myself. So he went on his way. I suppose most of us have had some of these thoughts; maybe some of us still have them. Perhaps you would like to be in an area where self can be expressed, and the things you want can be found. The sad thing is that there is all around us that which bears the name of Christ, and yet man's will and thoughts are given full expression there.

Jacob goes on his way and something happens in his life when he says, I cannot go on with this any longer. You know what happened to change Jacob's life? What began to change Jacob's life was the birth of Joseph. If it has not happened before, may it come into your heart tonight that God has another Man before Him, and that Man is Christ. If you read those chapters in Genesis, you will find that after Joseph was born, Jacob's life began to change. When you see Christ as the Man of God's choice, and that His thoughts are centred in Him, the arrangements of your life must become different. So Jacob says in effect, I cannot stay here where there is a semblance of Christianity, I must come into God's arrangements. He began to be concerned to make some move into an area where God's will prevailed. He found in those exercises very much what Paul brings up in Timothy, that in the midst of this great profession in which we are, there is a need to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. Jacob came to pursue some of these features. You come to examine the path that you are on—Is it righteous? Is it right that you should live to yourself? Is it right that you should be pursuing your own will and your own ways and your own arrangements? Is it righteous that you should accept Christ as your Saviour, and the benefits that have come from that precious blood having been shed on the cross to atone for

your sins, and still pursue your own ways, and your own will and your own ideas? It is not. Righteousness would involve that I make room for the claims of God and the claims of Christ. I know it is much more, but I give it that touch at this moment. Jacob began to see that it was not right that he should have tasted something of these benefits without making room for Christ, in type, to become supreme in his heart.

Later the word of God leads him to go up to Bethel, to the house of God, no longer a dreadful place, but a place where he can enjoy liberty. But on the way he is made fit to find his place there. It says that a man wrestled with him (see Gen 32: 24), and his name was changed, "Thy name shall not henceforth be called Jacob, but Israel", Gen 32: 28. God would like to give you a sense of changing your name. If you take up some of these exercises, as you seek to make room for Christ in your life, God would change your name. What for? To make you suitable to live in His house. What a place it is, a house of first-born ones. What a history was removed in that wrestling; it says in that chapter, a most beautiful word, "the sun rose upon him; and he limped upon his hip". He is saying, No longer do I want to please myself, no longer do I want my things, but I want to serve God. He is a limping man but a blessed man, no longer a scheming man, but a prince with God. God was making him fit for His house. God's house is where God dwells; it is where His arrangements prevail; not man's arrangements as in the great house; but the house of God, as I am speaking of it, is where God's arrangements prevail. I do not want to be misunderstood; because we know that the house of God in its widest sense includes every believer, that is the wide scope of it, but we can hardly identify that today in the breakdown. What I am speaking about now is the vital side of it, that is not only to be identified, it is to be experienced. I do not say where it is, but I say it can be found and Jacob found it; he found a place where God was honoured, where God was served, and he found a place where he could be at home in the presence of God. What a wonderful thing it is to be at home in the presence of God. God has made these arrangements, they are all centred in Christ. When the

disciples of John saw Him here, they said, “where abidest thou?” (John 1: 38), they saw something there that must have a home; He said, “Come and see”. I believe God would say to you as having begun a work in your soul, Come and see; find the place where My arrangements prevail; where there is to be found something in which I find My joy; where there is praise and glory to God in the assembly.

The psalmist says, “I rejoiced when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of Jehovah”. May I just make an application of that to the announcements that are made on Lord’s day morning of the meetings in the week. They bring a sense of joy. The prayer meeting would be an expression of the house of God. It says that about it indeed, “My house shall be called a house of prayer”, Matt 21: 13. We get that too in Timothy that there is to be intercession and prayer for all men, for nations and kings. So the prayer meeting would be an experience of being in the house of God. In what I say I would seek to elevate the assemblings of the saints. There is a danger of them becoming common, ordinary in our thoughts; but in the gathering together of the saints on right principles, there is an expression of the house of God. The prayer meeting would be that; not that a few people come together and some pray, but the prayers are to God in His house. What an elevation that would give to the prayer meeting. Solomon speaks about it when he says, “when they shall pray toward this place, and hear thou in thy dwelling-place in the heavens, and when thou hearest, forgive”, 1 Kings 8: 30. In the prayer meeting there is a sense of God’s ear being reached. I do not say that to weaken our individual prayers which have a great place in our experience and exercises.

The psalmist says, “I rejoiced when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of Jehovah”, the collective position is to be valued and esteemed, and the announcements on Lord’s day are to give a touch of dignity to the meetings. It has been spoken of as the anointing; there is something dignified that on the first day of the week these announcements are made that we will be gathered together for prayer and thanksgiving, for ministry, and for the reading of the Scriptures, which is another feature of God’s house, to enquire in His temple.

What a matter to come together with that in our minds! You say we come together to read the Scripture, we are reading in Matthew or Mark or whatever it may be, but we come together to an area of things, which in its vitality is the house of God. David speaks about that, coming into His temple to enquire of Him in it, yea more he says, “that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah”, Ps 27: 4. That is where God is known, in His house; He is displayed in creation unmistakably, but where do you expect to find an expression of God? Where do you expect to get the best impressions of Christ? It would be when the saints are gathered together on the principles and in the way in which I am speaking of it. As coming together, let us leave our own arrangements and what claims they have upon us. So as the announcements are made, we commit ourselves to being there, with a sense of joy as we look forward to the reading of the Scriptures.

Another great matter is the gospel. There can be no real preaching of the glad tidings save as the house of God is known and enjoyed. It has been well said no slave can be an evangelist. It is only as you enjoy the liberty and blessedness and fulness of God’s house that you can come out towards men in all the fulness of the blessing of God’s heart. In order to come out in the wealth of the glad tidings we must know the heart of God; we must know the kind of God that He is—ready to forgive, rich in mercy, abounding in goodness towards the sinner. All these things are learned in the house; so the glad tidings go out from the house, from persons who have been dwelling in His courts, who know something of His heart and the wealth of His love. I think that all enters into what David is rejoicing in here. Jerusalem was the place of God’s dwelling, “Jerusalem, which art built as a city that is compact together”. There was a Jerusalem that men had their hand in, but David is speaking here about what God had done, what He had built, the city of the great King; where God found His dwelling and His rest. I say again, from that sphere of things the gospel goes out to bring men in. The gospel does not go out just to relieve men of their sins, it goes out to relieve you of your sins surely, but also to bring you into the house of God as a son, as illustrated in what that young man

experienced in Luke's gospel, Luke 15. It is to bring you into all the wealth and blessings that are to be enjoyed in the house. These are available for every believer surely, but how few come into it. May you and I be among them.

So David here goes on to speak about the thrones of judgment. There is judgment expressed among the saints. The brethren may speak about some things and you may think they are hard; and maybe you maintain your own judgments; you think, Well, that is what I think about things. These things you know are not permissible in the house of God; it is where God's judgments are known, where His standards are upheld; it says, "For there are set thrones for judgement, the thrones of the house of David". They are always protective, not punitive in that sense, they are there that the divine mind may be known. It is a great matter to find the meeting proceeding and God's mind becomes known about exercises; it may not be my mind or my thoughts, or the thoughts that I have held heretofore. In the house of God there will be God's judgments expressed, and, dear brethren, they need to be honoured; they need to be accepted, indeed, but they need to be honoured, and they need to be embraced, and they become our standards. The standards of judgment as expressed in the house of God become the standards for my pathway, because my life, as Jacob's was, is to be lived in relation to God's house, and not in relation to my sphere of things. These things are testing but very blessed as we see that in the house is where Christ is enthroned.

David goes on to speak about these thrones, and he speaks about prayer as we have said, and he speaks about peace. The normal thing that pervades in God's house is a great sense of peace. In the type in the tabernacle, as Aaron went into the holy places, how calm it must have been; he must have been slow to come out because outside there were all kinds of troubles; but inside the whole thing was shut out, he was shut in to God. He was shut in there where there was the ark, the table, the lamp, divine light shining in all its blessed fulness and peace. Aaron must have proved it as he went inside. May we know more of it in our gatherings. It is foreign to the house of God that there should be unrest; it is foreign to God's dwelling place that there should be any

feeling of bitterness or strife. Let us remember, dear brethren, that in our gatherings together, in our local meetings, there is to be an expression and experience that we are in the house of God. We are not just there to air our views but we are there to listen. The main Speaker in the house of God is Christ. He is Son over it; His standard, His character, His features are to prevail.

In Hebrews 3, the writer says that He who has built it has more honour than the house. The house of God as I am speaking about it is all divine work, “he who has built all things is God”. Much could be said, if we were able, of the material He is using in the building; the boards of the tabernacle set up on those bases of silver speaking of the great redemptive work of Christ—all entering into the building and the forming of the material. So it says, “Christ, as Son over his house, whose house are we”. He is Son over it. He gives character to it in dignity and liberty. He is the same One who has shed His blood that we should be no longer strangers and foreigners, but should be of the household of God. How right that He should be Son over God’s house! What a place He has in the house, none shall move without Him, but when He moves everything will move. He gives the dignity to it and He gives the liberty in it, leading us into this area of things where we see Him in the glory of His Person; nothing needing to be done, but as Son over the house enjoying the company of His own; every one of them bearing His features; every one of them ready to respond, every eye fixed upon Him in His movements.

Well, it says, “whose house are we”—not will be then, but we are that now. So does Christ have His full way of liberty as Son over the house? Is He the point of reference, or is there some projection of man that would spoil the features and character of what is normal to the house of God? Let us ever seek to touch what is normal; however abnormal things may have been and are around us, the Spirit’s grace is here, the Spirit’s power is here, that we may touch something of what is normal in an area where Christ is known as Son over God’s house. In the types it is not the military man that is Son over the house, it is the Beloved, Solomon, who is Son over the house. David was restricted somewhat, I do not

Speak about that, but the one who was over the house was Solomon, typical of Christ the Beloved of God, and beloved of the saints. There will not be an eye there in that day to come but will behold Him and rejoice in His every movement. How about in the local gathering now? Do we come in faith? Do we come in expectancy that in the occasion of gathering, be it prayer or gospel preaching, or enquiry into the Scriptures, there will be some sense of the movements of the Son in the house. He is ready to move; He would be ever moving us inward and upward in relation to the great thoughts of God.

Well, it speaks too about His being a Priest over the house of God; it is to encourage us to approach now. It says, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness"—because we have a great Priest. It is not the high priest here, but it says, "a great priest", there is only One. He is distinguished in all His glory, and He is distinguished in making full provision for us that we may approach and enjoy the most blessed things. It says, "let us approach", having boldness for entering by the blood of Jesus—may that never be historical! The power of it, the blessedness of it should be there in every meeting. We need it in every meeting as we come together; a sense of the blood of Jesus that would touch me maybe in my conscience as to anything that may have happened in the day that may bring in defilement. There are the blood and the water; these things would affect us as we come to the meeting. If you look into the Old Testament and the types you would find them all there. There is the laver, the priest had to wash as he went in; and the further in he went the more holy and the more he had to be affected by the work of Christ in type. So as we come to the meetings we need to be affected by the blood of Jesus; that He has made the way at such cost. Can I project my thoughts and my way of thinking? Have I liberty to say what I think, when it has cost Christ so much to end the man that is so obnoxious to God? That is all in this new and living way.

Then it says, "and having a great priest over the house of God". He is there to make you feel at home. What a blessed thing to be at home in the presence of God. Beloved, unless we are, we shall not enjoy our portion nor will God have His. But you know God has made a way; Christ, as Priest over the

house of God is there dispensing what you need, that we may be at home in the dignity and blessedness of being in God's house, finding our true place there. It goes on, he makes it very practical, approaching, sprinkled, washed. He is not speaking here about sin in its grossness, but about things that may just spoil our enjoyment of the house of God. The great Priest is there to help us to get rid of these things; even our worries, even right exercises that we may be carrying. I think the great Priest is there to help us that we may be in relation to God and His things. What a system we have been brought into, and that, as I am speaking about it, is the house of God. I trust that we see it as being practical; not something that is unreal, not something that is unrealisable. I am sure there will be a chord struck in every true heart that has touched something of it, and may we through grace, as exercised know more of it, that God's name may be praised.

So it goes on to say, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together". That shows it is a present matter; it shows that it applies to our weekly gatherings, not forsaking them, but "encouraging one another, and by so much the more as ye see the day drawing near". Soon we shall be there in all its blessedness. The Lord says, "In my Father's house there are many abodes", John 14: 2. Meantime publicly, there is great admixture all around; in the midst of it all there is what is true, to be known for our blessing and for God's glory and praise. It is where He is praised. The psalmist says again, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be constantly praising thee", Ps 84: 4. May our hearts be led into that great note of praise that the Son would lead to God in the midst of all the confusion and breakdown.

When Aaron went in, he was there in the presence of the ark, typical of Christ, in all His blessedness; the table of shewbread, the saints in all their glory; the candlestick, the light shining. What a place it must have been! Aaron must have been slow to come out, but he came out with all the blessing of that place resting upon him. May we come out from the inside place to face what is false in the great house, as having been inside, knowing that there is a great Priest over the house of God who is able to sustain us, and knowing that Christ is there as Son over God's house setting its

standards and maintaining its glory. These things are going on, soon to issue in the Father's house above; soon to issue where every feature of God's work will be housed; where every family will find their eternal rest and God will be praised for all eternity. May we be exercised, amidst all the public confusion, to find our present living part in what is for God's glory and praise. For His Name's sake.

ABERDEEN

15th August 1992



THE PRESENT TIME

1 Peter 1: 1-9

Romans 8: 18

1 Corinthians 3: 9-16

I would like the Lord's help to say a word as to the "present time". In its widest application it would refer to this whole dispensation. There has never been a time like the present dispensation which has been enriched and illuminated by the fact that a Man has gone into heaven. There is a Man already in final conditions. That has never been before. We are in provisional surroundings and circumstances, but into them, as never before, has come the light of final conditions. In previous dispensations there was the idea of covenant, man's responsibility, but into this dispensation has shone the glory of a Man who has gone into heaven. As if that were not enough, scripture says He has gone into "heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us", Heb 9: 24. Nothing I could say could enhance the richness of these words. He has gone into heaven to appear before the face of God for us. So while we are in provisional circumstances and surroundings, the present time has been enriched by the light and glory of final conditions. This is to regulate us in our present circumstances. Paul says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are the most miserable of all men", 1 Cor 15: 19. Our aspirations, our objectives, our plans for our careers, are they bounded by death? Is that going to terminate all the aspirations that are beating in your heart tonight? May our hearts be filled with the glory of another world. The embracing of it is to enrich us, to encourage and strengthen us in the midst of the present surroundings. You remember the Sadducees brought to the Lord the case of a woman, enquiring, 'In the resurrection whose wife would she be?' They reasoned round it, how could it work out? The Lord's answer to that was about another world. He says, "they who are counted worthy to have part in that world, and the resurrection from among the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage", Luke 20: 35. The light of that world can solve countless difficulties. Administrative matters may come up or questions in our

histories and we may enquire what men would say about them. The light of another world brings a different viewpoint into the present circumstances. That world has different standards by which it administers, that world of which Christ is the blessed centre. The Lord would encourage our hearts by the light of that coming into these difficult times in which we are. Even as the people were in the wilderness, God was bringing to them the light of the land. He says to them, “When ye come into the land of your dwellings”, Num 15: 2. They were not to dwell in the wilderness. They were to pass through it. Some of them died there. It was all they knew. How sad that was. Caleb and Joshua came into the land they longed for. May the longings grow in our hearts for that heavenly land we love!

I read in Peter because there we have persons who were suffering under the governmental circumstances that God had brought in. That is our position today. I do not use that word lightly. The economic problems of today in this country, you may say, are in the government of God, and we are part of it. The recession, unemployment, people having to economise, these are all part of God’s ways. Peter here is encouraging the brethren not only to accept them but to live in them in the light of another day. There is, too, what has come into religious circles, scattering, reproach, dispersion. People are suffering, and we suffer through not having our brethren. We never come to this place without thinking of some of them. We miss them. God misses them. What are we to do—despair? Some have looked on the breakdown and have given up. They have said, Things are so broken and confused, how can we know a right way? We see here in Peter, that in the midst of these happenings, God is bringing in the light and glory of another set of circumstances where all depends on Him. Peter says, “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”. These verses bring out that divine Persons are very near and very real to us. The Father has had to do with us. Is He going to change His mind? In the ways of God there are things that we pass through individually and collectively, but the government of God is always for us. It may be reducing us. Maybe we got too big. It may cause us to pull in a bit, but I believe in the

end it is all to cause us to value divine things increasingly, that our faith and hope might be in God. We may rest in these other things. These people were driven out of their country. They did not only lose their jobs, but they were driven out of their country. But Peter says, Be that as it may, you are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. Before ever these happenings were necessary in His ways to chasten and discipline us, He elected, He chose to have us. He passed by many others. Elect, not because men have made the selection, but “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by sanctification of the Spirit, unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”. See how God has come into this dispensation. Divine Persons have made themselves very real to us and very near to us, and maybe the sorrows and sufferings of the present time are to make the Father and the Spirit and the Son all the more real to us. They never change. If in my ways I have departed, the Father still looks on me as one of His sons. There is no mistake in that, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. The economy has come onto view. The Persons were always there but they have come into these relationships in the present time, in grace making themselves indispensable to us. May we learn, dear brethren, that the government of God is for us.

In it all there is “the proving of your faith”. But before that Peter speaks of, “an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance, reserved in the heavens for you”. It is the great goal on which our eye is to be set. No man could ever propose this for you. It is reserved in the heavens beyond the reach of man and unaffected by the breakdown; unaffected too by your history and mine. God’s ways and His thoughts and His counsels all revolve round Christ, “a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”. There is a whole new world opened up, founded on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that is the light that has come into these circumstances in which we are at the moment. He is the blessed assurance that we will come into it, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead. What powers were there against Christ. Scripture says the kings of the earth were there against the Lord and against His Christ;

Herod, Pontius Pilate, the nations, all the power that men could muster was gathered together against God, Acts 4: 26, 27. They sealed the stone at the tomb. The whole power of the world that the enemy could energise was there to keep Christ in death, but He has been raised from among the dead, given a place of glory and honour, the blessed assurance that we have an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance. It is all centred in Him, and the power that raised Christ from among the dead is working for us, on our behalf. Paul says, “all things are yours, Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death ... all are yours”, 1 Cor 3: 21, 22. Our faith is being proved. Where is it? Is it in a company? Is it determined by the numbers in the company? Is it determined by the social standing of persons? No, our faith is in a Man who has been raised. The amount of it may vary, it may be “faith as a grain of mustard seed” (see Matt 17: 20), but what is important is that it is in a Man who has been raised. We are being tested at the moment as to our links with Christ.

When other props on which we have leaned are broken and removed, we are brought to lean more heavily on Christ. Our faith is in a Man who is already in final conditions. May He become increasingly precious to us! That is what Peter is trying to develop with these suffering brethren, “To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious ... To you therefore who believe is the preciousness”, 1 Pet 2: 4–7. How precious Christ is! How real is it to me that God, through grace, has given me to have part in another order of things outside of what this world can provide? It says, “the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold”. It will go through. What is worked out through faith will go through from these provisional circumstances into eternal conditions. The faith of the saints, the righteousnesses of the saints, that is what comes out through the proving of our faith. The Lamb’s wife is said to have made herself ready and be clothed in fine linen which is the righteousnesses of the saints, see Rev 19: 8. What the day will declare of the proving of our faith! Peter says it is much more precious than of gold though it be proved by fire,

and it will be found to praise and glory and honour in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That is what we are looking for, we do not expect wonderful things here. We are thankful for the mercy that meets us and helps us through, but what we are looking for is the revelation of Jesus Christ, the One who at the moment is hidden from the world. We are looking for the time when He will be manifested. He will not be alone then, but the saints will be manifested with Him in glory. What a time it will be! What a tribute it is to the Spirit's work that there has been gathered up in this present time a vessel which will be eternally the counterpart of Christ. Be it in administration or be it in praise Godward, whatever it is, He will never be alone again. Once He was alone, once He tasted loneliness as no one else could ever do, but when He is manifested the assembly will be with Him. Those whose faith has been proved will be justified too in the revelation of Jesus Christ. It will be seen then that what men despised was precious to heaven. May it encourage us, dear brethren, in all that there is at the moment, that we are looking for the revelation of Jesus Christ. How worthy He is to be revealed! All shall bow in honour and tribute to Him then. "Whom, having not seen, ye love", he says, "on whom though not now looking" with the natural eye, "but believing, ye exult with joy unspeakable". May we be helped, dear brethren, to have more of this "joy unspeakable and filled with the glory". Peter then says, "receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls". It is not body salvation; it is soul salvation. The saints are suffering in their bodies, there is much weakness, but this is what is vital. May our hearts be strengthened in these ways that God is passing us through, the hand of His love lying behind them all. May our feelings be developed as we feel the present time, but may we see that our faith is nourished, and seek to nourish and stimulate faith in one another.

Paul speaks about the sufferings of the present time. He says they are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory. How real they were! He was soon to be in Rome, bound with a chain. I do not think he changed his thoughts. I do not know how much he had suffered to this point, but he had known what it was to be in a city shut up and to escape the

hands of men by being let down through the wall in a basket. He had known humiliation and the plots of the Jews. He says, "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory". He did not speak about them too much. We may speak too much about the sufferings of the present time and not enough about the coming glory. Later, as I said, Paul was in this city, bound with a chain. I like to think of one and another going to visit him. You can think of them saying to him, 'Well, Paul, that is a heavy chain you have round you'. Perhaps a hard soldier was standing by his side. Paul's answer would refer to the coming glory. He would not allow them to speak too much about the sufferings of the present time, real as he felt them, and as we are meant to feel them. As they were visiting Paul, perhaps taking him a present, they would be thinking of his sufferings, but if they looked over his shoulder maybe Paul was writing to the Ephesians about the counsel of divine love. Perhaps when they went in he was praying, and maybe they would hear his prayer, "I bow my knees to the Father ... of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named", Eph 3: 14, 15. There is a man who believed that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory. May our hearts accept Paul's reckoning. It was not a light matter with him. He had weighed it all up and the balance is all on one side, the coming glory. The sufferings are not worthy to be compared. He said no more about it. He did not check the books again to see whether he had made a mistake. The matter was finished in his eyes. The coming glory shone within him. How real is it to us, dear brethren?

It may be tonight we shall be ushered into it, but it is coming anyway. The fulness of it will be the day of display, but for us who believe it will be when we see Him. John says, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is", 1 John 3: 2. That will not be public, it will be private, and John's heart was longing for it. How great and blessed the change will be when we see Him, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is". Do we know much about Him, dear brethren, as He is? It has been well said, 'We may know more about Jesus as He was than Jesus as He is'. It is what He is today, what He is in heaven, the same Man as the Man of the

gospels, the Man who was here in humiliation, we shall see Him then in all His personal glory. What a sight! The same Man but the surroundings will be different. It is like the mount of transfiguration. The Man who went undistinguishable from the rest of men, we may say, but on that holy mount His garments became changed. His face shone as the sun. Oh, what a sight Peter had! You can understand Peter encouraging the saints as he had a sight of the glory in the face of Jesus Christ. How precious the mount of transfiguration was to Peter! You can understand how he would bring out in his epistle the majesty that was in Christ. Majesty is not in the governments of this world. Majesty belongs to Jesus. Governments may be persecuting the saints today, but majesty in its finality is in the hands of Christ. Things are working out from Him. Paul says, "the coming glory to be revealed to us". May we be encouraged to speak more about it than the sufferings of the present time. We are not unfeeling, but may the coming glory be more real to us. The service of God goes on by overcomers, in whose hearts the light of the coming glory is precious. They are strengthened in the Spirit's grace to give glory and honour and praise to their blessed and glorious Lord.

In Corinthians we have the collective setting as to the present time. Paul is writing to this company where man's will was very strong. Present circumstances at Corinth were stamped, you might say, by man. Paul has to write to them that that is not how things stand. There was mixture at Corinth as there is with us. To correct that Paul strove in that local company to present Jesus Christ, that Man alone. The great leaders at Corinth are all put out of court as Paul presents Jesus Christ and Him crucified, see 1 Cor 2: 2. So he is bringing before them, and before us, the foundation, "other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ". It has been laid. It is the ground on which we would seek to gather. It is what is to give character to the local assembly. We should just test ourselves as to the ground we are on, to use a common expression. Is our ground of gathering this foundation, Jesus Christ? There are many companies, but what is the foundation that has been laid? In his second epistle to Timothy Paul speaks of the

foundation of God, “the firm foundation of God stands”, 2 Tim 2: 19. That is the general position. What men may do brings in confusion but there is what stands that can be laid hold of. This is not quite the same but it has the same character. “Other foundation can no man lay”. There has been interference with what Paul has said. That is the day we are in, men have interfered with the apostle’s teaching and have introduced something else; churches that have men’s names in them, for example. How can that be a foundation or ground of gathering? Paul says, “other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”. Our gathering together is to be in accord with that precious blessed Man, Jesus Christ.

Paul says, “if any one build upon this foundation”. We gather together and what is before us is this Man, Jesus Christ, no other man. At Corinth there were other men, and the saints may have patterned themselves after some of those leaders, taken on their habits and so on. Paul says the gathering is to be marked by no other man but Jesus Christ. So he says, “if any one build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones”. Can I bring a touch into the local meeting that is in accord with this Man, Jesus Christ, or am I bringing in something of myself, or of a party leader? Am I promoting some person that appeals to me, or is what I am contributing in the local assembly patterned after and in accord with the foundation which is Jesus Christ. Paul is really saying that if you give out a hymn in the meeting, or make a remark in the reading, or give a word in the ministry meeting, is it in accord with the foundation? Is what I am contributing promoting Jesus Christ? Well, to obtain these things you have to be a miner. You do not just gather them on the way to the meeting. You do not just put out your hand and pick what is on the by-ways. Gold, silver and precious stones are mined, they involve divine workmanship. Did ever man make gold? They have tried it, but this is referring to what God alone can make. There are no imitation pearls there. Gold, silver and precious stones refer to what is gained through exercise by looking at the foundation. So our contributions (and we all make some contribution in our ways, our habits, our dress, our attitude), are they in accord

with the foundation? You see the brethren coming in and you see something of Christ in their histories; you can take account of the gold, the silver and the precious stones. There may be other things, but may we be encouraged to contact the gold, the silver and the precious stones in one another and seek to stimulate that. Paul says, "if any one build upon this foundation". So let us look at our contributions to the local meeting in our manner of life, our habits, our attitude to life. Are they in accord with the foundation which is Jesus Christ? Nothing else! Jesus Christ, that Man who had endeared Himself to them, that is the foundation.

He says there are other things, but each will be made manifest, the day will declare it, because it will be revealed in fire. There are things about us that will be burned up, "but he shall be saved". But how blessed to have part in contributing something that will go through the fire. It will be tested but it goes through. It is all the brighter, all the richer, all the more valued as it has gone through the fire. It says, "the fire shall try the work of each what it is". That is very sobering. We are apt to become very loose as to what we may bring in and the standards that we employ. There are two points—one, we look to the foundation, which is Jesus Christ, and the other, we are looking on to the day when the fire will try the work of each. There is nothing which passes His holy gaze. Careless words, a careless manner of handling divine things, a wrong spirit, these things do not pass by His gaze, "the day shall declare it". We do not look on it with fear, but in order that in that day we may be well-pleasing unto Him. May the day in which the work will be tried thus regulate us. Spurgeon had a dream one night, during a most successful period of his ministry, in which someone appeared to him who said that he was going to analyse his zeal. He took it and ground it all down in a mortar and at the end of the day it was analysed. Spurgeon awaited the report, thinking that it would be good. The report said, Zeal to God three per cent, the rest man. He said he prayed as never before, Lord save me from myself. He saw that previously mixture had come into his service, but now he saw that the whole point was to glorify Christ, to magnify Him. So that, "If

the work of any one which he has built upon the foundation shall abide, he shall receive a reward”.

The Lord has committed certain things to us, the parable of the minas would bring that out. The Lord has committed something to us all. There is a very beautiful touch in that parable where it says, “Trade while I am coming”, Luke 19: 13. He might have said, ‘Trade while I am away’, but that would not have been the same. He says, “Trade while I am coming”. So in the trading, the contributions we are making, we are looking on to that day, to the time when, “the day shall declare it ... and the fire shall try the work of each what it is”. May our hearts be sobered and yet encouraged to fill out our part in the local gatherings of the saints. So Paul goes on, “Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God”. What beautiful adornment the temple had. Are those glorious precious stones and the gold that the temple was adorned with to be marred by man’s intrusion? No, dear brethren. “Do ye not know”, he says. At Corinth, with their parties and their habits and customs, they must have been arrested by that word. May it arrest us too, in each local company where we are, small, feeble it may be, “Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God”. It is to enhance the local gathering in our eyes and may it enhance our contributions to it, so that in every place where God has placed His name, there is what is according to His mind and for His glory, and for His glory alone. May it be so, for His Name’s sake!

GRANGEMOUTH

14th November 1992



THE BREAD OF GOD

John 6

Philippians 2

RT I seek help to speak about this bread the Lord speaks of. In the earlier verses it is the bread of God, what has come within our range to be appropriated and to be built up in. In the time when there were those going away, as the chapter speaks about, a time when there was a lot of inferior food about, the Lord brings in this food, food which abides. We all know the benefits naturally of good food, the kind of constitution it builds up, it helps throw off disease and can stand when other things may seek to dull the sensibilities. There are advantages of good food. The Lord brings it here in Himself within our reach; first of all, in the incarnation, the bread has come down out of heaven. It says in Isaiah 55, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?", v 2. Why would we fill our minds and souls with things that are not bread, it is not going to stand. The Lord speaks here about what has come down out of heaven. What He has brought down with Him! In this chapter it has come down out of heaven, now He says, "He that has eaten my flesh", an allusion to His death, and He says, "*he* also who eats me", an allusion to where He is. How much there is that has come on to our view, of Christ, to nourish our hearts and give us stamina and strength in the current winds of change that are around us, that we may stand as those who are true and loyal and have an appreciation of our glorious and living Lord.

We have read in these passages, and we may not have time to speak of them all, but I think they show what Peter had appropriated in the death of Christ, and they show too how Paul appropriated it, it was everything to him, Christ was everything to Paul. That is the effect of this kind of food. These matters are deep in one sense, but very precious, very testing and yet very attractive, and they would hold our hearts in relation to what Christ has provided. Such a cost, a cost that we shall never fathom, a cost that caused Him to come down out of heaven. What a contemplation for our souls and what He brought down with Him that there may be another order of Man before our gaze. Philippians says that

we should be formed in it, Paul was formed in it. Philippians 2 is seeking that the saints should be formed in it through feeding on Him and having this precious food entering into our souls.

JW Do you think that the fact that it says that He came down brings the character of manhood, the lowly Man, that marked Him, and as we feed on that we would become like Him.

RT John the baptist got a view of it, he says, “Behold the Lamb of God”, John 1: 29. He had seen many men, he had seen the professors, but as Jesus came onto his view he says, “Behold the Lamb of God”. As a Man of another character filled his soul he says, “He must increase, but I must decrease”, John 3: 30. I think that is the effect of this bread that has come down out of heaven. There is nothing here to nourish the soul, nothing here to build up this kind of man that is going to go through. Peter says, “we have believed and known”, (John 6: 69); the bread that had come down out of heaven. What he brought in with Him; another order, another character, love and grace. He brought in grace to our weary sin-stained universe, but lowliness too. These features have been brought within our reach. John speaks too of the things, the things that have come, things that we have handled, contemplated, 1 John 1: 1. What has come on to our view; “He that believes on me has life eternal. I am the bread of life”.

JW He is indispensable to us, and there is no lack outside of Him.

RT These things are very true, are they true to us? It was true to Paul and true to Peter. It is a good word you use; this bread is indispensable. It shows that all the other breads that you eat are going to lead to death. All the other things that may be built up by the food that comes in, are all going to end in death, but here it says, “He that believes on me has life eternal. I am the bread of life.”

DEB Do you make a distinction between the use of the word ‘bread’ and the use of the word ‘flesh’ in John’s gospel?

RT Well the idea of the bread is referring to the substantiality, concentrated nourishment. “Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread?” There are no husks about bread! It is the thought of what would satisfy you. Then the flesh is showing how near it has come to us, it has come within our range, it has come to us through intelligible form. What would you say about it.

DEB I was only interested in it! The references to flesh always involve the Lord’s death. Does the bread involve death in quite the same way?

RT The primary thought is the incarnation, I think. He went into death, but He took a condition that He may touch death; it says, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”, John 1: 14. He took a condition in which He could die, it was laid down in death. It brings it very near to us, it brings it within our reach, “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”. I think the allusion to the bread is in contrast to all the other things that might satisfy and build up another kind of constitution that is prone to disease and prone to deflection, but the idea of the bread brings in what would satisfy and help us to stand and be strengthened with some stamina.

JM It says in chapter 1, “In him was life”, v 4, and then here He says, “As the living Father has sent me and I live on account of the Father”. Do you think that what has come within our range is a life in which there is nothing of this scene whatsoever, and that is intended to be reproduced in us?

RT I think that would be implied in the bread that He has brought in life! Every other man brought in death. From the moment we are born, death is there, but He brought in life. It is very good food, food that builds up, food that has “life eternal”; He brought it in. The scripture says bread “out of heaven”. Adam very soon came into the line of death and every other man, but here was One who came in and “In him was life, and the life was the light of men”. It was there to be appropriated, shone into our hearts and now it is here to be appropriated, to be partaken of that we may have life. It goes against the stream, that life can look beyond death, to look into the very heavens itself as our present eternal home.

DJH Are these things the things that Paul speaks of, the things of Jesus Christ? “For all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ”, Phil 2: 21. I was thinking that that seems to suggest that there is quite a range for us to occupy ourselves with, the “things of Jesus Christ”.

RT That would be an interesting enquiry, what those things are! Here is the time of being life, it says He brought in life. It is one of the things He has brought into a weary sin-stained universe, He has brought in life where there was death. Well, do I want to feed on life? The kind of life that He has brought in is to be our food that we may live. He says here “He that believes on me” and “*he* also that eats me”, we may eat of it and not die. It lifts our horizon does it not?

DJW Did Mr Taylor not say, it is life out of death for us. If we appropriate, eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, we are appropriating His death. Later on in the gospels He says, “because I live ye also shall live”, chap 14: 19.

RT What you are saying is going on a bit, but very true and that is the essence of the chapter. First of all, He has come down out of heaven. There was a Man came onto view into this world, and He brought with Him the bread of life. He brought in as you say, what was superior to death, and we must come to that and see the way it is done. We have come to see that He lay down that life. I have been impressed lately with the life that was laid down. What a life it was! To us death comes, and it is a life that is subject to death, but there was in Jesus a life laid down that Peter says was incorruptible. It was not possible that He, the One in whom that life was exemplified, could be held by death’s power, Acts 2: 24.

Ques Is that why we get the two thoughts? “I am the bread of life” in verse 48, but in verse 50 it says, “I am the living bread”.

RT “... which has come down out of heaven”; that is where it has come from! A great matter to see it has come from the Father and when He was here, He said on account of the Father, think of that bread, bread that drew nothing from this world but drew from the Father, drew from heaven. We can well understand the grace that shone on those streets of

Nazareth, it was coming from heaven. Every day; “morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear” Isa 50: 4. Every day He says, “I live on account of the Father” (v 57), drawing the wealth of heaven into those weary circumstances. What a life was there, and John says it is for our contemplation.

ECB Is this chapter in answer in part to the curse in Genesis 3; “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread”, v 19. There is something of that here.

RT It is all brought within our reach. Brought to us to be appropriated, it is brought there very attractively to stimulate our taste buds that we may admire, and not only admire, but that we may appropriate this kind of Man. Well, as our brother has said, for us to come into the gain of it, His life was laid down. I think it is something to be thought about, the kind of life that was laid down, the beauty of it, the perfection of it. Do I want to have some of that character now? I can have it if I feed on this bread that has come down out of heaven.

JW The references to His flesh and His blood, when His flesh and blood conditions were ended, it was perfect in Himself, but that condition has been ended!

RT What a matter that was! We can contemplate it, what was laid down, the beauty of it! A life that had been the object of heaven’s attention every moment for thirty three and a half years. As you say it was laid down. Men cried why? Why was it laid down?

JW There was a lot involved in that. The purpose of God was to be accomplished, if we were to be brought into life, His life had to be laid down.

RT If that life had not been laid down, He would have been forever alone. But the effect of that life being laid down is that there are those who appropriate it and are brought to be like Him as He is, not as He was. That life was unique, precious and blessed and yet through eating this we are brought to walk in the steps and in the grace in which He walked.

JM In Luke’s gospel it is from the mount of transfiguration that He “set his face to go to Jerusalem”, chap 9: 51. He could have gone back there, He had every right and title in virtue of

that life that had been filled out here perfectly for God to return, but it would have involved returning alone.

RT So He could not have gone back!

JM No, from that standpoint He could not have gone back! Love held Him.

RT Love for us and love for His Father would not allow Him. The Hebrew bondman could have gone out free but he says, "I love", Exod 21: 1-6. That all enters into what He says here, laying it down.

DEB Would you say some more about 'as He was' and 'as He is'.

RT Well we have them both in this chapter. I think we have to appreciate what came down from heaven to understand how great the matter was that was laid down. But then the Person is Jesus; the same Person! There was what was laid down but Peter says, "This Jesus has God raised up", Acts 2: 32, the same blessed Man. He has come into these circumstances; I enjoyed the hymn that we sang, involving the manger and the grave, in order to endear Himself to our affections, "This Jesus", the same Jesus, God has raised up and made Him "both Lord and Christ", v 36. I think there is an allusion as we go through the chapter "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him". I think we come to Jesus as He is but too we feed on that.

PM Was the condition laid down to which He came, but what He was characteristically goes right through?

RT Yes, "This Jesus", the same Jesus.

PM I wondered if that was involved in the references to "the bread which comes down", what is there characteristically in the Person is heavenly.

RT Yes come down to where we are, it is not something that has remained as a doctrine or a text, but it has been exemplified and seen, come down to where we were that He may display this kind of life.

JW Did the Lord point out how He lived, lived on account of the Father, and all that marked Him in His pathway here,

He did not derive anything from the world, He did not rely on the company of His own, He lived on account of the Father. Do you think that is to produce something with us that we are to live on account of Him, our life is dependent upon Him, and we do not even rely on what we find among the saints.

RT It would teach us dependence would it not? This kind of life is only enjoyed through dependence on the One who has brought it in and in whom it is established. So that He was here as dependent Man. It says, "Thou wilt make known to me the path of life", Ps 16: 11. Think of Jesus here, all that was in Him, but this is the Son of man in this chapter. He has come into these conditions; in all His grace He has come into these surroundings that our hearts may be attracted to this kind of Man that lived on account of the Father. He did not use His own will.

DER In this chapter has the Lord not in view that the disciples should accept death to all that the flesh lives in naturally, and that we should find life, as accepting death, in Himself where He is in glory now. That is really the product of appropriating His death is it not?

RT Well it is very rich food is it not? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves". There is no life outside of this, and there is no life outside of His death. His death has opened up a new way of living, a new principle of life, but what a cost! I think there is need for us to tarry and think for a moment: "Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves". Doctrine will not hold us. The text of scripture will not hold us, the terms of the truth will not hold us; "Unless ye have eaten", unless we appropriate what it cost Christ to go this way. And I think Paul shows us he went the same way, "I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord", Phil 3: 8.

DER It involves the termination of everything of the first order of things. It is as we appropriate Christ's death in that way that we shall come into life.

RT It says Christ died, all were dead; He went this way, what a matter! I think it is something that would radically change our way of thinking about life as we realise the fulness of what was laid down: “Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves”.

JRW So as the manna was a necessity for the wilderness so this is the necessity to maintain us in life?

RT There is no life outside of it. Peter in Acts was contemplating that life laid down and the beauty of it. The beauty of what entered into death; it was not possible that he could be held by its power, Acts 2: 24. But He went this way that we may feed our souls on what He did and all that entered into it; “Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk his blood”. Christ going into death made a radical change on the life of the apostles.

JM It is one thing about eating, it is not learning, it is eating, the result of that is to be the production of moral fibre in us.

RT The end of every other man, every other man is terminated in the death of Christ. Think of eating it, think of appropriating all that was effected. Paul did very quickly, so did the apostles, they appropriated very quickly all that was meant and involved in Christ entering into death on their account.

JM Do you think it should also bear on our affections? The life of that character had to be laid down, do you think that should really touch our hearts?

RT Yes wonderful! Not only a life laid down, but He was three days in the heart of the earth, all that was involved, what food, what a Man to contemplate and appropriate, that Christ went that way to terminate all that man had brought in. All that had come in in man was terminated, and as we feed on it there is a new constitution, a new order of character developed in us that will stand and will be true in the days in which we live.

ECB Could you say something more as to why it is the Son of man.

RT It is very beautiful! He came so low, but it was the Son of man who died was it not? You say something about it.

ECB I was only thinking what a wonder that would be to the audience to whom He was speaking. There is that which is in relation to the glory of the Son of man in Psalm 8, but it bears on the scripture in Philippians, “emptied himself”, chap 2: 7. It is interesting how much Peter uses the title especially in his gospel, and the other apostles do not use it at all.

RT It is language He uses to endear Himself to our hearts that He came into this position, He came into these circumstances that He might taste death. Had He asserted His deity death would have had to flee, and it did! But think of the Son of man entering into death and as Son of man breaking the authority and bondage of death; “it was not possible that he should be held by its power”, Acts 2: 24. The One who came so low, “becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross, (Phil 2: 8), but it was not possible that He could be held by its power.

JRS How would you help us to distinguish between eating His flesh and drinking His blood?

RT I do not know, it is one matter, and I do not think we can have the one without the other, “He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood”. I think that they would speak of the fulness of that death, what was there substantially that death had to bow, and death had to give way, it was not possible He could be held by its power. I think too it refers to the work of expiation, what drinking His blood would allude to and show us how much we are affected. It is what was removed, what was ended, the blessed and preciousness of the sacrifice that was there, and appropriating it brings us into life eternal. You could say something about it for us.

JRS I am thankful for what you say, that it is one matter. The Lord refers to it three or four times in this chapter, but He refers to both together each time.

RT I think it is to emphasise the reality of His death, He died! The flesh and the blood, that life was laid down. He went that way that there may be a way made for us to be clear of all that flesh and blood had brought in on us. He laid down

that condition. He went through it, and the reality of death is emphasised in the flesh and the blood being referred to separately.

DJH I was reading again yesterday in Mr Darby that it was the life to which our sins were attached that was laid down, Synopsis vol 4 p108. Would you say that it is the complete clearance of everything on our side.

RT And in it He has terminated before God and as feeding on it helps to terminate in me, the kind of life that is displeasing to God.

JW So that we are to experience another kind of life. It says, "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal", that is more a continuous characteristic is it in verse 54?

RT And then it says, "and I will then raise him up at the last day"! We are then brought in to taste and partake of something that is not going to end with death. Think of our lives, most of what we treasure and most of what we possess, and what we call our life, is going to end in death. But here the Lord is encouraging us to feed on something that is going through, "raise him up", the character formed that is going through to eternity. It encourages you to appropriate this kind of food that is going to build up and order, and form something in us that is fit to be raised up.

RWF Is life eternal the answer to what is out of heaven?

RT Well it is the answer to what has come in in Christ and it is to be formed in us. As you say the source of it is heaven, but it commences in the death of Christ. He has ended the bondage, He has ended Adam's order, and He has brought in through appropriating His flesh and blood what will be raised up at the last day.

SDKR We referred earlier in John about the grain of wheat, unless it die it abides alone, (John 12: 24), and we referred earlier to what is constitutional: could you say something about that?

RT A fine scripture to bring in. Say some more about it.

SDKR I was thinking that we form part of this order of humanity, do we not?

RT Yes, and it says, “but if it die, it bears much fruit”. That is it here, He has died to bring forth something of His own character and order, “He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood”. I think that scripture helps us, it would help us to feed on that corn of wheat. It is His own action; to fall into the ground and die. It is His own action in going into death. We have said earlier that heaven was open to Him: at the mount of transfiguration you see something of Himself as suited to heaven, but He came down and set His face to go to Jerusalem; the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying. It abides alone if it does not die, but He has died and He has given us this flesh and this drink, that there may be formed something in us that may be raised up at the last day.

ECB Do you think there is an extended thought in relation to the flesh and blood to the Supper. It is in the light of the Supper that we appreciate Him and appropriating Him it is in view of eternal life, resurrection, abiding in Him and He in us.

RT A dead Christ is before us as we come together. We do not remember a dead Christ; we call to mind a living and glorious Lord. But as you come to the Supper you cannot but be affected that Christ has died. It says “ye announce the death of the Lord, until he come”, 1 Cor 11: 26.

ECB That bears on ‘as He was’ and ‘as He is’.

RT I think it is to be before us as come to the Supper, the loaf and the cup are separate. The Lord could not live here, He died. Peter brings it home to them, they crucified Him, that is their side of it, but the other side is that He went that way to terminate the kind of man that is in me, to terminate the line of Adam that had come in, to terminate it before God that there may be through His death a way made for us to partake of a life that is beyond death.

DEB This line that we are on, as the scripture says, “life in yourselves”, that would be evident would it not? It is not something that is exactly enjoyed secretly, it would come in to display so that others could see that it was so.

RT Peter brings it into evidence here; “we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God”, v 69. The Lord said “Will ye also go away?”; He felt those days and He feels the days we are in. As you say it is evident when someone has been appropriating this. Peter did not enter into the fulness of it, but I think we can read it into the passage that Peter as he appreciates it comes out with this, “we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God”, and he says “thou hast words of life eternal”.

JW Why does Peter use that title “the holy one of God”?

RT Death would bring it out. Death brought out that He was holy, it was not possible that He could be held by the power of death; “neither wilt thou allow thy Holy One to see corruption”, Ps 16: 10. He was there three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. All that is future from this passage, but I think Peter saw another kind of manhood, he saw something that had come from heaven. There was no holiness in any other man, but he saw in Christ One who had come from heaven, who was intrinsically different.

JW This is from experience with the Lord, having been in company with the Lord, to appreciate the Lord in this way.

RT Yes, the Lord says, “my flesh is truly food, and my blood is truly drink”. There is what is concentrated. It is truly food, there are no husks, it is not the kernel of things, it is not just the light of doctrine, but it is what is truly food. So that He says, “He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me”. We are brought into communion, we are brought into association with Him; “dwells in me and I in him”. That would be something like Christ as He is would it?

DJW It says, “Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves”. It is very sobering.

RT Yes, very sobering. It would preserve us from dabbling in other foods, it would preserve us from mixed foods. A great deal of what is provided today is mixture, but He says, “for my flesh is truly food”. It is concentrated nourishment, it is truly food. I say again Isaiah asks why do ye spend money for that which is not bread. So much that we may fill our

minds with is building up the wrong kind of man, leading our hearts and affections away from Christ but “my flesh is truly food and my blood is truly drink”. It brings us into these dwelling conditions, “He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me”. There is the past tense and the present tense as the footnote tells us, there is what we have to eat, but then there is the continuous, “He that eats”, there is the constant thing. We need two or three meals a day, and it is a constant appropriating in view of this kind of living, “*he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me”.

JW This would be the way of deliverance, complete deliverance from the world and all that is in it, and bring us to be attached to Christ Himself?

RT Very good, I think the eating His flesh and drinking His blood would bring about deliverance. Once we have tasted true food would we want any other? We tend to go back to something less. The young man in Luke 15 filled his belly with the husks, but it does not satisfy. We have to come back to where the bread is, he says there is bread in my father’s house, enough and to spare, Luke 15: 17. He comes to the true bread. I think as you say it would deliver us on the one hand but then it brings us into these dwelling conditions, “dwells in me and I in him”.

JM It is really the positive side of the line of instruction. There is the side of life that is over against death which might have a moral connection, but then there is also the side of life according to John which really means our associations of life and all that pertains in that area?

RT I think eternal life as we speak of it involves associations. It does not involve solitude: it says, “dwells in me and I in him”. It makes it very attractive! And then He says, “I live on account of the Father”, then “*he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me”. There is great supply! There is great reserve of resources that this this kind of life should be maintained.

DJH He says later in the gospel, “Abide in me and I in you”, chap 15: 4. Is this the same and is this the way into it? It does not speak about how it is to be brought about there, but is this the way into it?

RT Yes I think that is so. It is “He that eats”, it is a continuous matter, feeding on that death, feeding on all that was effectuated in that death, seeing all that was terminated, and then it is “He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him”. It is a very fine end reached. So how could we go away; “dwells in me and I in him”? We have felt the test of it, and we are meant to feel the test of it, the test of the application of the death of Christ to me, the termination of all that I am. These things are not just to be terms to us, we are to have some experience of them; “dwells in me and I in him”.

DEB The expression, “dwells in me and I in him”, is for the present time. It goes on to speak about raising him up in the last day, v 44. I was just wondering about that because all believers will be raised at the last day, but dwelling in Him is something in anticipation of that is it?

RT It is present enjoyment is it not? And it is life, “I live on account of the Father, *he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me”. Feeding on Him and dwelling in Him; “to whom shall we go?” There was nobody for Peter outside of Christ. There was nobody for Mary outside of Christ, it says she was sitting at His feet, listening to His word, Luke 10: 39. I think she was eating. There is Martha complaining, looking at the surroundings and being critical, but there is Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to His word. I think she was eating, eating involves restfulness. You get the good of a meal in these times, we need the circumstances, we need the surroundings, we need to make room, and Mary was doing that sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to His word.

DER Feeding on Him and living on account of Him involves where He is now, so that our life is not just here but it is in Christ where He is now, in His realm above. Is not the Lord attracting the disciples to Himself where He is in glory?

RT I think the chapter is very full, where we began it is Christ as He was, He came down and brought something within our reach and John says we have contemplated it. It is something to contemplate, Christ as bread out of heaven; and as you say it involves contemplating and feeding on His death and that makes way and opens up that it was not

possible that this Man should be held by death. He has been given a name that is above every name, at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, Phil 2: 9-10. I think it would fill our hearts with something of the glory; “*he* also who eats me”. It is not only eating His flesh, but now it is he that eats me. I think it would bring us into the joy of Paul’s ministry a Man enthroned in glory and what is flowing from Him as the glorious Head of the assembly.

DER I was thinking of what our brother was saying, it is completely delivering if we knew it because to be honest we would all own that our life is very much in things here, but the Lord would transfer us in our affections through a scripture like this to Himself where He is now that we might find life in Himself where He is now as appropriating His death and the meaning of His death upon us morally.

RT That is why I thought Paul may help us as an example; “I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord”, Phil 3: 8. I think Paul came to it very quickly. But then we have to be practical, we have to live here, we have to find our way here, we have family life, business life with all its problems, we have all these things to go through, but Christ Jesus who is our life, Col 3: 4. All these other things, we have to be righteous in them, go through them, but they are all going to end in death, but then there is Christ Jesus who is our life, something that we are enjoying now that is going to go through into eternal conditions. The eating is to help to build that up.

JM Would that link with Peter’s words do you think, “thou hast words of eternal life”, that would maintain him here in a scene of death, as coming into their souls, would it not?

RT The Lord felt, applying it to our times, how there are many who would take the advantages of the forgiveness of their sins, they would have some hope of going to heaven, some hope that their sins had been met in the death of Christ, but how are they living; living to themselves. They went away, they could find a life outside of the area where Christ was, but Mary could not; “they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him”, chap 20: 13. It is very easy for us to try to have both, but eating His flesh and

drinking His blood means that we cannot have both, we cannot have the world and Christ, we cannot have the things of the world and Christ. What do we want? Christ Jesus who is our life? Will ye also go away? Think of the Lord's feelings in those words. We feel the brethren that we have lost, but much more He does, "Will ye also go away?". He is providing in this chapter something that will not only help us to stay but something that will hold us in view of the enjoyment of life eternal.

ECB It is in chapter 21 that Peter says thou knowest that I love thee (v 15, 16, 17); do you think he comes back to this? He went away, "I go to fish" (v 3), but he says thou knowest that I love thee. Underneath he was living on account of Christ.

RT Very much so and he goes into the Acts does he not?

ECB I was thinking of what you said about persons who can be identified as living on account of Him like Mary, Peter and Paul, "I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God", Gal 2: 20. John too, "he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not", Rev 1: 17.

RT It produces a new character. We get something of that new character in Philippians 2, Paul says "let this mind be in you", v 5. There will be change in the person's attitude to things; "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". It is another way of living, another way of thinking. There is something formed, identifiable as you say, through feeding on Christ as having died but too as feeding on Him as the firstborn from among the dead. He went into death, but He is the firstborn from among the dead. He is the heir of all things as risen everything has been placed in His hands and it is all there to be appropriated by us now in the scene where we are.

JM So that heaven is really His place, there was that of the character of the heavenly Man when He was here but heaven is really His place. He could not be holden of death, that means that He could not be held here at all, and that character of man is to come out in the power of the Spirit in us do you think?

RT Yes, He went through death, the Man went down, the life was laid down, but the Person went through, and He is to be the object of our hearts.

PM I was just thinking that in His going into death He not only removed what I was, but He also won my affections, and those affections can only be satisfied with Himself where He is. Paul never knew Him where He was, did He?

GAP IN RECORDING – just about a minute

RT And what emerged was a man who thought to have Christ for his gain. The effects of that come out in persons who think the same thing, and have the same life and are joined in soul.

WHS I was wondering if you could say something about the fellowship of the Spirit. In the beginning of that chapter in Philippians, “If there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit”. Would the Spirit work in view of Christ having the place in our affections that you have in mind so that we might be of one mind.

RT It all has its basis upon feeding on the death of Christ. The Spirit will not have room with me if I am allowing something that has been ended in that death, the fellowship of the Spirit is these features that come out in character in the person who has been eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

WHS I was wondering about the service of the Spirit in view of this unity that we have been speaking about. We have been baptised by one Spirit into one body (1 Cor 12: 13), and that should be seen in evidence in the day in which we are now.

RT Well it is “any fellowship of the Spirit”, not a fellowship of the flesh, not because I like you or you like me whatever measure that might be, or any other standard but there are links formed through feeding on the death of Christ. There is a new character, new features formed, that gives us affinities in the Spirit and those affinities are to be nourished and strengthened and we are to be watchful that we may not bring in anything that may be divisive, but the fellowship is of the Spirit. I am not intruding anything that has been ended in the death of Christ, I am not bringing anything that death has

had to say to, but I am exemplifying a kind of Man that makes the fellowship of the Spirit easy, I am a happy man.

JW In John 6 the Lord refers to the Spirit, He says “It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing”. Does that make way for the fellowship of the Spirit?

RT The spirit of strife and vain glory, (Phil 2: 3)is gone and we make room for the Spirit for our bond and affinity and for His work to proceed in a way that glorifies and exemplifies Christ.

EOPM All these scriptures that you have read are very deliberate, the act of eating and drinking, and Paul saying I count. We need to set ourselves for these things, they will not just happen, we need exercise, but we arrive at something very much better. The food that we have as eating on the Lord is not just a substitute for what we have here in the world but there is something of a completely different order, very much better.

RT The husks would never have done, it says the younger son would fill his belly with husks but they would not do, he had to come to the bread and Paul is saying here, “If then there be any comfort in Christ”. Paul is trying to encourage the saints on to this line of things: “If then there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and compassions, fulfil my joy”. I think he is encouraging the saints that they may feed on Christ. He brings in the truth, these verses are very similar in one sense to John 6, he brings in the kind of man that went down, he says “let this mind be in you”. It is deliberate as you say, let it be in you. Give yourself over to thinking like this, thinking in lowliness, not seeking our own ends, not thinking in a proud way, but thinking in lowliness that there may be formed in us something of the character of this Man whom God has exalted and set above every name named.

PM The whole universe for God was established through the work of a lowly Man. Does that not provide an example for us, that if matters come up among us, they are to be dealt with in the spirit of lowliness.

RT Yes, eating my flesh and drinking my blood. I think we are brought back to this that, if I am portraying anything that is in the spirit of strife or vain glory, I am showing I have not appropriated the flesh and the blood. I have not been feeding on the way that Christ went and what He ended in going into death.

GCB I am being helped, I feel the depth of what we are having. It would result in this right estimation of one another regarding how valuable each one is to the Lord in view of that death.

RT That is a good touch to bring in, we have to appreciate one another, “each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves”. I can see that you have been feeding on the death of Christ and I see something formed of that other Man. I can see in myself what is not of that Man, but I can see in my brother, I can see in the brethren, something that is formed from feeding on the death of Christ; and I can esteem it as “more excellent”. Where is pride, where arrogance, where is man’s mind, where is what I think in my opinion? It is all gone to make room for this comfort in Christ and fellowship of the Spirit.

ECB Do you think the excellence of the movements of Jesus, apart from the question of our sins, is something about which we might reflect more?

RT I think so! That is what going into death was, not only the sin question, but there was One who went that way, laid down His life and took it again. Excellence has come out of heaven, not only to be admired but to be fed upon, to produce character and stamina in us in the present difficult times we are in.

ECB We have to judge ourselves, but we cannot do anything about our sins and therefore if we contemplate the death of Christ from the point of view of John’s gospel and Philippians, we have to look at the excellence of the movements of One who was straight in His goings! There is what has been referred to, the corn of wheat which falls into the ground and brings forth much fruit. I wondered whether we do not habitually think about our sins when we think about the

death of Christ; of course it was on that account, but it is as “the Father has commanded me, thus I do”, John 14: 31.

RT My sins are gone, gone evermore! God does not expect anything from me as a man in the flesh, He has terminated it all in the death of Christ. What He is looking for is something in me that is feeding on that precious Man.

ECB So that the obedience of the Christ can be seen in us.

RT The enemy gets a great advantage in troubling us about our sins but our sins are gone. As the hymn says—

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)

And God is not looking for anything from me as a man in the flesh because He has ended it. But He is looking for something in me formed by the Spirit as feeding on Christ as having died but as the Man who He has exalted, the only Man, the firstborn from among the dead. Paul says here in Philippians that he sees something in Philippi, and may the Lord see something more in each of us in all our localities.

REDBRIDGE

16th January 1993

List of initials -

D E Burr, Redbridge; E C Burr, London; G C Bywater, Buckhurst Hill; R W Flowerdew, Sunbury; D J Hutson, London; P Martin, Colchester; J Mitchell, Sidcup; E O P Mutton, Walton-on-the-Naze; D E Remington, St Albans; Dr S D K Roberts, Croydon; R Taylor, Barnet; W H Shepherd, Bedford; J R Surtees, Spaldwick; J R Walkinshaw, Bexley; D J Wright, Redbridge; J Wright, Redbridge

This reading has been included from a recording; the script has been edited but not by our brother.



WHAT BELIEVERS HAVE

Hebrews 4: 14-16; 8: 1, 2; 12: 22-25 (to “speaks”); 13: 10-15

I trust that these scriptures may be used, under the Lord's hand, to encourage us as to what we have. It is very easy in difficult days to think of what we do not have, and ignore what we do have. We have a lot more than we think, dear brethren, but we are apt to magnify what we do not have. Paul says to the Corinthians, “Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God” (1 Cor 3: 16), they were not acting like it, it must have pulled them up. It is very sad to have great wealth and not be using it. The land that was promised to Israel was a land whose mountains were copper (see Deut 8: 9); there was great wealth in the land but it had to be dug. There was enough there to satisfy and keep them, but they went into captivity, they did not appreciate what they had. I say these things as an element of warning. If we do not appreciate what we have, we live below the dignity that should mark us as brethren of a glorified Christ, and may resort to beggarly principles, maybe even to biting and devouring one another. The enemy gets great advantage if he can dull our vision of what we have.

The woman in 2 Kings 4 had oil but she said that is all—we have only a small meeting, only a few to go on with, we have lost a great deal—she said there have been better days. The dispensation that we are in is going on to a glorious finish. That woman came and said, I have nothing in the house but a pot of oil. Is that your outlook? What Elisha said helped her to value what she had. It says that the oil stayed, and he said, Go and live on the rest. There is enough to keep us at the height of our heavenly calling. We have said this dispensation is going on to glory, the Scripture tells us that; the previous dispensation was inaugurated in glory, but this dispensation subsists in glory, subsists means it is going on. There is a very interesting footnote in the beginning of John, it speaks of “grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”, the footnote says that its commencement supposes its continuance, see John 1: 17. The dispensation that we are in subsists in glory. It is the most wonderful of all dispensations. It is spoken of as the dispensation of God

which is in faith—dispensation of God, not of man. When we look around, we think it is man's time but this is the dispensation of God which is in faith; a dispensation when we can look on to finality, when we can be certain as to many things, be sure about our sins being forgiven. What a thought! It is a wonderful thing to enjoy, something that the saints of the previous dispensation hardly enjoyed because the sacrifice was repeated year after year. Maybe a sin was committed just after the day of atonement, and to come into liberty they had to wait another year. In this dispensation the matter of sin and sins is a matter which has been settled to God's eternal glory and satisfaction. The blood of Jesus, the death of Jesus, the work at the cross, the great matters that have been established in Christ risen are the great foundation of this dispensation, in which through grace we have been called to have our part.

So I refer to these things that we have. We have been brought into a dispensation where matters are settled, where matters are established in the Man Christ Jesus. What a centre for our dispensation! The centre is in heaven, the centre is the Man who has gone into heaven. This book opens by God speaking in Son, no longer speaking in angels, not even in prophets, it says, "God ... at the end of these days has spoken to us in the person of the Son", Heb 1: 2. The Son illumines the whole dispensation. The Person of Christ imparts His glory to the whole dispensation into which we have been brought, and it is going on, and continuing in His hands. Yes, there is breakdown; much failure has come in by men, but the whole point of these passages is what we have and where we have it, faith and hope are centred in this glorious Man. It speaks of Him in the book as "Apostle and High Priest of our confession", Heb 3: 1. Not profession, as has been often noted, but "Apostle and High Priest of our confession". I love to repeat what we have been taught about that—as Apostle He maintains the calling at its height. That was typified in Moses who brought the mind of God to the people, and it was all set out. In our day it is set out in Christ, the Apostle of our confession, the One in whom everything is Yea and Amen. He maintains the calling at its height. Yes, at the very last day of this dispensation there will be persons

on this earth who are loyal to the rejected Christ. The dispensation will be maintained in persons, in suffering, through the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. He holds the whole thing up; the truth has not gone, many may think it has, but the truth has not broken down. The matters that were brought in in the apostles' teaching in the Acts are maintained still today. The Apostle of our confession maintains the calling at its height. Then the High Priest maintains the people at the height of the calling. There is no need to live below our dignity in worldly principles; there is no need to resort to man's methods or man's provision for our joy, or our life, it is all to be found in Christ.

That is what we come to here in the passage we have read in chapter 4, "Having therefore a great high priest who has passed through the heavens"; this emphasises His deity. No other could pass through the heavens; the One who has done it is well known to us, Jesus the Son of God. He has passed through the heavens in the right of His Person. How sure things are in the hands of that blessed Man, a Man who has been well proved, tempted of the devil down here, has been into death, and has passed through the heavens. Finality was reached in Jesus having passed through the heavens, and that is where He is today. If we have One up there maintaining us, is there any need to live below the level of our calling? Do not let us give up the cardinal truths of Christianity; do not let us turn away from the light of one body; do not let us turn away from the light that has been vouchsafed to us as to Christ and as to the assembly. There is a High Priest there to support us at the true level of our calling, therefore "let us hold fast the confession". We are asked to "hold fast"; let us hold fast with one hand in His and with our eye upon Him; hold fast as looking to heaven. The breakdown is all around us, the sorrows of the pathway felt, but let us hold fast what has come to us in the apostles' teaching; hold fast the truth that we have been recovered to in these ministries that have come to us. The breakdown and the length of the journey have not wearied the Priest. As we see in this passage His grace is the same, it says, "For we have not a high priest not able to sympathise with our infirmities". He sees the breakdown more than we do.

He sees the tests about employment, the recession that has come in. He sees the tests that these things bring into our lives and our circumstances. He sees the sorrows that we feel as seeking to maintain and hold fast the confession, but He is “able to sympathise with our infirmities”. At times you may feel like letting go, He knows. He said to Peter, “I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not”, Luke 22: 32. He knows that at times we feel it is almost too much. Maybe we sometimes feel there could be an easier path—let us hold fast the confession. The High Priest is there in all His grace able to sympathise with our infirmities. He knows our faith is weak; He knows that we have attempted at times to compromise. Let us hold fast the confession. He has been in the path and has felt sorrow as no other has felt it. He could say, “The reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me”, Rom 15: 3. O, what sorrows He felt! “Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow”, Lam 1: 12. That is the High Priest that we have, a Man who has been here and He has felt the awfulness of death upon His spirit. He felt it that Lazarus had fallen asleep, it says, “Jesus wept”, John 11: 35.

There is the High Priest, there is the One who is able to sympathise. There is not a sorrow in your life that He has not felt. You may think that there are no sorrows like what you are facing; that there is nobody that has been tried the way you have been tried; we all have these feelings. He has been through them all and He is able to sympathise, He knows our infirmities.

Who do you turn to in your sorrows? There is only one place to go and that is into your closet with Christ. “Let us approach therefore with boldness to the throne of grace”. These things are very real. What our lives have been bound up with may have been shattered, I urge you to go into the presence of Jesus to find a Priest who is able to sympathise. Do not even turn to your best friend, turn to Christ, it is between Him and you alone; be there alone with Christ the great High Priest. There is only One. There were high priests before but never a great High Priest. He has passed through the heavens, and all the grace that is in Him there is toward you in your circumstances. No matter is too simple, be it your

work, be it family sorrows, be it local exercises, assembly sorrows, take them to Christ first. We tend to look to other sources, and there are other sources too, but I urge you, it says, "Let us approach therefore with boldness to the throne of grace", knowing that He wants you, the door is always open; there is no need to make an appointment. The disciples thought that the children should not come to the Lord, but Jesus said, "Suffer little children to come to me", Luke 18: 16. You young children take your matters to Jesus, He has an ear for your sorrows, He has an ear too for your joys. He has an ear for your exercises, and He has wonderful sympathy.

Now as to the throne of grace it says, "that we may receive mercy, and find grace for seasonable help". Mercy is what we do not deserve, nobody deserves mercy, but it is His disposition to give mercy. Maybe a failure has caused the sorrow; maybe you have been on a wrong path, or you have had wrong thoughts, or you have done wrong things, but as you repent you will find mercy. Mercy I think is what floods into a heart where sorrow and distance are felt, to assure you afresh of the love of Christ. Then it says you will find grace. That means you can go back into the circumstance with a reserve in your soul that enables you to stand. Grace is continuing, mercy meets the emergency; it comes in in all its wealth and fulness to put out the fire if you like, but then grace is there to supply the power to walk, and the power to stand.

It says in Hebrews 8 that we have a Priest who has sat down, "We have such a one high priest who has sat down". The work He undertook as Man here has all been done. His work is finished, there is nothing else of that work to be done. We are not waiting for something to happen, save we are waiting to hear His shout, that is all we are waiting for. All that is to be done to carry through the dispensation has been done and it says he "has sat down". That has never happened in a dispensation before, but the work has all been done. He "has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens; minister of the holy places". It speaks not only of Christ as sustaining us, but of Him as having set on the great service of God, as "minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not

man". Can there be any breakdown of what He has established? I think it would encourage us that the service of God is to go on, though in felt weakness. He is Minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle which the Lord has pitched. The conditions and environment of the service of God have been divinely prescribed. Some may go and set up a table and think they can have the service of God; it is not right. The area of the service of God has been divinely prescribed. In the Old Testament there was a place where God had set His Name, and if God had set His Name in Jerusalem there was no point in going and trying to serve God in some other city. It is a very solemn and sobering thing that we may disregard principles and go off and set up a table, that is not the service of God. It says, "minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not man"—note, "which the Lord has pitched". The surroundings for the service of God are provided in an area which has been divinely prescribed, where the saints tread a separate path in view of the service of God going on, and it is going on. May we seek through grace to find our living and happy part in it—"the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched", let us look to the prescription, let us attend to the prescription, what Paul has laid down. Paul speaks about that to the Corinthians; he could not praise them but he lays down certain prescription and details that need to be observed, and then we come into the gain of this holy place, and the Minister of the holy place.

What a blessed privilege it is on the first day of the week to know something of Christ leading His own. The Priest coming down to meet our needs is only one side of His service, perhaps the greatest part of the service of the Priest is to lead us into God. We think of the Priest sympathising, coming down to our circumstances, meeting our matters, but the great service of the Priest is to lead us in to God, that God's Name may be praised by a triumphant praising people. May we prove something of the service of Christ like this, such a One High Priest. The work has been done as scripture says, "he has died to sin once for all; but in that he lives, he lives to God", Rom 6: 10. He is the great Minister of the holy

places, leading us in to God, to have our part there in praise before Him who loved us before the world's foundation.

In Hebrews 12 there is more than we have time to speak of, there is a wonderful list of things that we have come to, and we have come to them now. You will not find them in the world; you will not find them in man's arrangements, but there is what Christians have come to now. It says, "ye have come to mount Zion; and to the city of the living God". What a contrast to man's cities! Man's cities are very demanding. It says, "ye have come to mount Zion" where there is a great supply of mercy, grace and love. We have come to mount Zion, high above all that is here on the plain in man's arrangements; it has been likened to coming to another country, where everything is provided. That is what we have come to. We have come to enjoy mercy, come to be formed by it. Then it says, "and to the city of the living God"; how fine it is to come into an area where God has His rest, and has made all the arrangements; it is the city of the living God. It is not a system of prayer books; not a system that is running out through man's inadequacy; but it says, "to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem". We have come to heavenly principles; we have come to heavenly arrangements. Then it says we have come to "myriads of angels". These things are very real, dear brethren. Angels have been sent out for service on account of the heirs of salvation; it is something we can count on in our prayers, in the economic situations and in matters among governments; the angels serve in all these things. More than that, I think we can count on the angels helping us, it says we have come to myriads of them. The Lord says there were twelve legions of angels that He could have called upon. They are there, some of them are named, unseen, and yet I think it is very easy in your life to trace at times that angels have been there, there has been divine protection; myriads of them available on account of the heirs of salvation.

We have come also to the "universal gathering; and to the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven". We have come to have our part in a dignified company, the assembly of the firstborn. Paul says to the Corinthians, Do you not recognise yourselves, are you acting as a firstborn?

Are you displaying the features of the Father? That is what the firstborn would do, he would be displaying the features of the Father,

Are you seeing that in your brother, each one of them, “the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven”? The assembly of the firstborn are all like Christ. He is the firstborn among many brethren. As having come to the assembly of the firstborn, we have come to a circle where His features are displayed; where there is respect for one another as belonging to Christ. There is a need for respect among us, dear brethren, a need for respecting what there is in one another, a need for displaying something of the dignity that we belong to the assembly of the firstborn. We would act quite differently from any other assembly of men. It says, “who are registered in heaven”; that is where they are registered, not in man’s registers, but registered in heaven.

So it would become us then that heavenly features are displayed in us. Jacob says to Joseph’s two sons, “and let my name be named upon them”, Gen 48: 16. What a family they came into! What a family we have been brought into, the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven. May we recognise them, may we give them their due place, may we respect what there is of God’s features in them. They said that to Gideon, “As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the sons of a king”, Judg 8: 18. Is that how you look on your local brethren? Is that how you speak about them? They are God’s property, part of the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven. Do not let us despise them. There may be other features there, but let us see them as they are registered in heaven. May we be exercised, as we enjoy our place as registered in heaven, to be displaying heavenly features, above the beggarly principles that mark the ways of men, or the assemblings of men. There should be something in all our local gatherings, that has this character of the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven. The meetings do not proceed in any other power, save the power of divine grace that would flow from Christ in glory. Then it says, “and to God, judge of all”, we are not the judges but God. Let none of us judge anything before the time. Maybe some matters we do not understand, but God is the Judge of

all. Abraham did not understand matters, he could not see how it would work out but said, "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?", Gen 18: 25. Judgment largely is in God's hands, the execution of it is His matter too. It gives restfulness to the spirit that we can leave matters with Him. Things can change very quickly when God acts. The dispensation has a rich history, we have come "to the spirits of just men made perfect". We have come to the martyrs; think of what has been worked out in the martyrs in this dispensation. There have been men and women here, strengthened in divine grace, to stand for the Name of Christ, and give their lives for Him. They adorn the dispensation. It speaks of the appearances in 1 Corinthians 15, how Christ appeared to Cephas. He appeared to five hundred brethren at once, and to others; these things have all enriched the dispensation. We sometimes speak about a 'man in Christ' that Paul speaks of, and we reason. Can we have this experience? or is it only Paul? And so on, but it has enriched the dispensation. The experience of a 'man in Christ', he did not know whether he was in the body or out of it, but it is part of this dispensation that a man, Paul, proved what it was to be in Christ and to enjoy that blessed portion.

These things are all part of what we have come to, "the spirits of just men made perfect". They have gone through, they have finished the race. The martyrs did not give up the truth, they did not scatter, they did not divide, they stood faithful to a rejected Lord that they loved. All that has enriched the dispensation. Now it is in our hands, it is our time. Let us find grace for seasonable help that we may stand in the joy of what we have been brought into through divine grace. The centre of all is a Man. A beloved saint of God said, We have not come to a circumference without a Centre. We have not come to doctrine without One in whom it is all established, we have come to Jesus. We have not come to regulations, but we have come "to Jesus, mediator of a new covenant", the whole thing is in His hands. He has satisfied God about everything, and now He is there the Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus. In a day to come He will write on the hearts of Israel, but today He is dispensing the new covenant. These things are true and test us. Are we enjoying them? On

the other hand they are to encourage us that they are ours. The blood of sprinkling gives us assurance, “speaking better than Abel”. The warning is, “See that ye refuse not him that speaks”. Do not let us live, dear brethren, below the high calling to which we have been called.

In chapter 13 it says, “We have an altar of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle ... Wherefore also Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate: therefore let us go forth to him without the camp”. That is where it is all enjoyed. He suffered without the camp; He has led the way outside of all the confusion, that we may enjoy in Him, outside the camp, the blessedness of all that we have come into. I quote a remark that I have enjoyed immensely, ‘Outside the camp becomes inside the veil’, J N Darby, Collected Writings vol 34 p157. Let us go forth to Him, that Person, bearing His reproach, feeling the breakdown, feeling the sorrows, but let us go forth outside of it all, and what you find is Christ, then you are inside the veil. The world is shut out, the sorrows, the pressures are all shut out where Jesus is, inside the veil. It is where God is served, so it says, “let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God”. There is a great need for praise, and a great cause for it, as we find how richly we have been blessed. May we seek to enjoy that wonderful land that we have come to and prove the wealth that is ours in Christ and in the Spirit.

REDBRIDGE

16th January 1993



THE PROMISES OF GOD

2 Corinthians 1: 19-22

John 14: 1-4, 18

Matthew 14: 24-31

I count on the Lord's help to say a word on the promises of God; something that God in His grace has entered into with us as taking account of the weakness of our condition and the danger of our being turned aside. God's promises are so different from men's. Men promise many things that they cannot fulfil; but God's promises are related to what He purposed before the world began, before ever sin entered into the world. He has made known something of that to us in His promises, and the glory and authority of His Person enter into the promises He has made. You can hardly speak of the promises of God without speaking of Abraham, a man who was called out from an idolatrous world, and you may say when he had nothing God promised him everything. Abraham believed God, not only believed Him but he walked in the light of the promises. It strengthened him amidst all the forces that were against him. It seemed impossible for him to have a son, and yet God said all the promises would centre in his seed. So it says, "being fully persuaded that what he has promised he is able also to do; wherefore also it was reckoned to him as righteousness", Rom 4: 21, 22.

I believe as we are helped by the Spirit to lay hold of the promises of God, it would stabilise our souls in the day of uncertainty that we are in.

In Hebrews 11 we have a list of persons who embraced the promises. That means they loved them and cherished them. In spite of what men were saying and doing they believed God. How much more so should we in our time, when we see that those promises are all secured in a glorious Man. Paul speaks of Him here, "the Son of God, Jesus Christ", all God's promises are yea and amen in Him. The whole purpose and counsels of divine love is opened up as this glorious Person comes onto our view. There was no other to preach, Paul says, "he who has been preached by us among you", and there is no uncertainty in that preaching, as it says,

“yea is in him”. He is the One in whom all the promises are brought to pass. As we see the glory of that Person, we can understand the whole counsels of divine love being worked out to God’s eternal glory and praise. So he says, “whatever promises of God there are, in him is the yea, and in him the amen”. We are brought onto more advantageous ground than Abraham, as we have a view of the Man who is able to bring them all to pass; One who has settled for ever the sin question and broken the bondage and power under which we lay; who has made way in the power of His blood for the new covenant; and in virtue of His work has brought us into the joy of reconciliation; so that we can see that there should be glory to God as we embrace those promises. All that God ever planned is centred in Him and His work, and from God’s point of view everything is secure in Him now. What an Object for our hearts, as He is for God’s heart.

As we lay hold of the certainty of these promises it helps us in the circumstances of life in which we are, so that there can be “glory to God by us”. Paul would have these Corinthians to be set up on this stable ground, that God has not delayed His promises. Peter speaks of them as “precious promises”, 2 Pet 1: 4. He was writing to these Jews who had lost so much of their earthly possessions, saying whatever losses you may have sustained God has promised us much more in the Person of His Son, the One who has opened the door, as it were, for us to come into these precious promises. You can see that there is very little glory to God in persons who are burdened or uncertain, constantly searching after one thing or another, but the promises fix our gaze upon Christ and bring us to walk in the light of the purpose of God. Paul is saying here that not only has God given us His promises as they are secured in Christ, but He would establish us in these promises. He says, “Now he that establishes us with you in Christ ... is God”. Think of God establishing us. I think He is doing it by presenting to us His promises. He directs our eye to heaven instead of to earth and gives us a sight of the glory instead of what man has done. God has taken in hand Himself to establish us. We can see how Abraham was established as the promises came into his heart. He would take nothing from the king of

Sodom. He promised him many things on the line of worldly possessions, but Abraham said that the Most High God had blessed him. The promises of God were greater than all the king could propose. So he says, “establishes us with you in Christ”, the certainty of everything is in that glorious, blessed Person, who has glorified God in the work He has done, and made way for us to be established so as to withstand the various attacks of Hades’ gates.

It says too that He has anointed us. That means He has given us power and grace to do things. God has His pleasure in persons who embrace the promises. The anointing reminds us of David, and how he laid hold of the promises. Everything seemed in the hands of Saul. David was in a cave with a few men and yet there he was, God’s anointed, God’s king. Oh that we may find help and strength to lay hold in faith of these promises of God, that we may be strengthened to walk in another way. The anointing comes out in our movements and in our speaking. The difference between the way David did things and the way Saul did things was in the anointing. It refers to the Holy Spirit’s power with us. The certainty of the promises in our hearts gives the Spirit liberty to strengthen us to walk here in the enjoyment of our heavenly portion. Then it says, He has “sealed us”. It means that God has marked us out, put His mark upon us. Those persons in Hebrews 11 who embraced the promises, they were marked out. It says of them that God was not ashamed of them to be called their God and He prepared for them a city. It shows what a transformation it can make in our lives as we embrace God’s promises; that we are strengthened to go against the stream as seeing the certainty of what God has done in Christ.

I would like to speak of two particular promises that have shed their light on the dark day in which we are. One is what the Lord says, “I am coming again and shall receive you to myself”, precious promise that shines through this whole dispensation, that He has gone to prepare us a place in His Father’s house. What a token of His love is the way He speaks here, “Let not your heart be troubled”. What troubles come into our hearts in these days, but He says, “ye believe on God, believe also on me”. All the promises are yea and

amen in Him. They can never break down. As He has gone into the Father's house He has there made a place for us that is our home. Mr Darby says—

And can we call our home
Our Father's house on high. (Hymn 64)

The hope and joy of that in our hearts gives a spring to our step in the day we are in. Christ has given us a place above that sin or our state can never change, "I go to prepare you a place". Think of Christ going into heaven in the glory of His Person, the work that He came to do fully completed, being received up in glory, and as there He is engaged with the saints. What a place we have in His heart! That place is undeserved indeed, but the token of His love is that He has prepared us a place there, far greater than any place we could ever have here. Many families will be there in His Father's house, it says, "there are many abodes", but "I go to prepare you a place". Oh the sense He would leave with those disciples of His love. Their love for Him, as ours, may ebb and flow, but His love for us remains unchanged. I believe He would leave a sense on our spirits today of His love for us, to establish our hearts in the fulness of His grace.

Then He makes this promise: "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself". He is coming Himself! We have that in Thessalonians, the Lord Himself shall come. Again a precious token of His love, He is not sending an angel; it is not Michael or someone else that is coming; it is Himself. What a precious promise! Are we looking for Him? Are we embracing that promise as others did before us? How it changes everything here, "I am coming again". He is no longer coming to settle the sin question, but coming as the One who has been glorified of the Father, to receive us to Himself. The Person is more than the place, glorious as the place will be. What will it be to dwell above, freed for ever from the burdens and the effects of sin? How glorious a place heaven will be, but the one who illuminates the whole scene is Christ Himself, "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be". He is not to be there alone, "where I am ye also may be". What a precious promise that we look for Him day by day. May the joy of it not wane in our

affections because He does not delay His promise. He is ready to come. It is all in the Father's timing. We are being tested today as to how much we are looking for Him. It takes our eye away from many other things that may engage us; it gives purpose to our walk and direction to our pathway, that we are waiting and looking for Him who is coming to receive us to Himself. The promises will all then be fully verified. No longer will it be a matter of promise but it will be face to face.

There only to adore,
Our souls their strength shall find; (Hymn 74)

It is very beautiful that it says, "where I am ye also may be". He is there in the right and glory of His person. It says about Him, "whom heaven indeed must receive" (Acts 3: 21), but He is not to be there alone, He wants us to be there with Him.

He makes another precious promise in the next section, He says, "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you". It is not only that He is coming for us but He is coming to us. The more we feel the orphan condition the more we will appreciate and realise the promise, "I am coming to you". He is coming to those who feel His absence. When He comes for the saints every blood bought saint will be caught up to be with Him for ever, a glorious hope, but He comes now to those who feel His absence. Many of us may not feel His absence enough, and because of that we do not realise His presence as much as we might as He comes to us. As orphans we would feel we cannot go on without Him. I think He is more ready to come to us than we are to receive Him.

We can see that in Matthew's gospel. The ship was there tossed by the waves. The Lord had His eye upon them there, as He has His eye upon us today in the circumstances in which we are. In the fourth watch of the night He went off to them. I do not know if they were looking for Him or not. They were maybe talking about the confusion and the breakdown and the waves and the storm and the wind. It says, "he went off to them, walking on the sea". The Lord, as I said, is more ready to come than we are to receive Him. The waves were disturbing their spirits but Jesus comes walking on the sea. It brings out His love and His grace. What a

change it makes as He comes on to view. It is testing for us. We may be engaged with these storms, the sea and the wind. The Lord shows that none of these things alter His promise, "I am coming to you". They thought it was an apparition. We may get our eyes so filled with the confused state of things around us that we do not recognise the Lord, and it says that "they cried out through fear. But Jesus immediately spoke to them, saying, Take courage; it is *I*". I believe He would say that to us today. It is not only a promise, it is an experience for most of our hearts, in the difficult times that we have known amidst all the wind and the waves Jesus has come saying, "it is *I*: be not afraid".

He is greater than the waves; what a sight to see Him walking on them, treading all these problems under His feet, the Lord of glory, the One in whom all the promises are yea and amen. Here He is coming to them in the very circumstances in which they are. He did not wait until they got into calm waters. The problems and exercises of the day will not keep Him away, dear brethren. May we have an ear to hear His voice, "it is *I*". May there be an echo in our hearts as it was in Peter's, "Lord, if it be *thou*, command me to come to thee", and it says, "Peter ... walked upon the waters to go to Jesus". The Lord here did not make a great calm. He did not change the circumstances to make it easier for Peter to walk, but Peter had an Object for his heart that enabled him to walk superior to the circumstances. He walked upon the waters to go to Jesus. I believe the enemy of our souls is bringing many things to keep our eye off Christ and to fill our ears with many voices that would disturb our hearts, but His voice comes to Peter and to the disciples, "it is *I* be not afraid". What a sight to see Peter and the Lord walking on the waters.

You may say, you can understand the Lord walking on the waters, but Peter walks on them too as his eye is upon Christ. What an Object for our hearts today, amidst all the confusion. Christ in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen. Peter then begins to see the wind strong and he becomes afraid. Oh what a picture of our hearts as we get our eye upon the difficulties instead of upon Christ. It says, "and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord, save me". How readily that cry was heard. There was no word of

reproach till later. It says, “immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught hold of him”. How ready the Lord is to come in, as I say again, more ready to come in than we are to receive Him. These very problems are used to endear Him to our affections, to bring out the verity of what Paul says that all the promises are yea and amen in Him. May we have our eye more firmly fixed upon Him so that we too may be able to walk upon the waters. What a sight Peter and the Lord walking on the waters! What a tribute to the power of divine grace! When we may be deflected how ready His hand is to sustain us.

May we increasingly feel His absence so that our hearts, in the Spirit’s grace, may more readily embrace His promises. The addresses to the churches in Revelation all have a promise to the overcomer. However much breakdown may have come in, the promises of Christ remain. Think of His promising to one overcomer to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God, Rev 2: 7. In the presence of all that man has done and the breakdown of which we are part, the promises of God shine in all their wealth and beauty to draw our hearts to another country of which Christ is the glorious centre. May our eyes be more firmly fixed upon Christ, for His Name’s sake.

BAD ENDBACH

12th June 1993



SIMPLICITY AS TO THE CHRIST

2 Corinthians 11: 1-3

Isaiah 42: 1-4

John 1: 29, 30, 35-39

I think Paul's fears would be fully justified today as to the danger of our hearts being deflected from the kind of Man that Jesus is. I would like to read the footnote to verse 3, which says, "Simplicity' here refers, not to a personal trait, but to the doctrine as to Christ; what a faithful heart retained in simplicity, as taught in the truth'. We would all like to have that, a faithful heart, what it retains in simplicity. Things have become very complex; Christianity is not complicated, but there have been many intrusions that have confused persons as to simplicity as to the Christ. There is one thing that stands out, dear brethren, He has left the world and all its facets. Someone wrote in a local newspaper, trying to justify education, sport and these things, that if Christ were here He would be the greatest professor in education, He would be the greatest sportsman in the world of sport, and so on. The next week some faithful soul wrote, Is this the Christ of Isaiah 53? No, there is no room for Him in this world, dear friend. However much they may attach His name to education or sport or any other thing, the world has no room for Christ.

Room for pleasure, room for business,
But for Christ, the Crucified—
Not a place that He can enter,
In the heart for which He died!

Daniel W Whittle (1840-1901)

I would like to stimulate our hearts as to simplicity as to the Christ. The devil is set against it, he is particularly set against the expression of assembly features as to Christ. Paul says here, "But I fear ... as the serpent deceived Eve by his craft"—"his craft"—not openly, though he is also denying the Person of Christ, he is very craftily confusing the affections of believers as to simplicity as to Christ, and especially as to the expression of assembly features. That is the attack today, as it has always been, against the assembly. Christ is in glory,

but the attack is to spoil what is here for His pleasure. These attacks are going on, they become more prominent from time to time, but I believe there is a need for being warned that what is being spoiled is the assembly for Christ, in the undermining of assembly features. Well, how are they to be preserved? When Eve came on the scene the serpent became very active, it says he “deceived Eve by his craft”, not openly but he sowed doubts. That is what the enemy is doing today, he is sowing doubts in the hearts of the saints as to simplicity as to the Christ. He not only sowed doubts in the heart of Eve; he sowed seeds of pride in her heart. These things work in all our hearts, the seeds of pride. He would cause Eve to get out of her place. Did she refer to Adam about it? Not a bit, there is no reference in Genesis as to Eve asking Adam about what the serpent had said. Do we take to the Lord, dear brethren, things that come in that would spoil assembly features, and Christ having the assembly for His joy? In not speaking to Adam about it, she got out of her place. The enemy is very active to get us to act out of our place, and take us beyond our measure in what we may say and do among the saints. May we be kept in simplicity as to the Christ.

How charming is the simplicity of the Man of Isaiah 53, “he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form nor lordliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him”, Isa 53: 2. It is a beautiful chapter, as to the lowliness of Jesus. There was nothing complicated about Jesus, or in the way He settled matters. They brought to Him almost unsolvable problems, as to whether it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar, for example. They thought they had a great case, the lawyers I suppose framed the question. They would say, You say it is God we should render tribute to, and we are under Caesar, what do we do? Jesus says, “Shew me a denarius. Whose image and superscription has it?”. They said, “Caesar’s”, and He said, “Pay therefore what is Caesar’s to Caesar, and what is God’s to God”, see Luke 20: 24. How simple! They brought to Him that woman in John 8, another difficult case. What did He do? He stooped down and wrote on the ground. How simple are these movements of Jesus

that would charm and form our hearts that we may be preserved in simplicity as to the Christ.

The footnote speaks about doctrine. We used to be told that doctrine is like the banks of the river, and the banks keep the river in its place. An old brother used to tell us to take care that you do not become all banks and no river. The main thing is the river. Far be it from me to undermine good doctrine, but the great importance of doctrine is to lead to the Person. Do not become a professor, someone who thinks he knows all the answers; someone who thinks he can solve all the problems. The problems are all solved in simplicity as to the Christ. How simple the ark was. God said, Make an ark of wood. He might have said, Make an ark of gold. No, the ark was made of acacia-wood, speaking of the lowliness and endurance of Jesus; the One who was here in wilderness circumstances, God's eye resting on Him. That holy ark, how beautiful things are spoken about it, an ark of wood. God said, "I went about in a tent", 2 Sam 7: 6. Oh the lowliness of Jesus—"I went about in a tent". There it was, that ark of wood—what an answer to all the murmurings, the ark was always the same, in the wilderness and in the land. See it in Dagon's house and what happens? The whole power is broken, in the presence of that ark of wood, overlaid with gold. In the type, Moses must have fed upon the manhood of Christ; how the priests must have fed upon it; it illuminated the whole journey; it was there always the same, that holy ark.

These features remind us of the simple charm of Jesus. Rising above the clouds of darkness, despair and discontent, is the charm of that Man. He is to be the centre, dear brethren, in all our gatherings. He is to be the theme of our conversations; He is to be the Object of our hearts. It is very fine to speak to a believer about Christ. I met an old woman the other week, as she was telling me about her conversion her face radiated when she spoke about Jesus. I had never met her before, but just in the conversation she referred to God and I referred to the Lord and her face lit up; she was crippled, but she rejoiced to speak in simplicity as to the Christ. It is fine not to be hardened, or academic as to the Person of Jesus. He has His own charm—

How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds

In a believer's ear!

(Hymn 54)

The verse goes on to say, 'It soothes his sorrows'; some of the things we say may aggravate the sorrow. The Name of Jesus brings in calm to the soul. How sweet it is! I say, How often is it in our conversations, simplicity as to the Christ. The newly converted soul can speak about Him; and the man or the woman who has been on the way all their life does not tire in speaking about Him, or become hardened in their affections.

When Paul had to speak before Agrippa, what does he choose to speak about? He could have told Agrippa about things that God had done for him, or his exploits, but he speaks about Jesus that appeared to him in the way, his heart was kept tender and simple as to the Person of Christ. He said that a light above the brightness of the sun shone round about him, see Acts 26: 13. It illumined his heart and life. It was the great theme, and the great stay in all his experience.

Well, in Isaiah 42 God is calling attention to Christ as His Servant, "Behold my servant". He does not say, Behold My King; that would not have been out of place. Isaiah gives some beautiful touches as to that word, "Behold". It involves our eyes turning away to look on God's Servant. You wonder at these expressions in the Old Testament, these writers must have wondered who God was speaking about. "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!". Oh the joy that God has found in the humanity of Jesus! He has passed by every other man. Samuel, when he saw Eliab coming in, thought surely this is God's man; I am sure he looked an outstanding man. No, God has not chosen this; He has rejected that kind of man. Another one comes in and Samuel says, Neither has Jehovah chosen this one, 1 Sam 16: 6-8. Well, may our eyes not be drawn away by another kind of man.

There is only one Man before God; only one Man been justified, raised from among the dead; God has glorified His Holy Servant Jesus. Think of Luke 2 as Christ came into this world in lowliness, in those conditions that were even

abnormal for the society of men. The angels announced that One so great had come into these lowly conditions, it says, “today a Saviour has been born ... who is Christ the Lord”, Luke 2: 11. Mr Darby says—

How rightly rose the praises
Of heaven that wondrous night.

and again—

More just those acclamations,
Than when the glorious band
Chanted earth’s deep foundations,
Just laid by God’s right hand.

The creation was a wonderful matter, but the incoming of Jesus surpassed it all. The angels saw there God drawing near in grace in Jesus and, if earth was silent, they could not withhold acclaiming, “today a Saviour has been born ... who is Christ the Lord”. His lowliness did not hide His greatness in their eyes; great beings they were, but that lowly Babe in the manger did not becloud the glory of who was there—“a Saviour ... who is Christ the Lord”.

Well, God says, “mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!”. He delighted in the incarnation and in those silent years that we read very little about; He delighted in the movements of Jesus as He was subject to His parents; He delighted in the way that He grew up as a tender sapling, a root out of dry ground. He did not derive anything from the scene into which He came; He brought everything in with Him, the lowliness and grace Jesus displayed. He brought in with Him. He derived nothing from the scene into which He came but sorrow, tears, grief; but He brought grace, dispensing it liberally to all humanity. What it must have been to God to see a Man who could heal the leper, who could touch such in all their infirmity. The devil sought by the temptations to take Him out of the place of “my servant”, but in them all, He was perfect. He says, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”, Matt 4: 7. The devil left Him for a season but when Jesus rose from the dead, the power of the enemy was broken and broken for ever. How He has glorified God! “My servant ... in whom my soul delighteth!”

There on the mount of transfiguration, God for a moment gave Peter and James and John an insight into His delight in Jesus, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight". How interesting those thirty-three and a half years were to heaven; it is all chronicled there, and we will have a better view of it some day I am sure. Then it adds, "I will put my Spirit upon him". He was anointed, God committed Himself to Jesus; the Spirit came upon Him. What a beautiful movement John saw, as he says, "I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven, and it abode upon him", John 1: 32. It abode upon Him, He was honoured by heaven. Despised on earth, He was the Object of heaven's attention.

Then, "he shall bring forth judgment to the nations". God has committed everything in this dispensation into the hands of Christ and into the hands of the Spirit. How beautifully He handles things—"A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench". How readily we may do that you know. As marked by simplicity as to the Christ, we would not discourage any soul as to their links with Christ, "A bruised reed shall he not break". Things almost gone, you may say, what use is a bruised reed? In His hands He makes it strong. Think of that woman bowed down for eighteen years, a bruised reed you may say, but a daughter of Abraham. I suppose very few thought of her like that, they thought of that poor crippled woman; the Lord speaks of her as a daughter of Abraham, Luke 13: 16. He makes the most of everything that is there—"and smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment according to truth". May we make way in simplicity as to the Christ that these things may work in hearts that are drawn to Him, and held in relation to Him. He does not make it complicated, nor long drawn out either. He would not need a lot of letters or long telephone conversations to sort it out; the whole thing is sorted out in simplicity as to the Christ. Christ and the assembly are the great issue. As these things are seen in their true glory, matters are relatively easily settled.

I think John would help us as to how they are settled. He says as to Christ He was preferred before me. John's ministry, I think, is to help us in the settlement of things. The

ministry of John the baptist takes away every other man; he says that the axe was applied to the root of the trees. It is very interesting that in a critical time in John's gospel, the Lord went to the place where John was baptising at the first, see John 10: 40. Maybe we need to make room for the way John would operate in his ministry to put the axe to the root of the tree; not only dealing with the fruits of it and the branches, but to be able to apply the axe to the root of the tree, and be established in what John was teaching. What was that? The baptism of repentance, repentance brings us back to simplicity as to the Christ, and the charm of His grace fills the soul; John's ministry came in to remove the kind of man that stood in the way.

Think of Jesus coming in unrecognised, "He came to his own, and his own received him not" (John 1: 11); they had not that simplicity as to the Christ. Dear brethren, do we recognise Him when He is spoken about? Do we recognise Him when He comes in? Samuel was brought to that as it says, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he" (1 Sam 16: 12)—not Eliab nor any of these other men. He is without a rival, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he". John's ministry brings about that there is no rival to Christ. John was not going to be a rival. No, he says, my ministry is the baptism of repentance—repent from all the complications that have come into your life, repent from these things that have beclouded the lowliness of Jesus, repent, make way for God's Man, "my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth!".

Well, it says that "he sees Jesus coming to him, and says, Behold the Lamb of God", another "Behold"—"Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world". What a sight to fill his vision; how simple, God's Lamb, God's Man, the Man of Isaiah 53—"he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities". Can you say, With His stripes I am healed? He is the Man who was wounded for our transgressions; the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. I said the Christ of Isaiah 53; I may have said the Christ of Philipians 2, the Bondman. That is how He was here—

Nor yet in triumph passing,
But human infancy!

(Hymn 188)

How Paul delighted to write about Him! He took “his place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death” (Phil 2: 7, 8)—the simplicity as to the Christ, that is how He met things, beloved. The complications of sin, and all that had come into the world since Adam onward, He met it, the Lamb of God met it, the taking away the sin of the world involved the sacrifice of Himself. What an example to us, dear brethren, maybe to suffer more and speak less. Maybe too, to take home to ourselves the responsibilities of things that have come in, and be affected by the way that Christ has gone to remove the man who has brought in the difficulties—“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. How could John have understood that? What a matter was the sin of the world—Who could measure it? God alone, and God alone has provided the Lamb.

Well, John saw that, how he delighted to speak about Him, and again, on the morrow, he says, “Behold the Lamb of God”. He is not now thinking about the sin question; but about the Person who did the work. These words, “Behold the Lamb of God”, seemed to attract these disciples. Would that we could speak about Jesus more attractively to cause persons to raise the question, Where abidest Thou? Where does it all come from? How can we be maintained in the lowliness of Jesus? How can we be maintained in simplicity as to the Christ? Jesus says, “Come and see”. How simple! He could have said a lot of other things. He could have given them a letter to read; He could have referred them to Isaiah or some other scripture, but He says, “Come and see”. They went to see, and they abode with Him that day. How formative it was! Andrew came out from the presence of Jesus and found his own brother. What would he tell him? He would not tell him about the splendour of a great house. No, he would speak about simple things; perhaps about how He gave thanks for His food or how He spoke about the Father. He would speak about the simplicity of His manner and the charm of the Man. May our hearts be affected by it, the simplicity as to the Christ. The Lamb of God who met the

greatest difficulty that there has ever been in the history of mankind, met it in suffering love, He met it by dying. All our sorrows and problems are answered in the Lamb of God, “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. He has met difficulties, not by talking about them, but in a suffering way, a Man of another kind.

May our hearts be encouraged as John was encouraging these disciples to follow Jesus. May the theme of our hearts and our conversation be the Person and His work, what He has done for God, how He has made Himself increasingly precious to God in the way He has gone. God has glorified His holy Servant Jesus. May we heed Paul’s appeal, that we may not be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ. I say in closing, the attacks are against the assembly, spoiling what is here that is simple and true and loyal to our absent Lord. He is absent, the testimony is here, the assembly is here, and it will be here until the end. The city of Revelation 21 will be the display of what has been formed in time by the Spirit of God, in which Christ is finding His delight and joy. May it be increasingly our theme, our occupation, Christ and the assembly. For Christ’s Name’s sake.

COLCHESTER

26th June 1993



HOW WE ARE BROUGHT TO GOD

1 Peter 3: 18 (to “God”)

Luke 10: 33-35; 15: 21-24

The incoming of sin into the world brought distance between God and men, a distance that man could never remove or even bridge. Job felt that when he said, “There is not an umpire between us, who should lay his hand upon us both” (Job 9: 33), the distance was so great. Man has tried in various ways to make himself comfortable away from God, and that is the situation that has continued in the world to this day, men seek to make themselves as comfortable as they can without God, to live in circumstances where God is shut out. But it is not possible, man has a conscience. That is the one thing that man gained from the fall, I do not think he had it before, certainly not in this way, but the incoming of sin gave man a conscience that he was away from God. Before sin entered into the world, the relationships between God and Adam must have been quite normal, as between the Creator and the creature. But the incoming of sin left Adam with a conscious sense that there was distance between him and God, so he hid himself. He did not do that before. I suppose Adam must have enjoyed certain communications he had with God before the fall, because it says that God brought the animals to him, to see what he would call them, and Adam gave names to the animals, and God accepted what he did. But after the fall he sought to hide himself, he sought a way of making himself comfortable in the distance that sin had brought in.

Well if man, as I have said, could never bridge it, God measured it. He measured that that distance required a sacrifice. He measured the distance that could not be removed by any man, because all in Adam’s race were sinners. If that distance was to be removed to His satisfaction it required that He Himself must act as a Saviour God. Had He acted as a Judge, as He might well have done, seeing Adam’s almost indifference to Him, all would have been lost. God measured that distance, and these measurements showed that if the distance was to be removed it required that God must act from His own side; and He has acted in the

Person of His Son. How beautiful are these words, “Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust”. That is how God measured the distance. There was One who was just, a sinless, perfect, holy Man, who came in to remove that distance in the sacrifice of Himself, “Christ indeed has once suffered for sins”. They could not be His own. Peter says He was just.

It is not only Peter who says that, but it was fully testified in the pathway of Jesus, testified too by that thief on the cross, he said, “this man has done nothing amiss”, Luke 23: 41. I do not know that he knew Jesus much before that, but in those few hours that he saw Jesus on the cross he said, “this man has done nothing amiss”. Oh the concentration of what he saw in the holy Saviour, there suffering on the cross, taunted by sinners! He must have seen many men in varied circumstances, but in those few hours he saw there a Man who was just. The Roman governor says, “I find no fault whatever in him”, John 18: 38. Think of Jesus in Pilate’s judgment hall and the verdict is, “I find no fault whatever in him”. Oh how carefully He was examined! What an array of accusations was railed against Him; priests, lawyers, the nations, they were all there against Christ, all there telling forth their own sad hearts as to what they thought about Christ, and the answer was, “Away with this man ... Crucify, crucify him”, Luke 23: 18, 21. The centurion, who saw Christ on the cross, says, “Truly this man was Son of God”, Mark 15: 39. Oh whatever circumstances He was placed in, He is seen to be a Man of a different character, a Man who was able yea, more than that—a Man who was willing to measure and remove the distance that sin had brought in. The hymn-writer says,

Thou didst measure then sin’s distance

(Hymn 298).

Ah, friend, how deep was that measurement, a measurement that no other could measure, it went deeper than any other man could ever measure, “Christ indeed has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust”. The judgment that we deserved was all meted upon the head of the Just One. Again the

language makes it very plain that there was only one Just, the word is in the singular; 'the unjust' includes the whole of humanity, we are all before God 'unjust', but Christ stands out in His own uniqueness, the Just. He suffered for our sins, the sins of believers, oh what a sacrifice, what a price He paid! God in the counsels of His own love saw there was no other way that the distance could be removed, save that the Just One should bear the judgment that was due to the sinner. It involved for Him the cross, where He was taunted by men, crucified by wicked hands, despised by those He came to call. It involved for Him bearing all the hatred and the ignominy that men could pour upon Him. Think of the Saviour, One who had been among them for thirty-three and a half years, there on the cross, and what did men give Him? They gave Him a crown of thorns, they gave Him vinegar to drink. They cast lots for His garments, that is what men did, may I say in the hour of His need.

There He is, the Just, not a word of condemnation, but indeed a word of blessing to that thief beside Him who spoke so beautifully about Him; He says, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise", Luke 23: 43. Among the few recorded words that Jesus spoke on the cross were these, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 34. What fulness was in those words! In Acts 4: 26 it says that the kings of the earth and the rulers were there, gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ, and there is that cry, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do", from the Just One; the One who was able and willing to pay the price and to measure the distance that our sins had brought upon us. Blessed be His name that He has measured it to the full. He has once suffered for sins, never needing to do it again. The price has been paid once, He has once suffered for sins.

The Jews were not accustomed to that, their offerings were repeated year after year. Certain hardness crept into the very service that they were engaged in, but He has once suffered for sins. Why did it not need to be repeated? Why, if these offerings with the blood of the bullocks in Leviticus 16 had to be repeated year after year, did Jesus not have to

suffer again? Because He was just, His offering of Himself has satisfied God for time and for eternity. He has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust. How much He suffered and bore in those three hours of darkness on the cross when He was forsaken by God. Then He died, His blood was shed and He lay in the grave. What it meant too for Him as He anticipated being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, Matt 12: 40. His holy soul shrank from all that it involved. He alone knew the price that had to be paid if the distance was to be removed, and He came to pay that price. He came to suffer as it says, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God”.

He did not only come to relieve you of your guilt. He did not only come to shed His blood that you may be able, as I trust you all can tonight, to point by faith to that atoning blood and say, This made my peace with God, but He suffered as Peter says, “that he might bring us to God”. Do you know something about that, being brought to God? God is looking for you coming. Christ having paid the price, “that he might bring us to God”. The relationship that sin had spoiled and distorted has been more than restored in the work of Jesus. It involved that He rose from among the dead. It involved, not only that Jesus died and was buried, but that He was raised, because it is as raised that He would bring us to God. The work that He did would meet our guilt, but in rising from the dead He becomes the Firstborn, the great Leader of a heavenly race, “that he might bring us to God”. The believer is brought back in a way and into a relationship that Adam never knew. Far greater than all that was there in man in innocence, man is brought back to God, justified in the power of the blood of Jesus. What a Saviour! What a work has been done once to bring us to God! It says we have been “justified in the power of his blood”, Rom 5: 9. Oh what power! what power in the work He has done that He is able to bring us to God.

The Samaritan in Luke 10 did not leave that man with just the oil and wine poured in, but it says that he brought him to the inn. The gospel never leaves you where it finds you. All the converts in Luke’s gospel were brought into a

circle of wonderful blessing. In these two outstanding gospel incidents in Luke, he leaves them, first in the inn and then in the house. The gospel does not leave you on that Jericho road, left to your own devices saying, Well that is the slate cleared, go on now and do not let it happen again. That is not the gospel. No, the gospel says that he “came up to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine”; the man was made whole. The effects and ravages of sin were all met in the oil and wine, but then it says that he put him on his own beast and took him to the inn. He brings you to God. He brings you into a circle where there are others, who are telling forth the glory of the grace of God. He brought him to the inn, a provisional place. It was not the final resting place, but he brought him into a circle, I think, where grace was known, where he was loved. You think of that inn, what a place it would be. This man would have a wonderful story to tell. People speak about giving their testimonies; it is right in this sense. Think of how he would tell, that in the hour of his greatest despair, “a certain Samaritan journeying came to him”. He did not ask a question. Official persons, such as the priest and levite, like asking questions; they maybe said, Well it serves him right, it is only the due reward of his deeds; but the Samaritan never asked a question, he just poured in the oil, poured in the wine, put him on his own beast and brought him to the inn. Friend, have you known something of the grace of God, that not only met your needs and your liabilities and all your questions, but brought you to a place where there is divine care. It says that he placed him in the care of the innkeeper, somebody that he knew well, someone who was able to appreciate the circumstances, and had resources to meet the provisional time. As I have said, the inn was a provisional thing, but it was there as long as it was needed. He says in effect, take care of him until I come again.

The son, in Luke 15, was a man who had known something of the gospel, he had known something of the father’s house, and he had turned his back on it. He had known brighter days, to put it in other words, and he began again to see the emptiness of all that was outside of what divine love had arranged and prepared, and he comes to his father. He comes into this area of divine provision. It is like

a soul who has known something perhaps, in brighter days, of the love of Christ, but the joy of it has been lost, has been beclouded by the pressures of circumstances and the waywardness and wilfulness of the flesh. But here he comes back into the area of divine blessing, and what does he find? He finds the father's attitude towards him is still the same. He tries to meet the distance on his own terms, but what he finds is the father's love there in all its fulness, and he hears these words, "Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet". The father's heart was longing to have him in the house.

As I say, Christ has paid the price, He has made the way clear, He has made every provision to bring us to God. May we not be satisfied with less, beloved. Is it not due to the God who has spent so much? Is it not due to Christ, who has once suffered for sins the just for the unjust, that we allow the fulness of grace to fill our hearts and find our place in the area that divine love has provided? That is certainly not the world. Christ has not suffered that we may go back into circumstances such as this young man went back into, of a far country, where men were living in their own lusts and wills. Christ's work was to bring us to God, to bring us into the area that divine love has prepared. This man would never go out again. May the gospel in its fulness, wealth and charm, lay hold of all who hear it, so that they would not be satisfied, would not be restless, until they come to where love and grace would lead us, to find our place in the Father's love, to praise His Name for time and eternity, for Christ's Name's sake.

WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

27th June 1993



THE GOSPEL LEADING TO THE ASSEMBLY

1 Corinthians 15: 1-11

Joshua 5: 8-12

Deuteronomy 26: 1-11

RT I wondered if there might be help for us in considering how the gospel rightly apprehended leads us to have our living part in the assembly. I trust that will become clearer from these scriptures as we proceed. I think the offerer in Deuteronomy was a man who was in the good of the gospel: it had its full results in his soul. In Joshua we might see something of how they were on their way to that. But I thought we would begin by speaking about what Paul speaks of here—the need for standing. He says, “which also ye received, in which also ye stand, by which also ye are saved”. Paul is free to speak about the distinctiveness of his glad tidings and he preached Jesus that He was the Son of God, which leads us into another world. Paul’s commission, indeed, comes into it—deliverance, but too that they might have “an inheritance among all the sanctified”, Acts 20: 32. The gospel is leading us into that. There are many young men taking up the preaching of the gospel these days, and there is evidence of gift among them in doing it, for which we thank God. But we need to see that the fulness of the gospel is not just relief. Paul would not leave us only with our sins forgiven—blessed, precious fact that we would rejoice in all our lives, that our sins are gone—

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,

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!’

(Hymn 238)

What a glorious theme to keep us fresh in our affections! But it leads us on to having an inheritance. It is surely due to God, beloved brethren, that the One who has relieved us of so much should have a portion from us. I thought, in looking at these scriptures, that we might be affected by the way that Christ has not only died and been buried and raised again, but has appeared. I think we are brought on to assembly

ground in these appearances. Paul is anxious that the saints may not have believed in vain. I do not think that just means that they might go back, but it implies that, as the fulness of the gospel has its effect on their lives, they become worshippers. The gospel is preached to bring us into the assembly and to the experience of assembly life so that God has His portion from hearts that have been touched and filled with the glory of what He has done. I trust these things may become clearer as we proceed under the Lord's hand.

ECB In Romans 16 Paul directly connects "my glad tidings" with the "revelation of the mystery", v 25. Does that bear on it?

RT Yes, I thought so. That is what was in my mind, that we cannot divorce them and we do not stop at our sins being forgiven. In Exodus God not only brought the people out of Egypt—that is the gospel, delivering us from our sins and the world and all its bondage—but His mind was to bring them in and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance, see Exod 15: 17. The gospel brings us into a sphere where God is known, where He is loved and where He is worshipped.

DJH The great point in the preaching in the Acts was Jesus and the resurrection, was it not? It is not only that He was raised for our justification but raised to establish new ground on which we can stand before God.

RT Yes, and we see Him here active in relation to that new ground and those new persons. Verse 5 is not a new sentence—"and that he was raised the third day, according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas"—it is a continuous matter. It was a great matter when Christ was raised, but He was raised in relation to a whole heavenly order of things in which through grace we have been brought to have our part.

ECB As to your question about our sins, God saw the necessity from His own side and for His own sake to deal with the question of sins in order that He might have man.

RT He met all that had come in. We have it all met here: He died for our sins. Nobody else could have done that. That is God acting of Himself. He came in Jesus into these

circumstances in which we were and Jesus died for our sins. What love! What grace!

JCE He adds “and that he was buried”—a fully completed matter. It is wonderful, is it not?

RT It is. Everything is met. What a fulness in the preaching, that Christ died for our sins! But we do not rest in that; He was buried, the whole matter was met. What depths enter into these things! He died for our sins and He was buried and He was raised—the whole vicarious work of Christ to clear the ground that there may be new relationships established with men in view of worshippers being secured.

ECB Would you have anything to say as to why Paul says, “But I make known ... which I announced”? It has seemed to me that Paul had something in mind beyond the actual preaching and that it involved the teaching of the gospel with a view to drawing believers into it.

RT Yes, I think it is safe ground. At the beginning he and Silvanus and Timotheus had preached the same thing, so we need to go over the ground again. We need it to be kept fresh in our souls. We initially rejoice in the forgiveness of sins and in the clearance that God has made in removing not only our sins but the man that had sinned, removing it all from before Him. But then we need to go over the ground that we might stand and that we might be saved. I think salvation involves our having part in the assembly. Would you say that?

ECB Yes; it has been said before that the assembly is the sphere of salvation, and Paul says, “by which also ye are saved”. It seems to involve some committal to the whole truth of the gospel. There is much preaching—and we have it among ourselves—that takes things up from man’s side, but, not to go on to Deuteronomy too quickly, that scripture brings out that the purpose of their being in the land was that there should be an offering for God, does it not?

RT Yes, and I think the going over the ground as Paul is doing here helps us to appreciate the land. It helps us to see how God has removed all that stood out against us. He has taken it out of the way, nailed it to the cross, and in the

resurrection of Jesus He has brought in these new relationships, new ground on which we are saved and in which we stand. What you say is true, that the gospel of relief is a wonderful matter but it is only half the story: it is only the start. He relieved us that He might have us as worshippers.

PM There is a touching verse in Isaiah: “I have redeemed thee ... thou art mine”, chap 43: 1. Does that bring out the purpose of God in redemption?

RT Yes, and we want to act like the redeemed. There are some beautiful touches in Isaiah as to how the redeemed conduct themselves. It says the redeemed will walk in Zion. They will walk in a prescribed area of things with singing, see chap 35: 9, 10. I think, as you say, valuing redemption in our souls stimulates worship.

JM Does not verse 11, “thus we preach, and thus ye have believed”, show the necessity of preaching a full gospel so that there is nothing defective in the believing?

RT I think there is a need for us to think about this line of things. The assembly is in our mind in the preaching. Somebody once said to a brother that he liked to preach with the assembly behind him—good enough thing! The brother replied, ‘I like to preach with the assembly before me’. I think Paul brings himself forward to show that the gospel leads us into the mystery. He says, for me it has not been in vain. He had a sense in his heart of the fulness of what the gospel had met, but it created in him these assembly feelings and affections and a love for that heavenly land.

DJH There seems to be an order in the appearances. First of all one man, then twelve men, then five hundred. It seems to be an expanding order. But I was thinking of the reference, “and last of all ... he appeared to me also”, He appeared as out of death, did He not? It is distinctive; therefore is that what is to mark Paul’s glad tidings and ours?

RT I am impressed with the liberty the Lord had as having been raised: “and how am I straitened until it shall have been accomplished!” (Luke 12: 50), straitened in these circumstances in which He died for our sins and was buried,

but in these appearings you are impressed with the liberty He has. He appears to the work of God; He has not been seen openly. We are going on to private ground now, assembly ground. The world saw Him on the cross. They may have seen that He was buried, but in the resurrection we are brought on to assembly ground. He appeared to Cephas. The Lord as risen is active in relation to the work of God.

DER Is the reception of the Spirit part of the glad tidings and essential for entrance into the enjoyment of the truth as to the assembly?

RT Yes indeed. It could not be apart from that. It was the great result of Christ having ascended that He sent down the Spirit. The Spirit enters into our apprehension and enjoyment of those appearings, I am sure, but I think we have an impression here of how the ground has been cleared in view of the Spirit coming. The Spirit did not come to unbelievers but to these redeemed persons so that they may be brought into a fresh apprehension of the living, glorious Man who has done the work.

DAB Speaking practically, do you think it would be good if someone at a preaching in one of our rooms had a sense that it was not only what the preacher was presenting but what the company represented? It is a point of contact with the Christian circle into which through the glad tidings they have entrance. It says in verse 11, "we preach"; that is, it is not just a clerical idea. Do you think all those in the good of these things, if there is a full gospel, need to be participating in spirit?

RT I think so; hence the need for the saints to be at the preaching. They bring the atmosphere to the preaching, to see shining faces, to hear some 'Amens' and maybe occasionally a Hallelujah! We had an old brother that used to shout it in the preaching and these things are all part of the atmosphere. There are persons there who are demonstrating that He has appeared, and the preaching would flow out of the appearings. He appeared to Cephas; he preached and three thousand were converted.

DAB I was thinking of the beginning of the Acts. Peter and John went up and Peter spoke and John supported him, and

then it says of the three, with the lame man, that “they came to their own company” (Acts 4: 23) as if there was that progression that you had in mind.

RT Yes, and the man comes into it fully. Peter says, “Look on us” and he gave heed to them and then he was walking and leaping and praising God. So he very quickly came into the joy of his relief, but he was very quickly active in relation to the praise of God.

EFW It is one thing to receive it, but do you think there is real exercise as to whether we are holding fast the word?

RT It says, “in which also ye stand”. We stand on the finished work of Christ. The hymn-writer says—

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

Annie Ross Cousin (1824-1906)

We stand on the good of what Christ has done. Then Paul says, “by which also ye are saved”. I think that brings us into the liberty of the fulness of the work of Christ. Paul is concerned that we not only believe but stand, and we are saved in the power of what God has effected from His own side.

LWB Would the standing in a way be connected like the boards of the tabernacle and the two bases of silver?

RT They were very solid—two bases of silver to each board. What a place these boards formed! So Paul is concerned about the Corinthians, and we would be concerned as to ourselves that we are in the good of the gospel, that we are exponents of the gospel and showing the fulness of what God has done to bring us in to have part in this glorious vessel.

LWB Could I ask as to what the Lord says about the glad tidings: “Wheresoever these glad tidings may be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her”, Matt 26: 13. I often forget that in the preaching, but the Lord does say that, does He not?

RT That is very good. That brings up what I have in my mind: “that also which this woman has done”. It is part of the preaching. It connects with what has been said, that the

saints are in the preaching. There is not only the preaching—a solitary word and someone speaking—but there is evidence in the company of what this woman has done, and so our feelings enter into the preaching, assembly feelings. Assembly prayers enter into the preaching, that Christ may be glorified and magnified as that woman anointed His head.

JW Paul often brings his own experience into the preaching, not only setting out the terms of the gospel but his own experience. He brings into this chapter the experience of others with the Lord, does he not?

RT Say some more about that.

JW I feel the need of that. Personal conviction, personal dealings we have had with the Lord, our own knowledge of Him, would give power to the preaching.

RT Yes, I think you see that here with Paul. He says, “I am the least of the apostles”. There is nothing of man to come into the preaching. Christ dying for our sins and being buried has cleared man away altogether, and so Paul says, “by God’s grace I am what I am”. Grace makes you a preacher, does it not? An impression of Christ, as in these appearances, forms preachers in that sense, as Ecclesiastes speaks about it: ‘a former of assemblies’, see note chap 1: 1. People would not be left only with a sense that their sins are gone, glorious thought, but they are prepared for their place in the assembly.

BWW In relation to what was said earlier, would there be, if that interest and warmth were in some way in evidence amongst the saints listening, something that would attract a stranger who might come in?

RT I think so. The attraction is in the presentation and, as you say, in the company. Hence the need for this kind of atmosphere and for what has been alluded to, some sense of an appearing forming the preacher, forming the saints, so that the gospel is commended. Paul said there were three of them and they all said the same thing. The gospel was commended in the personnel. Have you some more to say?

JW I was thinking that you would have to have a greater sense of what the assembly is. It is a spiritual entity

composed of spiritual persons. Formation takes place as a result of these appearances. It is not my natural personality intruding but something spiritual, something after Christ.

RT Yes, the true end of the gospel is that we might find our part and place livingly in the assembly. These appearances were to that end, that there might be persons set up as witnesses. He appeared to five hundred brethren, not just five hundred persons. That would connect with what has been said about the brethren being part of the preaching. It was not just a company but “he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the most remain until now”. So there would be evidence among the saints of the gospel having done its full work.

JSG Did Paul experience that himself when Ananias came to him? Was he a representative of love working in a company to draw the brother Saul into it?

RT Say some more. That is good.

JSG I am trying to link on with the suggestion as to experience; Paul proved that “what this woman has done” was actually functioning in Damascus. They had been persecuted saints but they loved one another and they were ready to embrace Saul, the new believer, under the Lord’s direction.

RT And he never forgot it, did he? He brings it in here: “because I have persecuted the assembly of God”. That is what he saw in Damascus. The scales fell off his eyes and what he saw was the assembly of God. It is a beautiful thing to have a sense that we have been relieved of all that guilt and burden and have been brought into the assembly of God.

MAJT Is there a distinction between the gospel meeting and a ministry meeting? Peter did not need teaching when he was sinking; he just cried, “Lord, save me”, Matt 14: 30.

RT Is there anything out of order in turning an address into a gospel preaching?

MAJT You can give out a gospel hymn on Tuesday night.

RT I think that helps us about our notice boards: we preach the word of God, whatever it is. I agree with you that the gospel would never leave out Christ and His work, but it

meets the condition that is there, and Paul is meeting the condition that is here in Corinth to bring them into the fulness and the joy of assembly experience.

JM Would “Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he was raised the third day, according to the scriptures”, relate to the moral work? Is it necessary that that should go on in the souls of those who receive the gospel? But then His appearing and His labours on the other side of death are in relation to the spiritual vessel.

RT I think so. “He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve, then to above five hundred brethren”. I am struck with that—he appeared to brethren and Cephas. The work of God is there and the Lord is active. As you said, the moral line of things is dealt with and met, the Lord has liberty and is active in leaving an impression of Himself upon these brethren, be they five hundred or individuals.

DAB If we had a fuller understanding of the scope of the gospel, we would not make great distinctions between our meetings. We have all had the experience of getting a fuller sense of the gospel at the Lord’s supper, for example. Someone might be converted by coming into that occasion.

RT I think the Lord’s supper bears on the preaching, so we begin the day with it, and look to the Lord to give us a touch that adds to the whole day. It may come into the preaching; it is good if it does.

JM Going back to what was said at the beginning, do you think in the preaching, while we have in mind the need of man, there is also the side of God’s claim upon man and the way in which He has effected that claim through the death of Christ? Should that come out in a powerful way in the preaching?

RT I think it should. So if we are a freelance we have not appropriated burial. The gospel has not come to make us freelances, to do as we please. He died and was buried to remove that kind of personality, that kind of man. He has removed it completely from God’s sight so that a new kind of

character might be formed that is assembly material. So they are together-five hundred brethren.

Ques At the beginning of Acts, when Peter was preaching, souls were added to the assembly. They were not freelances, were they?

RT I think that is what the gospel and the teaching of the gospel would bring into our hearts, that we belong to something else. We have been cleared from Egypt to have our part in a vessel in which Christ is active and is upbuilding.

DJH As to the scope of the gospel, I have often thought of Paul's word to the Corinthians: "For Christ has not sent me to baptise, but to preach glad tidings", 1 Cor 1: 17. That was his commission, was it not? He might have said that the Lord had sent him to unfold the mystery, but he just says that his commission was to preach glad tidings, and it is all included, is it not?

RT Yes, and as we have said already, that they might have an inheritance, deliverance from sins and "an inheritance among all the sanctified". That work has been done in these early verses, and then the Lord is active in relation to His saints. He is leaving some impression of His glory upon these five hundred brethren. And He has left some impression of His glory upon Paul in that he says, "But by God's grace, I am what I am". I think that is assembly material: "by God's grace, I am what I am".

ECB That is not just a forgiven sinner. Would enlargement in our apprehension of grace help us forward? He says, "But by God's grace, I am what I am"; then he says, "and his grace, which was towards me"; and then he says, "the grace of God which was with me".

RT He says in Titus, "the grace of God ... has appeared, teaching us", chap 2: 11. That comes into the gospel. So I think grace—as you are saying, "by God's grace"—fashions some other kind of character. Think of being formed in grace! "For it is good that the heart be confirmed with grace", Heb 13: 9. I think that is the result in the gospel: "by God's grace I am what I am".

LWB Paul says too “Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus”, 2 Tim 2: 1.

RT Well, the Lord is serving us in grace. As Paul says about himself, “and his grace, which was towards me, has not been vain”. Grace has been shown us. Have we drunk it in? Have we taken on the character that grace would form?

JW Is it grace that gives us a place among the brethren, I mean the brethren in the way they appear here? There were appearances to persons who were distinctive but we all have a place among the brethren. Does that underlie the working out of the truth of the assembly?

RT Does it not say that Barnabas saw the grace of God, see Acts 11: 23? It was in the brethren there was something there that was the fruit, the development of the gospel, you may say. He saw the grace of God. That is what Paul is setting out here: “by God’s grace”. Well, has the gospel formed something of that in me that I am, as you say, suited to be among the brethren?

DEB Paul says here I “am not fit”, but later on he speaks of the Father having “made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light”, Col 1: 12. Do those two sides need to be maintained with us?

RT Yes, “a perishing Aramæan was my father”, not fit, but think of the cost to Christ to make us fit. The Father has made us fit too, but grace has made us fit. The effect of grace on the soul is that we are fit to be among the brethren. I think that is a telling expression, grace giving us to have our part among the brethren. We would not be there in any other character. What God sees in the assembly is a vessel of grace.

HAH Paul closes his word to the Ephesian elders with the fact that the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus was “to testify the glad tidings of the grace of God” (Acts 20: 24), intimating the close connection between the two, do you think?

RT That is good and brings to mind the fact that Paul closes all his epistles with a reference to grace; and in one of them particularly he says, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren”, Gal 6: 18. That is what the

gospel does, it forms another character that reflects the heavenly Man. It is a wonderful thing that there is a vessel here that is in touch with and has something of the character of the heavenly Man.

ECB That verse in Acts 20 to which Mr Henry Hutson refers answers Mr Terry's question, because it says Paul is going to complete his ministry testifying "the glad tidings of the grace of God". Preaching was ministry.

RT So believers do not sit in the gospel and think about something else. They sit there with their heart ready to be impressed with the grace of God.

JM That reference to "seeing the grace of God" is in relation to Antioch. Following upon that there is the extensive teaching: "seeing the grace of God, rejoiced, and exhorted all with purpose of heart to abide with the Lord". That is Barnabas. Then he goes away to find Paul and it says, "And so it was with them that for a whole year they were gathered together in the assembly and taught a large crowd", v 26. Then chapter 13 opens with the assembly, as though the grace of God provides the teachable material in view of the assembly coming to light in a concrete way.

RT That is what grace does. It takes away the man that has been ended in the death and burial of Christ and forms assembly material to be livingly among the brethren. What you say is instructive; grace enables us to be merged in a company that reflects something of the heavenly Man.

DM The Lord met the woman in John 4 in grace in view of her having part with the worshippers.

RT He set it out to her very quickly and she comes into it: "Come, see a man", v 29. She becomes an evangelist through contact with someone who spoke to her about another order of things altogether. But the moral question was met. How clear she was of it so that she is able to speak of "the Christ"!

ECB Do you think that as preaching we perhaps need more conception of the greatness of what the gospel is intended to bring us into from God's point of view? If we think about the needs of one another, that is one thing, and, as you said, it is good, but I wonder if there is not a need for which we might

seek the Spirit's help as to a greater conception in relation to the gospel.

RT I think so. He was raised the third day. We are apt to stop there. But why was He raised? Well, He was "raised for our justification" (Rom 4: 25), but He was raised to bring in a whole order of things in relation to something here: "why persecutest thou me?", Acts 22: 7. That is something that in relation to which Christ is living today, His body here; and the gospel is to bring us out of the world's system to have part in what belongs to Christ.

ECB And "he appeared to me" goes beyond the resurrection, does it not? It must be Christ glorified.

RT These appearings are very rich and full. As you say, they involve not only the resurrection but that He appeared from the glory, and no doubt in one of those appearings He gave the Supper to Paul. There was a touch that brings out the importance of the Supper. Paul says he received from the Lord the Supper as we have it today.

HAH It would appear that most of these appearings were after the Lord had ascended, the reference to the twelve and five hundred brethren and so on.

RT Showing what He is engaged with. The work has been done. The Lord was once straitened but He is for ever beyond that condition. The Lord has gone out of the world but He is living and active in relation to His assembly here in which through grace we have been brought to have our part.

We might just speak about Joshua for a moment. I thought it illustrated that the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. Circumcision would be the gospel applied. The burial of Christ would bring about that with us, circumcised in heart; the reproach of Egypt is rolled away and they are now marked by the grace of God, you may say. They are brought into another territory altogether, but, dear brethren, there were two-and-a-half tribes that wanted to go back. Solemn! I suppose they came into the blessing of the gospel, but they wanted to live short of the inheritance. These things test our hearts. The gospel has given us wonderful clearance, but are we like the two-and-a-half tribes going to receive the benefits

of the gospel and go back into the world, its ways, customs, habits and tastes? The reproach of Egypt is rolled away in this circumcision and the people are brought to this wonderful food, the old corn of the land.

HAH Galatians says He “gave himself for our sins, so that he should deliver us out of the present evil world”, chap 1: 4. Would that link with this?

RT Yes; and I think deliverance involves that you are saved; as Paul says: “by which also ye are saved”. But here we have these children of Israel. They held the passover. It is like going over the gospel. They held the passover on the fourteenth day of the month. It would remind them of that lamb that made the way for them to get out of Egypt, of the cost to God of that blood having been shed and the power of it too, in bringing them out. And then it says, “And they ate of the old corn of the land”. We are brought to apprehend Christ in resurrection, in His personal worth and glory.

ECB The passover in the land would remind them of what the original passover was in view of, would it not?

RT It would. What was that?

ECB That God was going to bring them out in order that, as we say, He might bring them in. The passover actually is a testimony to God’s sparing them from judgment, but that is with a view to their coming into the land. Does the passover in the land not remind us of what it was in view of, and it is in the light of the passover we take the Supper?

RT They were reminded of God’s words: “Let my son go, that he may serve me”; and if we were to get out of Egypt, it required that initial passover. It required the blood on the lintel and on the door-post to be clear of that judgment that is fast coming in upon Egypt. But then the reproach of Egypt rolled away means that we are clear of Egypt’s features. We are brought in, we are suited by the grace of God, to have our part in the assembly of God.

ECB And then you have new food that you have never had before.

RT I thought of that when reading it. I think they must have said about the old corn of the land: What is it? I do not

suppose they had seen this kind of food in the forty years. The gospel brings us in to see Christ as the old corn of the land, the heavenly Man. That is what these appearances brought in. It was not only a Christ that once suffered but they brought in the heavenly One, an appearing imparting something of His own personal glory to them.

DAB When the manna was given, God says it was given “until they came into an inhabited land”, Exod 16: 35. Would that help us in our personal devotions to be led in spirit and in thoughts towards what is collective?

RT Beautiful expression that, bringing them to “an inhabited land”. That is what we have come into in the assembly, is it not, the local assembly? These expressions of the grace of God! Egypt’s reproach rolled away! We have come into an inhabited land. Is there some experience of that, dear brethren, in our local meetings, Egypt’s reproach rolled away? All worldly features are rolled away through the teaching of the gospel, and then we are free to feed on the old corn of the land.

ECB Would you find the five hundred brethren in the inhabited land?

RT Yes, and they were eating the old corn too. Wonderful thing! I suppose they were from different localities but they would all go back to their own place and say, “he appeared to me”, and what He said to me. Do we have some sense of an impression the Lord would leave on our spirits of Himself as the heavenly One?

JM Is it Christ in His own sphere? The manna is Christ down here, the lowly Man, but the old corn of the land is Christ in heaven, is it not?

RT Let us feed our souls on it! That is what the assembly feeds on.

JM It would transfer us in our affections to a Man in another realm altogether and everything that appertains to Him in that realm.

RT Beautiful!

SBH They were at Gilgal, the place of reproach and where they resorted to after their victories.

RT We were reminded of it last week as a base. The base of operations was Gilgal, but it was not only a place where things were judged; it was a place where they fed on Christ. We need to hold these things in balance. We speak about Gilgal where the reproach of Egypt was rolled away; it was the place of circumcision; but it was also a place where they ate the old corn of the land. How much do we know about it?

PM The experience at Gilgal cost them something but they proved through that the fulness of what God had in Christ.

RT It did, but I do not think they were speaking about the cost. They were speaking about the old corn of the land. As you say, it cost them something, and it has cost the brethren something to be where they are today, every one of them. It has cost us all something to have our part in the assembly, and let us value that, what there is in one another formed through suffering and now to have this assembly experience to eat the old corn of the land.

PM What costs us something tests us, but as we face that, do we not prove the fulness of what God has in the Man in His presence, that there is perfection and affection without any disturbance?

RT So as they ate the old corn of the land they would be satisfied. They would say it was worth it. As I say, it has cost the brethren something, but do we experience, dear brethren, especially collectively that the sorrows have been worth it in that sense? The sorrows have worked their spoil, you may say. Our taste has become changed and we want to feed on this heavenly food.

DEB Are the loaves a suggestion of the assembly? They would be made of the old corn, I suppose.

RT Say some more about them.

DEB There are the two elements, the corn and the loaves, some formation. I was thinking of Paul's word: "Because we, being many, are one loaf", 1 Cor 10: 17.

RT Yes, there is a wonderful variety in the old corn of the land—unleavened loaves and roasted corn. It reminds us of the man from Baal-Shalishah, a man who came from another country, see Kings 4: 42. He had been feeding on the heavenly food. He brings with him this rich spoil. Well, can we taste something of it—the “unleavened loaves and roasted corn on that same day”? As you say: there is something formed in our souls that is whole and has been through a process that speaks of Christ and speaks of the saints as Christ is formed in them.

ECB Does not Mr Darby say that the only Christ there is is the heavenly Christ? He says that especially in relation to the Supper against the thought of remembering Him in His death. And this is the only food there was.

RT So “if even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer”, 2 Cor 5: 16. It is new creation we come into and this old corn brings us something of that. They had not sown it. There it is: God’s provision, God’s secret store, what God has provided for them. It says they ate. It was furnished there for them. These appearances, I think, would bring in something of the old corn, touches of Christ as the heavenly Man.

ECB It is very challenging how much we can understand the “Son of man ... in heaven” because that seems to blend the old corn and the manna.

RT Yes. The Lord says to them in that passage: “If I have said the earthly things to you, and ye believe not, how, if I say the heavenly things to you, will ye believe?” John 3: 12. Well, the earthly things the Lord has spoken and they have met the liabilities and our condition, but now He wants to speak about the heavenly things, and, as I say, there are those two-and-a-half tribes that come to taste of this, but they go back to live in their own circumstances. They would not get the old corn of the land where they went back to. They would not get this roasted corn again. They become dissatisfied and a reproach on what Israel should be. So applying it to ourselves, we need to keep in this area where this food is and feed on it so that we do not become dissatisfied and go back

into what is short of the fulness of the gospel and our place in the assembly.

ECB That seems to me to underline the necessity for a quality in the preaching which will induce the brethren to remain on that heavenly ground.

RT I think so. As you say, there is no other ground. Mr Taylor makes the remark somewhere that we know more of a historical Jesus than we do of a living, heavenly Man; and that is very true. We speak about the Man of the gospels and it is the same Man, but He is living: “in that he lives, he lives to God”, Rom 6: 10. The old corn of the land did not grow in the wilderness. It is Christ in His own domain. Those full ears, how rich and satisfying they were!

ECB The man in Deuteronomy 26 is living to God, is he not?

RT Yes, he is.

SDKR The “grain of wheat” fell into the ground and died that it might not abide alone. It is what the Lord gets. We think in conversion of man getting deliverance, but is not the gospel in order that the Lord may secure us for His own heart?

RT So it gives us a taste for the old corn of the land. The Christ of the gospels gives us a taste for the old corn. If He was like that in those testing circumstances, tested of the devil and by men round about Him, if He was like that in all His grace in those circumstances, what is He like in the heavenly surroundings? No voice there challenging who He is, no lack of faith that would becloud His Person, but there He is in His own glory, the heavenly One.

JM What we have been saying brings out the substance of Mr Stoney’s ministry, does it not? He was really Colossian in character, but he was concerned that the saints might drop from what had been recovered through Mr Darby, the Head in heaven and the body here, and resort to some lower level, and he said the main protagonists were the evangelists.

RT Well, that is the danger today, that we may drop from the level of the assembly; I say that for myself. There are not enough assembly-minded persons. The two-and-a-half tribes, that character of things, is tending to dominate in assembly affairs; persons who are dissatisfied and are living

near the world are complaining and finding fault. That is the two-and-a-half tribes, and these things are very near us, dear brethren. But the answer to it is feeding on the old corn of the land. We know Christ as the heavenly One, the One who is giving character to the assembly as the heavenly Man.

DJH Reuben and Gad had much cattle. They wanted to keep it for themselves. Would that be over against going into the land and offering it to God?

RT It is a danger today. The saints have been prospered and we have maybe expanded a lot and there is a danger of settling down in what is short of feeding on the old corn of the land. I do not think those two-and-a-half tribes tasted again the roasted corn. They were comparing themselves with themselves. They lived in these circumstances. But God brings them here to what He has provided. What a land was opened up! If they had a taste of this old corn, what were the vines and the pomegranates going to be like?

HAH The solemn thing is that the wives and the children they left behind when they went over to join the conflict never tasted it.

RT Well, that is testing. We might be half-hearted. As you say, they left a foot, not in Egypt, but on the other side of the wilderness, in Moab. The law brought them up to the brazen serpent and springing well. The Spirit takes over, but living in Moab is a certain uncharted area where persons flaunt themselves, please themselves, go in for what they like and say there is nothing wrong with it. They say, So-and-so does that; I can do it. That is Moab where people are lawless. But in the old corn of the land in Gilgal there is regulation for the land. Paul speaks about what he prescribes in relation to the assembly and assembly conditions in view of the saints feeding on this roasted corn.

DAB In Matthew and Mark at the Supper, after the Lord speaks about the new covenant which was God's disposition towards them, they sang a hymn. That was responsiveness to God, was it not? It is solemn to see in Luke, which is normally a gracious gospel, that after the Lord speaks to them there about the new covenant, they begin to ask who of them is the greatest. There is nothing for God in that, is there?

RT So Paul says we are new covenant ministers. It is not just the letter, it is not terms, but the grace of God as we have been speaking about it; it makes new covenant ministers so that the thing is exemplified, and I think it is exemplified in the man in Deuteronomy. He goes over some of the ground that we have been going over: “A perishing Aramæan was my father”, but he is not bound in that. Moses here is directing them about when they come into the land, how they were going to live in it, that they come into an area that is fruitful; and that fruit appropriated causes the man to bring his basket to the place that Jehovah will choose. In the assembly there is regulation. What I have said about Moab is worth thinking about, brethren, that there is an area in Moab where people do what they like. They please themselves and they grow big, but if you come into the assembly you come into an area where there is the law of liberty, regulation, and this man brings the basket and places it down at the place that Jehovah will choose. The assembly is governed by divine authority and grace, and what is suited to the assembly regulates assembly persons.

JM The lover of Christ would have no difficulty about that regulation because it flows from that blessed One.

RT Yes, it is a preservative so that our hearts may be kept fresh and tender, rejoicing in the liberty of an unbroken communion with Christ.

PM Would not an assembly-minded person always move in relation to assembly principles? Does that not make way for the operation of the Head in heaven to be known in the assembly now?

RT I think so. So this man has the fruit of the ground and he gathers it all in; he does not go only to his home—I suppose he would go home—but he brings it to “the place that Jehovah thy God will choose”. I think it brings out the Supper. There is a certain prescription in relation to the Supper, how it is set. It is set in the assembly. People cannot just say they are lovers of Christ and have the Supper. That is not all that is required for the Supper; there is regulation as to it. We have 1 Corinthians 10 as well as 1 Corinthians 11. These things bring us into what is suited to the assembly. So this man

brings the basket to the place that Jehovah will choose. He might have said that some other place is nearer, I can just go there. No, God has set certain principles that govern assembly persons, as you say.

JW There are details in 1 Corinthians 11 in relation to the truth of the Supper. Do you think the Spirit of subjection with us enables us to take the Supper rightly?

RT Yes; the effect of grace helps me to have my place at the Supper. Grace brings me to that area where we appropriate afresh the Christ who has died but is alive, and this man is feeding on what is living, the fruit of that land that God has brought them into.

JW I wondered if this man had a sense of what he had been delivered from, magnifying God's mercy, but he also had a sense of the greatness of what he had been brought to.

RT Yes, he had. "A perishing Aramæan was my father": we never forget that Christ died for our sins and was buried and was raised again, but the fruit of Christ being raised is these fruits referred to here. Now, can I gather them in a basket, not only my own soul filled with it? He brings in a basket and offers it to God, offering the fruit of that wonderful land.

SDKR The Supper is really for the heart of Christ—response. Often in Christendom the thought is that I gain something, but it is a response to love, is it not?

RT Beautiful! 'This do for the calling of Me to mind'. I suppose there is something in it for us. There will always be. We will never be short. But, as you say, it is the Lord's request for every lover: 'This do for the calling of Me to mind'. It is something He has left us to do.

ECB The man in this chapter would understand Joseph's word: "Bear a remembrance with thee of me when it goes well with thee", Gen 40: 14.

RT Very good; so he brings this basket, puts it down before the altar. Think of God finding His joy in people gathering up these impressions of Christ and coming full, their hands full, their basket full, offering it to God!

ECB It does not detail the fruits: no pomegranates or grapes or figs: it is just fruit. I wondered whether you would underline what you are saying as to the assembly being a regulated sphere, because the spirit of the world is that there is no regulation for anybody and that creeps in. I think it is very important to underline that the assembly is a regulated area and we have to learn subjection in it.

RT So we are changed from one of a crowd into the assembly. A crowd is Moab in a sense. In the plains of Moab persons did what they liked and they had their own standards and their own ideas and God does not say too much about it, but in the land you cannot go where you like. You are set in a certain place and you are set in relation to certain circumstances and you have to let your ground lie fallow. You have a lot of things, I was going to say, to comply with, but to rejoice in, the good land that God has given you. The effect of it is that there is this fruit, this offering to God of Christ, Christ in His own perfection.

HAH I had a letter from a brother this morning in which he said the great need is for instruction in the truth, and the lack of it was leading to what he called the formation of social democrats, which really bears on what you have said, the need for regulation.

RT There is nothing more orderly than the assembly, the assembly of God. It is not a place where I can do what I like or where I have my own standards. The assembly is where God's standards prevail. These things are disregarded, dear brethren, to our loss, and to God's loss too because here this man observes them all; he says he has come into this good land flowing with milk and honey and now I have brought the first of the fruits of the land which Jehovah has given me, he sets it down, and he worships before Jehovah thy God. I do not think we get much detail in Scripture about this happening, but it shows what was in Moses' mind, what was in Paul's mind, that the assembly might be functioning Godward and that God may have His portion from the people enjoying their inheritance.

DAB Paul says that the assembly is God's house. Even little children have some idea of how to behave in somebody else's

house. They do not move the furniture around and rush all over the place, do they? I was thinking that the order of God's house was actually the means of the prodigal's recovery, the impression of it, the recollection of it. There was a place of order. It was the means of his restoration.

RT So the house is where the will of that person prevails and, in the house of God, God's will prevails and He is served. The great end is that God has His fruit from the gospel, and then the gospel goes out. This last verse that we read is, "thou shalt rejoice in all the good that Jehovah thy God hath given to thee, and to thy house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is in thy midst". There is the gospel going out from somebody who is a worshipper, from someone in whose heart and experience in life God is His portion. Well, I believe the Lord would exercise us that we are brought into the end of the gospel. We are formed as persons upon whom the gospel and the grace of it has had its effect and we are suited to function and have our true part in the assembly of God.

LONDON

17th July 1993

List of initials

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“HOLD FAST WHAT THOU HAST”

Revelation 2: 4-7, 17, 24-28; 3: 9; 21: 9-11; 22: 14-17

This section of scripture, dear brethren, deals with church history, something with which we should all be familiar. But I would say one word of warning: be careful from whom you learn it. Many people would tell you certain facts, but it may not be the true view of church history. They may, for example, tell you that things are finished; they could point to many things that would support their reasoning. But here we have a view of church history from the Lord; and we have it written by a man who, when he saw Him, fell at His feet as dead, a person who realised his true position, someone who is competent to speak rightly of church history.

So the Lord reviews in these sections what has come in. He reviews how matters were at Ephesus, Paul's choice work that was worked out in that assembly, the saints enjoying their heavenly portion. In addressing them here he says, "Remember therefore whence thou art fallen". These are the times we are in, beloved. Publicly things have fallen, are broken, and He does not suggest there is a revival to that exactly. The Lord goes over these things, pointing out that they have fallen, but He gives the reason for it: "thou hast left thy first love". The great point of departure has been in affection for Christ; but the great point of recovery is affection for Christ. Paul devotes a whole chapter to love. He says, "And now abide faith, hope, love; these three things; and the greater of these is love", 1 Cor 13: 13. We used to hear the expression: what is your stock of love? You might know all things; you might be able to set out church history in great detail and great reasoning, but what is your stock of love? Beautiful chapter that: 1 Corinthians 13—love! Paul there writes of the quality itself, how love acts, how it does things. Well, the departure has been, as I say, in affection. The Lord felt that. What feelings in those words: "but I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love". The word there, I understand, is 'chief'. What is your chief love? The Lord is feeling that the assembly has become involved in things that have spoiled the freshness of affection for Him. It is a striking thing that the Lord says to His own: "By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine,

if ye have love amongst yourselves”, John 13: 35. It does not say they will know “ye are disciples of mine” because you can write a good thesis or can set out things in an orderly way, right as these things may be. It says, by this ye will be distinguished “if ye have love amongst yourselves”.

Well, things have broken, things have fallen, but there is reviving as the affections are touched. As we make room for love to express itself: “Love has long patience, is kind; love is not emulous of others ... does not seek what is its own, is not quickly provoked”. That is the character and quality that the Lord says should be found among His own. That is what the Lord would call attention to here.

He says here too that first works have gone. The danger may be of trying to do first works without first love, but getting back to these features involves that the affections are drawn to Christ. The Lord makes a good deal of that: “If ye love me, keep my commandments”, John 14: 15. The great spring is affection for Christ, and that is where things have departed publicly. But amidst all these things the Lord would draw attention to overcomers. That is what I want to speak about principally, that while departure has come in, the Lord has not closed the door. The Lord is serving in these assemblies, even to Laodicea where things have become very, very low. The Lord is still serving. I only comment on this in passing—that there is a view in these assemblies of the public history of the assembly. The first three churches speak of phases that have past, Ephesus that has fallen, and Pergamos, Smyrna. But you notice there is a distinction in the way that the overcomer is addressed in the next four. These things are all well known in the ministry and I expect I speak to intelligent persons, but we should look into them. The features of the last four, as we have been taught, go on until the end. There is what we would call Romanism, Protestantism and there is Philadelphia and Laodicea. Laodicea is still here with its coldness, indifference, hardly a spark of affection for Christ. He says that they are “neither cold nor hot”. O, what a condition to get into! Yet we are very near to this. “We have piped to you”, the Lord says, “and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wailed” (Matt 11: 17)—a state that is unresponsive to the movements of Christ. That is what marks the general

position—indifference and coldness, hard-heartedness, Christ standing outside; professing His name, no doubt: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and am grown rich, and have need of nothing”. Where is the Lord in Laodicea? He is outside. O, how He feels the cold. Maybe you are wrapped up in your circumstances as the bride was in the Canticles. She says, ‘I am in bed; my room is cosy; things are comfortable for me’, and there is the Lord outside knocking at the door, appealing to her affections. What an appeal He left with His beloved in the Canticles. She says when she opened the door: “And my hands dropped with myrrh, And my fingers with liquid myrrh”, Song of Sol 5: 5. What an appeal He would leave at the door, an appeal of suffering love, an appeal of a love that went to the cross, that caused Him to bear “our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Pet 2: 24), a love that caused Him to be in the grave for three days and three nights. These are the movements of the love of Jesus. Alas that the persons upon whom He expended that love should find themselves wrapped up in their own circumstances, indifferent, cold, unresponsive to the appeals of His love. That is the condition that we are part of in one sense. The Lord is there outside, knocking at the door. He says, “if any one hear my voice”—ah! it is an unmistakable voice! The knocks may go on. You may think it is someone else knocking, but you could not mistake His voice. “If any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me”. If the public body has closed the door to Christ, He is appealing for an overcomer to open the door. He says, “I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me”, He will listen. I suppose as the overcomer opened that door and the Lord came in, He would listen to the words of repentance. But then He says, “I will ... sup with him, and he with me”. The Lord will go over the ground of your repentance. He will go over the ground with you of how far you have gone and tell you that He has measured that distance. He has measured it to the full. Remember that David said, “I have sinned”, and Nathan says immediately, “Jehovah has also put away thy sin”, 2 Sam 12: 13. Well, the Lord would bring you in to sup with Him.

But, as I say, these things continue. To Thyatira the Lord addresses “the rest”. If the public position has broken

down, there is something left. He says, "But to you I say, the rest who are in Thyatira ... but what ye have hold fast till I shall come". I should like to speak of what we have, dear brethren. There are certain things in the revival that we have been brought into that we have to hold fast and not let go. I speak carefully and I trust the brethren will be sympathetic in the way they understand what may not be presented too clearly, but we are part of a revival. There was a revival many years ago which has gone on and is going on and will go on until the rapture, in which through grace we have been brought to have our part, and there are certain things which have come into that revival I would wish to speak about that we might hold fast. In spite of the breakdown, in spite of the confusion, the Lord in His grace has given us a wonderful ministry that has brought in revival to assembly features and character. No, we do not say we are it. Let that be clear! None would claim the position. Yet the circumstances of assembly life are to be experienced and enjoyed by overcomers who hold fast what they have. May the inroads of what there is abroad today not be allowed to encroach on what has been brought to us in the revival, in the Lord's gracious service to the assembly, because what has come to us is undoubtedly, through the service of the Lord, to revive in the closing days of the dispensation assembly features that are pleasing to Himself in which we are to find our living part.

So it says, "hold fast what thou hast". Hold it fast! Many things are challenged today which were part of what we call the good teaching. Many things are set aside and licence is taken by saying one thing is done here and I can do that: "hold fast what thou hast". The overcomer that I would like to speak about is a person who, in spite of declining surroundings and departure all around, holds fast what has been given. He does not claim anything, but he does not let anything go; he does not lower the standard. Standards are in danger of being lowered as to Christ and as to the assembly: "hold fast what thou hast". As I said, the overcomer holds the light of the assembly without claiming it, but he walks in the principles that are proper to the assembly. He does not engage himself in things that are out of keeping with Christ's assembly. In the darkening days, the light of a coming day

shines into his heart, and that is one thing that has come to us in the period that I speak about, the appeal of the Lord's coming: "Behold, the bridegroom". I understand in the early part of the recovery it was much more before the saints: "Behold, the bridegroom". What a thing to keep up the standards! What a thing to cast us on the Spirit of God that we may hear the Bridegroom's voice and have our lamps lit when we hear His voice. It says, "they all grew heavy and slept" (Matt 25: 5), but the wise had oil in their vessels. There had perhaps been a little bit of departure, but they had oil in their vessels; they were with the Spirit. So the Lord says, "and I will give to him the morning star", to persons holding fast. O, what a thing it is to see it! Maybe you have not seen it. Those who are sleeping do not see the morning star. Laodicea and those unresponsive to the love of Christ do not see the morning star. Their eyes are on the breakdown, the confusion, the departure, the sorrows, and it leads them into further departure and further sorrow for the heart of Christ. But He says to the overcomer, "and I will give to him the morning star". What does it mean? It means that the day is about to dawn. "The night is far spent, and the day is near", Rom 13: 12. The hymn-writer adds—

Rejoice, for the coming of Jesus draws nigh.

(Hymn 194)

The Lord speaks about Himself as the bright and morning star" (Rev 22: 16), becoming brighter as the dispensation is drawing nearer to its close, and soon the morning star is no longer seen, but the Bridegroom is seen. But the hope of the Lord's coming is to help us in holding fast what we have. It is interesting that the Lord refers in three of these churches to His coming. He says to Philadelphia, which would be the normal position, "I come quickly", chap 3: 11. It is His disposition. That is His attitude towards real assembly affections, so that they are not looking on the night; they are looking for the Bridegroom coming: "I come quickly".

Then He says to Sardis, "I will come upon thee as a thief". That is how things will be in the public position, that the Lord will come unexpectedly. A thief does not tell you when he is coming. Would that be how our hearts are today, dulled

with all that is abroad, dulled with all that has happened? He would encourage the overcomer with food to strengthen us while we are awaiting His coming. Where I read in Ephesus it says, "To him that overcomes, I will give to him to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God". What food for an overcomer—to be brought to know something of Christ in His own domain. He speaks of "the tree of life which is in the paradise of God". The word is addressed to "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. To him that overcomes, I will give to him to eat of the tree of life". To look on, dear brethren, with unwearied eye, to One who has completed the race: "Looking steadfastly on Jesus" (Heb 12: 2), "the tree of life which is in the paradise of God", not only as He was here. As we remarked in the reading, if He was like that in circumstances of tribulation and distress where all was opposing, what is He like in His own domain? It is a great answer to all that has come into the history of the assembly and the history of the world, that God has this tree of life. We read more about it in chapter 22—an interesting subject to look into. There it is seen in the city, by that river, with its fruits and leaves, but here the overcomer has the best portion; he is eating of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. What food for our souls amidst all the departure, to feed on Christ.

Varied fruits of richest flavour
Offers still the Tree divine.

(Hymn 50)

Mr Darby has a beautiful poem about it. He speaks of that Tree of life—

To its own rich soil transplanted,
Waits alone the eternal morn.

As I said, there He was in circumstances of humiliation, imparting grace, blessing and healing to all around, but think of Him there, "the tree of life which is in the paradise of God". What a place He has, dear brethren! What a place He fills! He has already gone in. He already fills that sphere and He would encourage the overcomer to eat and feed on Him as He is in the paradise of God.

Later on we have those twelve fruits, every month fresh fruit (see Rev 22: 2). Oh to be kept fresh in the declining circumstances of the dispensation! We need to feed on “the tree of life which is in the paradise of God”. There is much inferior food going about. I only remark in passing that the day we are in is a day of fast food and casual clothing, the very opposite to what an overcomer should be marked by. The tree of life is no fast food, nor are the garments that He gives any casual wear. Things have become so indifferent, but the Lord says I will give you the best food, “the tree of life which is in the paradise of God”. He speaks too about being “clothed in white garments” (Rev 3: 5)—nothing casual about these habiliments. May we be helped to overcome, helped to have our eye on “the bright and morning star” who is coming, but in the meantime to be feeding on that Man in whom all God’s promises and all God’s thoughts are centred. You will never tire of it. The whole year goes through, “in each month yielding its fruit”, each month bringing its own distinctive flavour, bringing its own quickening of step amidst the general departure that is all around.

Then too He gives the overcomer in Pergamos to eat “of the hidden manna”. The Lord was once in those circumstances that we are in. The hidden manna refers doubtless to what God has treasured of the pathway of Jesus. We have the gospel writers’ impressions of the pathway of Jesus, each precious in its own way, but the hidden manna is something more. It says, “To him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna; and I will give to him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it”. There is a secret side that the Father has treasured up of the manhood of Jesus. I believe that enters into the hidden manna that is to be known in secret. Every overcomer has a secret place, and anyone, beloved, who is at all drawn to Christ and has His part in the assembly has a closet, a secret place where the confusion, the breakdown, the troubles are all shut out and you know something of feeding on the hidden manna, something of what it is to have a new name, “which no one knows but he that receives it”. Overcomers are personalities who have a distinct personal impression from Christ of His love and of His grace, and an

impression, too, I believe, of how precious the assembly is to Christ. May we make way for that food that will cause us to keep on our tiptoe that the Bridegroom is soon coming.

Another thing that has come to us in the recovery is the Lord's supper. He says to Philadelphia, they "shall know that I have loved thee". Is that not enjoyed at the Lord's supper? Can you tell me any better expression of the love of Christ: "This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me", 1 Cor 11: 24. So the Lord says to this assembly in Philadelphia, they "shall know that I have loved thee". He does not say anything about their love for Him. It was there, but it cannot be boasted about. Very humbly we would say that we love the Lord, we would have to say though feeble here, but He loves the assembly. Dear brethren, the Lord's supper is one of the cardinal features that has come out in the recovery of which I am speaking, and the setting of it in assembly circumstances. We are in a day when there are so many who would claim to be having the Lord's supper, but the Lord does not say to Laodicea, they "shall know that I have loved thee"; He says it to Philadelphia, where love is functioning. Philadelphia means that, love, brotherly love, those that love Me and keep My commandments. Those are the surroundings of the Lord's supper, and He would give an impression too to Philadelphia of His love for them. May we respect what has been said as to the Lord's supper. It is set in localities. The Lord has placed it in the assembly. The Lord gave it, as we remarked in the reading, from the glory, something that is very precious to the Lord. May it be held in its preciousness to us, dear brethren, the Lord's supper, "in remembrance of me". It is what would engage every true lover of Christ, that they are finding their place, responding to the Lord: "This do in remembrance of me". We have had great help as to how the Lord's supper is set and the circumstances in which it is set. We need to guard these things. The Lord would have us do this "in remembrance of me"—till He comes. What it means to the Lord to see the saints gathering for the Lord's supper! It has been said that, if the world knew what we were really doing in celebrating the Supper, they would not allow us, because what are we doing? We are renouncing the world's judgment about Christ. The world in which we are, even the public body,

has forgotten Him. The world crucified Him. They said, "Not this man" (John 18: 40), but in the Supper we are renouncing the world's judgment and we are saying, Worthy art Thou! We are doing it in view of His appearing. We are holding the ground for Him until He comes. May we be diligent in holding the ground, dear brethren! "Hold fast what thou hast"! May we not be casual in any way as to the Lord's supper. It becomes every lover of Christ to have in view the first day of the week for the calling of Him to mind. The Lord would give His compensations, as we have proved, in "that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience". That is what a lover would do, keep His word. The Lord says that: "If ye abide in my word, ye are truly my disciples", John 8: 31. These things are all in the environment of the Supper and in that holy occasion the Lord gives us to know "that I have loved thee". These matters, as I say, are part of what we have to hold fast. The time will not be long.

Another thing that has come out particularly in this period of the recovery is the light of the assembly as a heavenly vessel. John is brought to see that. The Lord in these early chapters goes over how breakdown has come in, but He still makes the way open for the overcomer. The way is still open that assembly ground and assembly experience can be realised; and now at the close He draws our attention to the assembly in its heavenly beauty and glory. Something that has been revived most distinctively in this period in which we are is the light of the assembly as a heavenly vessel. There was conflict about it. If you read these early matters of church history in the good books, you will see that there were persons who were comparing the assembly with what had gone before. They were saying that Israel failed, Noah failed, Abraham failed, they all failed. There is a very good letter about it and it answers it all, see J Taylor, Letters vol 1 p122. It says that, in contrast to all these families, the assembly is an exotic—very beautiful! She does not belong here. She is a heavenly vessel, heavenly in origin, heavenly in conception. That is the light that has come into this broken day in which we are: "I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly", Eph 5: 32. The assembly does not involve herself in politics, is not marked by worldly principles, habits and features. She portrays and

reflects the glory of the heavenly Man. That is something I commend to you that has shone in this time of the recovery in which we are, the assembly as a heavenly vessel.

John is brought to be shown it here. It says, "Come here, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife". He could have omitted "the bride". Here is the assembly as it is in the heart of Christ and it is the assembly as is presented to us in the ministry of the recovery—a heavenly vessel, heavenly in origin and heavenly in destiny. John is brought to see it. It says, "And he carried me away in the Spirit, and set me on a great and high mountain, and shewed me the holy city". Is that your view? Here is the Lord's view of what the assembly is: "the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God". What a view to have! Amidst all the departure, amidst all the confusion, to have a view of what has been revived among us, the light of the assembly as a heavenly vessel, and watchful that worldly principles do not obtain or find an inroad to spoil what is so precious to the heart of Christ. Dear brethren, it will go through. Will you go through with it? Hold fast what we have! Hold fast to these great matters! There is much more, but I think these three matters that I have spoken about illuminate the time of the recovery, and they would be what the overcomer would cherish in his heart and hold fast until He comes.

It is worked out in local companies because, as He closes, He says, "I ... testify these things to you in the assemblies". It is not an unreal matter. The features of the assembly are to be seen in local gatherings and the overcomer would see to it that what is proper to the assembly is what dominates in the local position. Let us not entertain any other thoughts! Let us not lower the standard that is becoming to the heavenly vessel! Let us hold fast! He speaks here so beautifully: "I Jesus", no longer in those robes as in the early chapters, He says, "I Jesus". How He loves the assembly, how He loves the overcomer! "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies. I am the root and offspring of David". That is something about Christ that no-one will ever share. But then He says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come". There is a vessel that is suitable to be the companion of the heavenly Man. Deity belongs to Him, but

there is a very touching word to Philadelphia. The Lord says about the assembly, “behold, I will cause that they shall come and shall do homage before thy feet”. I do not know that we could say too much about that, but the Lord says those words, that the assembly is so precious to Him that He is going to cause others to come and do homage to this glorious vessel. We, through grace, have been called to have part in it now. May it be precious to us as it is precious to Him. It says, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come”, a creature vessel and a divine Person using the same word at the same time. How we need to be near to the Spirit in these days, to the One who has come from heaven, to gather up these assembly affections and these assembly features. May we in unison with the Spirit say “Come”. He is not speaking here of departure. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come”. How the Lord would love to hear that, and He hears it at the Lord’s supper. There is an expression in the Lord’s supper of the Spirit and the bride saying, Come. May there be a clearer expression of that word, “Come”! It is not said dolefully. It is said in all the joy of one who is looking for Him: “Come”! Come to take up Thy rights! Worthy art Thou! Come to reign! But He has it now in the assembly. He has it now among the saints. May we be encouraged! “And let him that is athirst come; he that will, let him take the water of life freely”. Whosoever will let him come! It is for all to come into and find their living part in this heavenly, glorious vessel. May we hold fast what we have! It has come into our hands at great cost. The ministry of the revival did not come easily; it came through suffering and at great cost. I know persons who were cast out of their homes, cast out of their families, because they sought to walk in assembly light. Hold fast what we have! May we treasure, beloved, what the Lord has placed in our hands, yea, what He has placed in our hearts! For His Name’s sake.

LONDON

17th July 1993



THE FATHER'S LOVE

John 17: 6-14, 22-26

Ephesians 1: 6

RT I felt from this morning that there might be help for us in having some fresh sense of the Father's love. I do not know that I can say a great deal about it, but I am sure we all have had some experience of it. The Lord says, "thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me". We cannot fathom those words, but they would be meant to leave some impression upon us that leads us to worship. The Father's love brings about a certain restfulness with us, and a sense of peace that we are brought to be at home in the presence of a love we cannot fathom. But we know it. The way the Lord brings the disciples into the sense of it in view of His leaving them is very touching. He says, "whom thou gavest me out of the world". I do not think the world knows anything about the Father's love. Indeed, John in his epistle says that if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us, see 1 John 2: 15. There is an area that Christ would bring us into where we know the Father's love:

Yet deeper, if a calmer, joy
The Father's love shall raise. (Hymn 178)

I think that, by the experience of the Supper and knowing the love of Christ, the Lord leads us into a sense of the Father's love: "for the Father himself has affection for you", John 16: 27. These things affect our spirits and develop in us a sense of maturity that would be a stay and strength to us in the midst of the present surroundings. The Lord lived in the Father's love; we can see that from this gospel. He was in circumstances such as we are in and felt things in a way that we could not feel them, but it is obvious that He lived in the sense of the Father's love. That is what John was impressed about as He saw the Lord and knew Him, that He lived in the sense of an undisturbed relationship that gave power and effect to all that He did. We feel measured in what we can say about these things, but I think these verses may help us. He says, "I have manifested thy name". The Lord's sojourn

among them and His contacts with them left them with an impression of the Father and of the Father's love.

ECB Is there a connection between the Father's love, as you are now speaking of it, and purpose? In chapter 16, to which you alluded, there is a reason given: "because". Do you have in mind that there is an experience of the Father's love which is because of what the Father is?

RT I think so. I might have read Ephesians. We get it set out there, that He chose us in Him before the world's foundation. It brings a depth to the Father's love that, before ever sin came in, before ever we were born, the Father purposed to have us; and His love has moved to effect that purpose, effected it through Christ in His pathway here. So the Lord says, "I have manifested thy name to the men", as if what He was showing them and what He was doing among them was all flowing from a love of purpose, as you said.

ECB What you refer to in Ephesians, "before the world's foundation", must be before "because ye have had affection for me" in chapter 16 because that implies the incarnation. I was thinking what depth there is in the fact that the Father loved us and then He gave us to Christ. Is that right?

RT That is the way He has drawn us into His own love, that He portrayed it, you may say, in the Person of the Son, so attractively, in manhood here: "Behold the Lamb of God". It drew us to Him, and the great end was that we might come to know the Father's love. It reminds me of what Mr Raven said (something that I have always enjoyed): I was a saint in purpose before ever I was a sinner in practice. I think that brings us to the Father's love. It is not a love that loves me because I am good or anything at all, but I was a saint in purpose before ever I was a sinner in practice. What maturity that brings into the spirit, and restfulness in the midst of a world where things are all against us.

ECB That contributes to our understanding of "my peace" and "my joy" that Jesus spoke of in a world, as you said, such as the one in which we are; but He had peace and joy there.

RT The Father's love in the soul, known and lived in, helps us in the very conditions we are in to be to the glory of His grace, "wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved".

JCE In our practical relations with the Father, is it a challenge as to whether we love Him better when He refuses our petitions?

RT That is a challenge to us, but I think the better we know the Father, we know that, whatever His attitude towards us, it is for our good: "God conducts himself towards you as towards sons", Heb 12: 7. He never changes. He never changes His disposition towards us or His thoughts about us, but I think He has given us to Christ to lead us into an area where there is, we may say, undisturbed affection.

DJH It is wonderful that the Lord Jesus says "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world". That would not be in this relationship, would it? What the relationship was we cannot say, but that would be the same love.

RT It was the Person, was it not? We cannot say much. We cannot carry the relationship back, but this is the way it has come to us. "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world". We do not want to make this difficult or something that we cannot fathom. It is for the very simplest and youngest of us that the Father gave us to Christ out of the world. He operated when there was no spark in you or me. He operated to take us out of the world, to bring us into an area where His affections are to be known and responded to.

ECB Mr Stoney says more than once in regard to Luke 15, speaking of the Father, that love travelled faster than necessity. That is the aspect of things you are touching on, is it not? You were loved in purpose before you were a sinner in responsibility or in practice.

RT Why did it travel that distance? What was the end in view?

ECB The end was to have the son back in the father's house.

RT The end in view was to put the best robe on him. The father would not have been satisfied until that robe was put

upon him. I think that is what the Father's love gives us an impression of, the robe and the ring and the shoes.

ECB That is the first thing the father says: "Bring out the best robe".

RT I think that is what the Lord is leading the disciples into here, to bring us to know something of the Father's affections and how He would have us before Him in love to be responsive to the glory of His grace. You can well understand the Son being to the glory of His grace.

DJH It is precious what you say. I hardly like to use the word as to the 'simplicity' of it, but John says, "I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father", 1 John 2: 13. It is the youngest in the divine family that know the Father. That would be to know His love.

RT I think so. That is a good word to bring into this—the family. That is what the Father is bringing us into, and we are all in the family on an equal footing. The Father's love brings us to have on the best robe. However young we may be, as we have come under the influence of the work and grace of Christ, we each have the best robe and a ring and shoes. We are each there to the glory of His grace.

HAH So the father does not answer the son's protestations, but, as you say, "Bring out the best robe"; and with that on, all his doubts and anxieties would disappear at once.

RT In saying, "I have manifested thy name", the Lord does not make Himself the objective, if you understand what I mean. It is not only that they are brought to love Christ, but the Lord leads us in to come to know the Father and the Father's love; we are brought into the family and into the house, to be at rest, to be to the glory of His grace.

BHC Israel said, in regard to Ephraim and Manasseh, "Bring them ... to me", Gen 48: 9. Love would delight in nearness, would it not?

RT I once had an impression on that verse from Mr Parker. Israel says, "Bring them ... to me, that I may bless them", but the first thing he did was to kiss them: the blessing came afterwards. First of all, he kissed them and that is what the

father does in Luke 15. He brings them in. The blessing is something else, but the first thing was the kiss, and that is what the Lord would lead us into, to come to know the Father's kiss, and to know His embrace, and to know that we are brought into what is immeasurable and that the Father gives us to be at home in it.

ECB That we should be at home in it is the impression conveyed by that "we should be to the praise of his glory". It does not say we say anything; it does not say anything else about us, save that the fact that we are there is to the praise of the glory of the Father's grace.

RT It is wonderful just to be there. It is not service exactly. It is just to be basking in the wealth of His love, but, of course, it must evoke sonship's response.

ECB "Holy and blameless before him in love" is sonship, is it not? But it is not that we should be; it is the Father's satisfaction in having for Himself what He gave to Christ.

RT We have been taught that reconciliation is more for God than for us. The son might have done without the robe, but the father could not. The father had to have the robe upon the son, to have him in his house for his pleasure. Is what we are saying intelligible?

GAO I would like you to open up that last statement that reconciliation is more for the Father than for us.

RT I am just saying what we have in the ministry. Reconciliation is to make God at home with us, you may say. The new covenant is to make us at home with God. We need to think over that. In reconciliation God has not only removed the distance but looks upon us and does not raise any questions because we are clothed in the worth and preciousness of Christ. That is for His eye. The new covenant comes in to set me at peace that the blood of Christ has cleared the ground that I can be at home with God. Is that true?

ECB It is very important to understand—if I may put it like that—that reconciliation is not God come to us but us brought to God; and really it is the foundation of everything

we enjoy. I was very struck by a remark by Mr Raven, that reconciliation is the basis on which we enjoy justification.

RT Well, these things are worth thinking over. It all comes into “I have manifested thy name”, that the Lord has made God known as Father and that was not known before. God was known in the old economy, but in the incarnation and the pathway of Jesus there has been a manifestation of God as Father. His name has been manifested among us to bring us into this area of undisturbed and known affections.

ECB I think it would help if you would expand your remark about the new covenant so that we get the two sides of the thing complete. We have that in the cup, do we not?

RT Yes, the new covenant is going to change things. Israel is not at rest with God yet because they have not come into the good of the new covenant, but when they do they will be at home with God. He says, on the basis of the blood of Christ, “Giving my laws into their hearts, I will write them also in their understandings” (Heb 10: 16) and they will be at home with God. That is the new covenant as I understand it. God meets our needs for us to be at peace and to be at home with Him.

ECB So that the expression that has been used by others that the new covenant makes known the disposition of God is very helpful in the explanation, is it not?

RT Yes, indeed it is, but then, as we have said, reconciliation brings us to see God’s arrangements and that is what we come into in the Father’s love. We come into the Father’s arrangements. We come into His house where things are according as He would have them and everyone in those arrangements has a best robe and a ring and shoes.

MAJT “See what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God”, 1 John 3: 1. That is the Father’s house, is it not?

RT Very good: “See what love”. He brought it near to us in the person of His Son. The way that the Lord moved among the disciples impressed them that there was a manifestation of someone greater. So that at the end of the gospel He says,

“my Father and your Father ... my God and your God”, chap 20: 17.

JSG Would you say more about the Father’s name: “I have manifested thy name”. Would the Father’s name in itself involve grace and love in expression? The Lord had mentioned, as you say, in chapter 14: “In my Father’s house”, so that they would be attracted to the thought, would they not?

RT Yes. The answer to Philip’s question is: “Am I so long a time with you, and thou hast not known me ...?”, chap 14: 9. The Lord in that sense was not calling attention to Himself though everything was there in Him, but He says the works that I do are the Father’s works. It was in manhood it was seen, such a Man indeed, but what was seen really was the Father, was it not? It is difficult to explain these things in a sense, but there was something greater and deeper than what was expressed in Christ and it was all leading to the Father. What would you say?

JSG One thought of it would be that the perfect and holy and pure character of what the Father is has come into expression through Jesus making known His name. The Father’s name would be that it is known, the perfect and beautiful character that has come into expression.

RT Yes, and He says, “I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world”. The Father drew us to Christ. It is a very fine touch. We sometimes think that we have been drawn to the Lord and the Lord has drawn us to Himself, but the Father drew us to Christ. He was operating there on the line of purpose, as we said, before ever there was a spark in us; He drew us to Christ and placed us in His hands to be formed in the grace and love of Christ, formed in affection so that we are suited to the Father’s presence without a question being raised, but to bask in the sunshine and the warmth of that love.

JAB It says, “but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father”, John 14: 21.

RT Say some more about that.

JAB We know the Father as we know the Lord. I was just thinking of these affections.

RT It is very beautiful that the Lord speaks of them as men: “I have manifested thy name to the men”. It is not the sinners, not a question being raised, but they are men. I think the sense of the Father’s love brings about a certain maturity with us so that we know that we have a home and we belong to a scene where affections are flowing without being disturbed. He says, “They were thine, and thou gavest them me”, so we may say that we are brought home. We are brought to see that, before we knew and loved Christ, the Father was operating and He put us into Christ’s hands, you may say, like Joseph’s two sons. They were in Joseph’s hands, but then the great end is that they are brought to Israel; for us, brought to the Father, to have His name named upon us and to be in the dignity of all that belongs to the family.

DJH The Father’s operations are something we do not think of much; we think of the Lord and the Spirit, but the Father has made us fit. It is interesting to ponder the Father’s operations. They are all in love.

RT It would give us a deeper tone and more wealth in our response to the Father that He drew us to Christ. He put us into the hands of the Son to fashion us, to pass us through the exercises of Romans, if you like, to make men to be brought to a realm where the Father does not have to raise any questions, but He says, “Bring out the best robe”; there is something formed under the hands of Christ that, you may say, can wear the robe.

DJH That would be a man: “the men whom thou gavest me” could wear the robe.

RT That is so. It is not what belonged to us in the children state which, in that sense, is settled and gone. We are brought into this place where we can be before the Father’s face. It is “out of the world”. These things are not known in the world. “Love not the world, nor the things in the world. If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”, 1 John 2: 15. We may engage ourselves in things that the

work of Christ has placed us beyond and it hinders our coming into the enjoyment of the Father's love. We do not take these things up; we just say them in passing, but the world would interfere and spoil us from enjoying the undisturbed relationship that the Father would have us in.

HJT I think it is all very blessed. Would you say a further word on Genesis 48? What is conveyed in the kiss as distinct from the blessing?

RT What would you rather have? That is the test for us.

HJT I would sooner have the kiss.

RT Well, it was, maybe, not always like that. Maybe at some time you would rather have had the blessing first. Jacob was like that. He was a man who wanted the blessing. But maturity says, I would rather have the kiss than the blessing, does it not? There have been times when I would rather have had the blessing. We sometimes think we are going in for Christianity because of what we can get out of it. But the kiss gives a touch to the blessing. The blessing is all the sweeter when you know that the kiss was there first.

MJW So the world should see the difference in us in our being in the gain of this love, but how can we grow in the reality of it? I am tested in speaking about these things.

RT Well, I remember Stanley McCallum, at the beginning of an address, saying, We often speak about laying hold of sonship, but tonight I would like to speak of sonship laying hold of us. I think that is how we come into the gain of it. If you want to know the Father's love, be a son. Wear the robe and live in the dignity of it. If we are world-bordering and going into the world, we do not enjoy the Father's love. But the persons who come into the joy of the Father's love are those who place themselves and live in the joy and dignity of sonship.

BWW I have noticed in that section in Genesis 48 that consistently it is Israel and not Jacob. I suppose that is an evidence of where the man was and of his greatness, because he was the greatest man there, greater than Joseph: Joseph had to be corrected.

RT Yes, when he says, “let my name”—the name of Israel—“be named upon them”, v 16. They are brought into the dignity of the family. So the question raised is good: how can we know more of the Father’s love? Well, live in the family! Do not go outside the family or the family characteristics! We have seen some families go below what belongs to their dignity and they have spoiled their name. Live in the family atmosphere! Live in the family status! Live in the dignity of “let my name be named upon them”! That is what the Lord says here: “out of the world”. That is where He has led them. The love of Christ leads us “out of the world” to come into this area where we have the Father. Then He says, “I have given them thy word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, as I am not of the world”. I think as we remember these things we are helped to enjoy and live in the Father’s love in a deeper way.

MAJT You keep emphasising “out of the world” but the Lord Jesus was praying to His Father because we are in the world. Do we not know it! I often say, where do we draw the line? Spiritually we are out of the world, but it says in verse 11: “and these are in the world”.

RT Well, there is a common brethren expression, that we are in it but not of it. That helps us. But where was our origin? “He has chosen us in him before the world’s foundation”, Eph 1: 4. Our origin was there before the world. So we are in it and we prove grace in it and mercy, we prove these attributes of divine love, but we have to remember that we do not belong here. We are not of it; and, as we keep ourselves in that, we keep ourselves in the Father’s love.

BHC The Father delights in variety. I was thinking that sonship is not a mould but is a relationship, but then there would be variety in that relationship, do you think?

RT Yes, indeed, all like Christ, but there is variety, as you say, and personality and distinctiveness. Sonship gives us the status. The son has liberty. Sonship emphasises that. It brings us into the liberty of all that is in the house. Sons can be in the house at perfect rest and perfect liberty.

BHC When we are young we tend to think that we would like to be like someone else. We might think, I would like to be like that brother. Do you think that, from the Father's viewpoint, He would see everyone distinct in his setting—

Each with some trait of Him who loves so well?

(Hymn 90)

RT Yes, He would. Think of the Father's eye resting on that, as you say, some feature of His Son! Because the Son is so great, it requires them all to set Him out, you may say, but He sees in each one something of His Son. So He has given the Spirit of His Son into our hearts for that very purpose: "But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father", Gal 4: 6. So there is responsiveness, and that brings in the distinction, as you have said, in which the Father finds His pleasure.

JSG When He says, "I have given them thy word", does that convey that it enters into the Father's love that His thoughts should be known?

RT Yes, I am sure it does. He says elsewhere that the words that He was saying were the Father's words; He was not speaking from Himself. As the disciples followed the Lord, especially as in John's gospel in these chapters, you can see the Lord is leading them out all the time until He comes to the end when He says, "my Father and your Father ... my God and your God", chap 20: 17.

ECB In connection with what He says in chapter 15—"for all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known to you" (v 15)—here, speaking to the Father, He says, "I have given them thy word". That embraces the "all things", does it not?

RT I think so, and how they would cherish it: "I have given them thy word". The way it is put in the verse involves that the word has formed them because it says the world has hated them. There is some formation in the saints as the Father's word has been given us by Christ.

ECB This chapter in particular—and much, indeed, of John’s gospel—is quite apart from our responsibility or our sins, is it not? Yet you could preach the gospel from this chapter; there is no reference to sin in it or forgiveness or redemption, anything like that, but what it is to be drawn into the place where the Father loves you as He loves Jesus.

RT It gives us a view of God’s thoughts about us. Someone described the chapter as the heart of Christ about His own. He is speaking to the Father about them. As you say, it is not a question of their history but that they were persons who were there in purpose and the work of Christ has brought that purpose to light. The work of Christ has unfolded divine counsel and divine purpose and now He is leading them, through that work, into the area where that purpose is to be enjoyed.

ECB You might even put it that the death of Christ has been the key which has opened the door to the display of divine purpose.

RT That brings in the new covenant in the way that God has moved and the way that Christ has moved in opening the door. That is a good way to put it: it is the key. It has unfolded a great wealth of divine love that was beyond the sin question altogether.

ECB It is an interesting thing—not to depreciate in any way the value of Christ’s work—but once you have the key and open the door, you can after that no longer be thinking about the key; you are thinking about what is opened up for you.

RT So we are brought into the Father’s house, brought to know the Father’s love. Then it says, “And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them”. That is very beautiful, that the Lord confers that glory upon us, the glory of sonship: “And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one”. The Lord has conferred that glory on us, so that we can be at home in the presence of such love and such greatness.

HAH Mr Darby said that the death of Christ opened the floodgates so that the full tide of love might flow over sinners, Notes and Comments vol 6 p371.

RT Well, it is not only opening the door for God to come out; it is opening the door for us to come in. We go in in the same way that God has come out, through Christ by one Spirit (there is the door) we have access to the Father. So we are brought in and the Lord says, “And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them”. That is reconciliation too, that we are brought there in the wealth and dignity that belongs to Christ.

ECB We may perhaps over-define it by saying it is the glory of sonship. It is the place of a glorified Man before God. It may involve sonship, but “the glory which thou hast given me” is that the Father has raised Him from the dead by His glory and given Him a place in glory, as man, and that is the place He has opened to us.

RT Yes, I think it is love in full expression. It is what He goes on to: “that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them”. There is a glory about that: “and the glory which thou hast given me I have given them”. Think of being before the Father like Christ!

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

That is how the Lord serves us and brings us in to know the Father’s love and to enjoy the wealth of the house.

BWW Would you say a little more about that last verse: “that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them”?

RT The only impression I have about it—and I only thought of this a few minutes before the meeting—was that it was in them, not only upon them: “that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them”. It is right in here.

BWW In which direction does it flow?

RT I think it would involve the Holy Spirit. “God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts” (Gal 4: 6) so that we can enjoy that love in all its blessed sweetness. But it is undefinable, as far as I could say.

ECB Has it not been suggested that that last line approaches what is collective?

RT I think it would; the whole chapter has what is collective in view, does it not?

ECB I was thinking of the force of what you were saying yesterday about our understanding the assembly. It has sometimes seemed to me that this verse underlies, “in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises” (Heb 2: 12): “I in them”.

RT Yes, so that there is a company responsive to His touch. Think of the Chief Musician with a company enjoying that love! How responsive they would be! As it is enjoyed in its fulness it finds a way of expressing itself undoubtedly.

JSG Do you think it would link with the in-breathing in chapter 20?

RT I am sure it would, that there are these inward activities. That is good. Say some more about it.

JSG If we prove the power of the Father’s love as life in us by the Spirit, other things would seem strange.

RT I think that is a good suggestion because He breathed into them and you get the impression in that section that He was conveying divine feelings to them: “he breathed into them, and says to them, Receive the Holy Spirit” (v 22); and then He speaks about remitting and so on. I think that “the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them” would mean that we have divine feelings and we act in the divine character.

JSG That was a fresh challenge to me because we are not always up to it, but are you suggesting that we have to keep the divine thought before us so that what is normal might more and more mark us?

RT Yes; it would come out in our character, that we are acting like sons and in the sense of knowing the Father’s love in all its blessed sweetness.

How are you getting on?

IM If we think of these things as being from before the world's foundation, it is quite weak of us to think that we do not know very much of them, is it not? That is so nevertheless, and I am grateful for what is being said because it is for our acceptance in the gospel, flowing out of that and living in it.

RT Yes, we are brought into a great wealth. The illustration used to be used of a basket floating in the ocean; the basket could never contain the ocean and yet the ocean is in the basket. We are brought into a great area of divine wealth that we can never compass or fathom, but we are in it in all its blessed fulness, and in the joy of it there is produced a certain maturity and a character in our affections.

DJH Is that something like "I in them"? Must it not draw out the Father's love if He sees Christ in us?

RT "I in them and thou in me" brings out the sweetness of the family, does it not? What a thing to be in an area where there is this closeness and these feelings in operation and love enjoyed!

DJH It is a wonderful mutuality but it all springs from the Father's love.

RT And it all takes character from the person of Christ. He says, "Father, as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me". What it must have been for the Lord to be with the Father! But He would not be there alone. It says, "that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me". The glory that Christ has been given sustains and gives character to the whole realm.

ECB Is some of this connected with "I know a man in Christ", 2 Cor 12: 2?

RT I am sure it is. You get some sense of maturity.

ECB Sometimes it has been suggested that that was limited to Paul, but I do not think that is right. "The men whom thou gavest me out of the world" are the same ones who know a man in Christ, are they not? Do we know that?

RT The Lord, I think, is serving us to bring us to know something about it, and that is new creation. We are brought into this wealthy area where the Father finds His delight in His sons. It says, “and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”, Eph 3: 19. So that in a scene that is immeasurable we have a point of reference, and that is the love of Christ and the glory of Christ, as He speaks about it here, in a scene that we can never compass. Christ is there to hold us in relation to a scene that is immeasurable.

HAH Paul in Ephesians 3 bows his knees to the Father. Do you think he was in the consciousness of the Father’s love and, as strengthened by the Spirit, the first thing he asks is “that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts”, v 17? Is that like “I in them”?

RT That is very beautiful. You could say more about that.

HAH I wondered if it showed that Paul, rising to the height of his calling and knowing what it was to be “a man in Christ”, was in the consciousness of the Father’s love. Was that what the position “in Christ” led him into?

RT Very good. It is a very fine reference and I think that is what it would do with us; it would cause us to bow our knees to the Father, a love that knew us before time began but gave us to Christ—

Thou gav’st us, Father, in Thy love,
To Christ to bring us home to Thee.

I think that is what the Lord is leading us to—

Suited to Thine own thoughts above. (Hymn 88)

He is bringing us home, suited to this holy realm because, as we have said, there are no questions to be raised.

RJG In Luke 15 there is no record of the son taking the robe off. Is it important that we are sons all the time?

RT It can never change. Sonship is not something we work up to but, as you say, it is what we are. God has brought us into it by faith in Christ Jesus. The Lord has made sonship very attractive. What John saw was “a glory as

of an only-begotten with a father", John 1: 14. We are brought into sonship in its feelings, its joys and its liberty.

ECB What was said connects with what you were saying earlier about being out of the world, because you cannot wear the best robe in the world.

RT That is very good, and the more we know that love, the less we will want to be near the world. "Love not the world, nor the things in the world", 1 John 2: 15. Loving the things in the world causes a certain disturbance with us and we lose the joy of being at home in the presence of a love like this.

DJH So Paul says, "giving thanks at all times for all things to him who is God and the Father", Eph 5: 20. It is an interesting expression: "to him who is God and the Father". It is a test for everything, whether we can give thanks at all times to Him who is God and the Father. It would preserve us, would it not?

RT Yes, indeed. We are living in the joy of that relationship so that sonship has really laid hold of us because the Lord never lived for a moment outside the joy of that relationship. Disturbances come in with us as we know in our practical experience, but the Lord is serving us that we may be led into this area of undisturbed affections.

DJH So it is not a question of whether there is any harm in this, but can I give thanks to the Father for it.

RT Very good.

JCE It is remarkable that in chapter 17 it speaks of the Son demanding certain things of the Father, and that He will not demand certain things: "I do not demand that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them out of evil".

RT What an expression it gives us of His love!

JCE Yes, it does!

RT It is like the high priest with the breastplate on and the stones in it. John 17 is something like that, you see something there of Christ and His feelings for the saints. There they are upon His heart in all their beauty, in all their

dignity, and He is going into the presence of God and saying, Here they are, how beautiful they are!

AG I was thinking of the Father's supply in the way of daily care, the mention of the sparrows and the hairs of our head all being numbered. If there is a drought, it soon gets noticed, but the Father cares for us every day.

RT Yes, He comes down to us in that way in His providence and His care and, indeed, that extends to all men, to give us some impression of the kind of Father that He is, that there is nothing outside His ken. But these things are the blessing, you may say, that we spoke about earlier. I think He reaches us first through the blessing, the richness of His grace coming to us in the blessing, but He wants us to come to know the kiss. He wants us to come to know not only the attributes and the way He has shone out in His grace and His mercy, but He wants us to know His heart, and there is much more in His heart than we learn in His attributes, and He brings out something of His heart here that the love with which He has loved Christ should be in us. The great end is that there is a company who are "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the Beloved". We live in that favour. We continue in it, in its sweetness and its blessedness. I trust we have not made these things complicated but attractive. The Father has wonderful thoughts about us, greater thoughts than we can ever devise, as has been demonstrated in the younger son. He could never have thought about that robe. The Father has greater thoughts for us than ever we could imagine, and He would bring us to know something of this favour that He has taken us into, "into favour in the Beloved".

ECB It is a great thing to see that because Christ is there, I am there. I was thinking of what was said earlier, that we do not need to make an effort to take these things on; you just take them on, that because Christ is there, I am there.

RT It gives us title and it sets us at home, that in the presence of this there is Someone that we well know, Someone who has had to do with us in our sins and had to do with us when we were far away. And as I have said already, He is a point of reference in a scene that is

immeasurable: “and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”.

LONDON

18th July 1993

List of initials

London unless otherwise stated

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THINGS WE HAVE COME TO

Hebrews 2: 10; 3: 1-3; 12: 22-25

RT I thought the Lord may encourage us to speak of some of the things we have come to. We are so apt to take our impressions from the confused state of things that is abroad and the breakdown arising through man intruding into the things of God. But it is a fine thing to see that God has not changed His mind or His thoughts. It is very striking, in the book of Numbers particularly, when the people failed and breakdown had come in, that God brings in the word, “When ye come into the land of your dwellings”, Num 15: 2. God would remind us of what He has called us into, that His thoughts have not changed but, too, that He has made a way to secure them all in Christ. I thought that these scriptures may help us to see the way that God has operated to work out His thoughts, and the One in whom He has operated in bringing many sons to glory. It is what God is doing, it is still His mind to bring many sons to glory. How He has done it is through that One already made perfect, the Leader of our salvation. Then we are to be partakers of a heavenly calling. What we have been called into has its centre and source and origin in heaven. Then we have some detail in chapter 12 of the beauty of these things to which we have come. We have come to them now; it is not that we are coming to them but it is what the gospel calls us into, it is what divine grace calls us to have part in. We all feel how little we have part in it but maybe we could be encouraged today to see that it is not only open to us but it is the Spirit’s mind and His service to bring us into the joy of them now. In spite of what has come into our histories and what we have had part in, it is still God’s mind to bring many sons to glory.

LMcF So the greatness of His Person is brought before us immediately: “it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory”. These “all things” are a very wide thought, would you not say?

RT Yes, it brings us back to the greatness of God, “for whom are all things, and by whom are all things”. There are certain things that have come into man’s hand which have ended in

breakdown, but these are things that God has retained in His own hand, including the saints. So that “for whom are all things” means that He is the great end, and He is the great operator. The hymn says,

O God, the thought was Thine,
Thine only could it be (Hymn 92)

It was His mind to bring sons to glory and now He has operated to secure His joy in them. So it is to encourage our hearts that, in spite of what is broken and the weakness we feel, God is the great operator and He is working out His own thoughts in His own way.

JAP It is of interest that you say God changes not. Is that not one of His names? He says, “For I Jehovah change not”, Mal 3: 6.

RT He is the same, He does not change. We have been taken aback by many things that have happened in the history of the testimony, but God has not been taken aback. He does not change in His thoughts by what we have done or what has come in; He is still bringing many sons to glory. It is “many sons”, not a few, but all those who were purposed, those who were in His mind; He still regards them in their true dignity: “bringing many sons to glory”.

CFD Maybe you would say a word as to what this glory is.

RT I think it is bringing us to Himself. I suppose it includes what we have come to in Hebrews 12; I think it is bringing us into His own circumstances, His own surroundings. What would you say?

CFD It is a very beautiful expression; we often draw on this scripture at the time of the service of God on Lord’s day. It seems to be something that relates to the persons themselves and yet has to do with the place into which they are brought.

RT I think it is where divine grace and love would have us to live; it is bringing us to glory. We have our part in responsible matters of course, but divine love and grace set out in the gospel are to bring us into divine arrangements. I think the glory would be something of divine arrangements which we touch in the assembly. You will remember that when He

brought them out of Egypt, it says He brought them out and He will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance, Exod 15: 17. So God has wonderful thoughts even now of which the saints are to be in the joy and the liberty.

LMcF This would be in His purpose for us before time began, though it awaited the fulness of time—God sending His Son—for us to have our part in it. Is that right?

RT I think so. In Christianity things have become fixed, you may say. It says earlier in the chapter: “But now we see not yet all things subjected to him, but we see Jesus” (v 9); there is a Man in whom God’s thoughts have been set out and in that Man we can see the thoughts of His purpose unfolding.

GDP Did you have some thought about sons being the full thought of maturity, not just simple believers but sons?

RT That is a very fine thing to lay hold of today, that in spite of our history God is regarding us in the true wealth and dignity that divine grace has put upon us. You say some more about it.

GDP I thought from your opening prayer that you had that in mind, maturity going on to full thoughts, until we arrive at the full grown man. Is that right?

RT Very good. So in the times we are in, broken times, it is very easy to settle for a lot less and rearrange our circumstances short of what divine love and grace would have us to enjoy. We feel these things very much. But God’s thoughts have not changed, He is bringing many sons to glory, and in doing it, “to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings”, to give expression to His thoughts and to bring the saints into the joy of them.

CSE In the thought of many sons there is no limitation; the limitation is on our side. But God is bringing many sons in, and that opens our minds to a vast area that is under His hand; expansion is in mind in that.

RT God has greater thoughts about us than we can ever have for ourselves; He is bringing many sons to glory. The effort of the enemy is to cause us, as I said, to settle for less. But it is beautiful the way God is operating and has operated

through “the leader of their salvation through sufferings”. There is One in whom it has all been established and in whom the way has been set out; He the firstborn, the Son, the Beloved; already, we may say, in glory, the great Forerunner of a wonderful company, is He not?

CFD Bringing us into the idea of the divine arrangement is very suggestive. Do you think bringing many sons to glory involves the whole mediatorial setting of things and the functioning of it?

RT I think so. Ephesians would open it up more I suppose, that through Christ and by one Spirit we have access to the Father, chap 2: 18. It is emphasising the Person there more, but here it is the environment into which we are brought. Think of divine grace bringing many sons into circumstances where everything is suited to divine love. It says He has done it and in doing it He has made perfect the Leader of their salvation through sufferings. What a substantial basis has been laid in the sufferings of Jesus for God’s heart to expand and bring many sons to glory!

JAP The expression, “it became him”, is a very wonderful expression, as if to say, This is what our God will do.

RT It is very beautiful, there is wonderful feeling in it; “it became him”. He did not leave man after the fall; He has not left us because of all that we are as of Adam’s fallen race, but it became Him in the working out of His thoughts to make perfect the Leader of their salvation through sufferings. He has operated, as we are so often reminded, from His own side. The footnote tells us as to the Leader that there is only one, it is the One who has worked out the whole plan of divine love and thus has made the way for God to be free to bring many sons to glory.

LMcF Do you think service is in view? It would seem to be a primary thought of the blessed God. Even in relation to Israel He says, “Let my son go, that he may serve me”, Exod 4: 23. So it does seem that the service of God is very much in view here.

RT Yes, I think so. It would issue in that, not so much service in the wilderness but service in the land, we may say—

sons at home, is it not? How sweeter and fuller the service becomes as we touch something of the environment in which divine love would have us to be at home. The song at the Red Sea was one thing—very beautiful—but when you come to David’s psalms and the dedication of the house, you see something of service and sons being brought to glory. It helps to have our thoughts transferred to the One in whom it has all been brought to pass; firstly as the Leader of our salvation and then the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. The whole system is upheld and centred in Christ, a glorious Man.

CSE Would you say a further word on “to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings”? Why do you think it is put that way—“through sufferings”? You might say, because of who He is, He could have used other means to do it, but it is through sufferings.

RT I think it brings before us very beautifully the manhood of Jesus. Many things were done by angels but here it has been done in a Man, and the sufferings have brought out the feelings of the Man. In the majesty of His Person death had to give way: “Lazarus, come forth”, John 11: 44. These are things He did in His power. I think it is to endear the Person to our hearts; He fills this position having gone a suffering way and, in that suffering, a basis has been laid in righteousness so that man may be cleansed to come into the position of sons in glory.

CFD Would the position that the Lord has taken as Apostle and High Priest of our confession emphasise His manhood? I was wondering whether the appeal to us to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession would show how the Lord has moved from His own side to bring this all about. The Apostle would suggest the side of authority and power, the High Priest would have in mind moving into the inward side of things where all these features that you have been speaking about can function according to the mind of the Lord.

RT Yes, I think so. It is very beautiful that it is all centred in Jesus. Feelings come into it; our brother has referred to His being made perfect through sufferings. It is not that He fills an official position as an official but a Man as the Apostle and High Priest. Not only is the mind of God made known but the people are being brought into it through the operation of divine

grace. A brother used to tell us that he heard Mr Raven say that as Apostle He maintains the calling at its height and as High Priest He maintains the people at the height of the calling, vol 16 p44. That is a very choice expression and worth thinking about, that as the Apostle He is from God's side, He holds the whole system up; it will not break down. It broke down under Moses, but Christ as the Apostle maintains everything for God, that will never break down. But then in His priestly grace He considers for the people and He holds us in relation to the greatness of that calling. That is Jesus; it is not Moses and Aaron, they were the men who set it out in type, but there is a Man, Jesus, who is able to hold things for God, and there is no breakdown there. He suffered and, on the basis of His blood being shed and His being raised from the dead, He is maintaining a whole system of things for God; but in His grace He is touching the people. It is worth considering, is it not? "Consider", it says, the heavenly calling and the One in whom it is all centred and set out.

JAP In the book of Numbers to which you referred, Moses and Aaron were quick to intercede when the breakdown came. Do they answer to what the Lord Jesus is currently maintaining on high and the Spirit here?

RT It is all part of what flowed out of the sufferings of Christ, and the Spirit here is the answer to the High Priest above. You think of the High Priest there above with the names on His breast and on His shoulders; the answer to it is that the Spirit is here serving us in view of the saints being maintained in the glory of that position above. It is a wonderful wealth we have come into and come into now in these very circumstances of weakness and breakdown that we feel so much.

ASH "To make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings"—"make perfect"—would it be right to say that He is looking for perfection in the leaders?

RT Well, He has found perfection in Christ, has He not?—"This is my beloved Son", Matt 3: 17. But then that perfection is filled out in the position He has taken because of the way He has suffered. In His death and in His blood He has removed every stain of sin, and in those sufferings He has laid a basis in righteousness for God's heart to come out to bless the

sinner, but more than that, to bring sons to glory. What a God He is!

CFD Is the writer trying to elevate the thoughts of these Hebrew believers to see that, great as Moses was and high as he was in their estimation, what has been inaugurated and brought in through the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, is greater than anything that ever went before? The glory connected with this system far exceeds anything that belonged to Judaism and he would try to lift their affections and their thoughts to come into that.

RT I think we can do with something of that today. What was set out in Moses and Aaron declined. When there was revival, there was a good priest and a good state, but things declined. Here things cannot decline; “consider the Apostle and High Priest ... Jesus”. Things are in good hands, not only is the system righteously established and maintained but the saints are in good hands. We are in the hands of this High Priest, this One who is known to us in His personal name, Jesus. So that, as you say, he is asking the saints to consider this, not consider how man has intruded or the enemy has spoiled, but to consider that in this Person, Jesus, things have been established for God, and the saints are held in relation to their living part in that system.

LDP I was concerned as to the expression ‘leader’ and notice it refers to the Acts where it is the originator and completer of things. I am thinking that it is distinctly Christ’s position.

RT There is only One, is there not? And there is nobody to take His place, “the leader of their salvation”. It does not depend on any other. As you follow through the footnote it says that the word applies only to Christ. It is used only a few times in the Scripture. “The originator of life ye slew”, Acts 3: 15. It is the same word and it applies only to Christ, “the leader of their salvation”. So that the whole race, you may say, takes character from the Leader of their salvation, and He has made the way through suffering that we may follow into the joy of what He is leading us into.

ASH Peter in Acts says, “Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him, this Jesus

whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”, Acts 2: 36. He is all in all both Lord and Christ.

RT That is a good word—to know assuredly. We get shaken sometimes, but, “Let the whole house of Israel know assuredly”. God has placed the heavenly calling in good hands and all is proceeding under His hands. So we, those who are partakers of the heavenly calling, have to consider, too, the centre of the system, Jesus.

KNP Does this considering involve contemplation?

RT I think it means taking time. How many voices there are abroad today, how many influences are at work that would occupy our time and distract us from the system that God has established. “Consider the Apostle” fixes our attention on the centre of the heavenly calling and the assurance that it has all been brought to pass. It says, He is faithful in all God’s house.

JAP There is a note of Mr Darby’s on the word ‘consider’ in chapter 12. He says, ‘Weigh so as to judge its value, and sometimes in comparison with other things’.

RT It is a needed word for us—to be able to look away from what is around us; and later: “consider well” Him. But we have here that God has established everything in Christ and from that position the heavenly calling is to be enjoyed today.

CSE The Spirit of God wants us to make time to consider these things well, to consider Jesus. There is so much about Him. In this section He is the Leader and He is the Apostle and the High Priest, the same one Person. And there are many other titles and glories that are great enough to occupy our consideration, do you think?

RT Yes, but a Man bears them all, they all hang upon Jesus. It is very fine to think of it. The Apostle is needed, the authority and the principles and the grace that He has set out, are all needed, but there is a Man able to maintain the calling at its height. But that same Man is able to maintain the saints at the height of the calling. The combination of authority and grace that comes in in the expression of divine love is very beautiful.

DHM I was wondering about the expression, “holy brethren”.

RT It is a wonderful thing to be in the gain of, to look at the brother next to you and regard him as one of these holy brethren. We have all known what it is to be overtaken and fall below our dignity, but it is fine to pray for the brethren as part of the 'holy brethren'. Though they may at the moment be outside the enjoyment of the position, we should be able to pray for them and regard them as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, and encourage one another to come into it through considering that it is all centred in Jesus, the Man who would appeal to the affections of every believer.

LS In John 20 Mary comes to the Lord on resurrection ground. He says, "Touch me not", and then He gives her that word, "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", v 17. That was the thought at the very beginning of resurrection, He was bringing many to Himself. She would touch Him alone but He would have the thought to bring others in.

RT Yes; and where were they, do you think, when the Lord gave that message about "my brethren"? They may have been at home, maybe discouraged, they may have thought that things had not worked out as expected. The Lord says, "Go to my brethren". Mary knew who they were. It is like the holy brethren here. The saints are never to lose their true dignity and character and place in our affections though the circumstances that may come in that way for the moment may overwhelm us.

LMcF So priestly service would be in view; the sons are to be priestly.

RT It helps us to change our thoughts when we consider Jesus, the Man who has gone through and the Man who has established everything in relation to God. So that we need to be helped to pray for our brethren like this, and regard ourselves and one another as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. Maybe the world and self have intruded, maybe sin has been allowed, but God has His thoughts about them as the holy brethren; and as the Apostle and High Priest the system is still functioning through coming to Jesus for us to have our living part in it. So in chapter 12 it says "ye have come". You have come to it now, I understand; we have not

come to what could change but to what divine grace has established for present enjoyment and experience. So it says, “but ye have come”; it is not what you have not come to. There are many things, brethren, we ourselves feel that we have allowed and become ensnared in perhaps—things that we really have not come to. But we have come to what we spoke of earlier, to divine arrangements where God has set out His thoughts for the saints to be at home before Him.

CFD Is there a moral reason why he refers to Zion first: “ye have come to mount Zion”?

RT That is a beautiful area of things, is it not: “ye have come to mount Zion”. Mount Zion never breaks down. We have come to what God has established on the basis of His mercy and His love. There are some beautiful psalms about it, are there not? It says of all the tribes He chose Judah, the mount Zion which He loved, Ps 78: 68. I always remember that it was remarked in past ministry that we get two Jerusalems but only one Zion. Jerusalem refers to what God may have placed in relation to man’s responsibility, so He makes a new Jerusalem, but Zion refers to the purpose of His love and what He has established Himself apart from breakdown, that the saints through divine mercy are brought to have their living part in. What would you say about it?

CFD I think what you are saying is very helpful. How the saints at that time would have needed this and maybe how much we need it at the present moment. What you come to first is a whole system of things that is established by God, immovable, it cannot break down, it is all from His own side, mount Zion, absolute stability. They needed it and you feel that we are at a juncture where we need it ourselves.

RT I think it would be quite right to say that you can substitute the word ‘assembly’ for ‘mount Zion’—we have come to the assembly. We have come to an area of things that is the fruit of divine purpose; not the assembly on the side of breakdown but the assembly as in God’s purpose where we are to find our living part.

CFD I think your use of the word ‘assembly’ helps us. Maybe mount Zion is a little more mysterious to us, but relating it to

coming in from God's side involving His purpose helps. God can be hindered in no thought of His and He is going to see the assembly through and He is going to see it through now in our own time, do you think?

RT Yes, I think so; and we come to enjoy it. It is a fine thing to come to enjoy what divine love has prepared. It is all divine preparation—mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, angels, the assembly of the firstborn. Man had no hand in any of these things but through divine mercy we have been brought to have a living part in them where God has His arrangements and we are to find our home.

LDP Do these verses in Psalm 48 fit in: “Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (v 2); “Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: count the towers thereof”, vv 11, 12. We see failures, but we are told to walk about Zion, go round about her, count the towers.

RT How beautiful a vessel the assembly is as the fruit of divine purpose! That is what we have come to. As you say, beautiful in elevation. It is not part of man's arrangements. That Psalm is very beautiful and encouraging; “go round about her”. How much there is to engage us in assembly experiences, the preciousness of this vessel, what she is to Christ, what she is to God; and we have come to have our part in it. The verse you quote is very beautiful—to go round about it, to consider her bulwarks. What attacks the enemy has made against it, but there she is still to be enjoyed today. It may be in smallness and outwardly broken circumstances, but we have come to what is divine in its conception and proceeds from the thoughts of divine love, and we have our part functioning in it. So as you come to mount Zion, as we come to the assembly, different principles affect us. We are in the world but worldly principles have no place in mount Zion or the assembly. We have come to what God has set out according to His own thoughts.

GA In 1 Kings 10 the queen of Sheba came and saw Solomon's glory. It says, “I gave no credit to the words, until I came and mine eyes had seen; and behold, the half was not

told me: in wisdom and prosperity thou exceedest the report that I heard”, v 7. Would that fit in with the position we are in now? It exceeded the report.

RT Yes, I think that is true. As we come to Jesus we see that He is beyond every comparison. But then He has a counterpart, we have come to mount Zion. It is not only that we love the Lord Jesus and have come to find Him as our Saviour, and come under His influence as our Lord and Head, but we come into what belongs to Him here. Mount Zion is the place where He is expressed, I think, the place that He chose. It says of all the tribes He chose Judah, the mount Zion which He loved. So that the assembly is the vessel of divine choice. We have not only come to Christ but we have come to the assembly where He is cherished and where we are to find our part and our enjoyment.

CSE There is another Psalm, 125: “They that confide in Jehovah are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved; it abideth for ever”, v 1. I am thinking of the link with the assembly. The Lord says, “On this rock I will build my assembly, and hades’ gates shall not prevail against it”, Matt 16: 18. So mount Zion is something stable, immovable you might say.

RT Yes, that is not on earth, is it? Think of the nations and the countries and the systems here today that are changing; countries’ boundaries changing, their names changing, their legislation, it is all changing, but we have come to a system of things that proceeds from God and where His mind is expressed, and we have come to find our life in it now. I think that would help us to be assembly persons, assembly-minded persons. They are very scarce today. We are mixed up with worldly influences and all these other things but I think this would help us to be assembly-minded persons, that we are considering for God’s dwelling. Mount Zion is where He dwells, is it not?

JAP Another Psalm, by recovered men—the sons of Korah—brings out the thought that God loves Zion: “Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion”, Ps 87: 2. That is the place of assembling, is it not? I think you should say more about that.

RT If you read that verse it will tell us more.

JAP “Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God ... And of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her; and the Most High himself shall establish her”.

RT It has been said before in this city that it is better to go to the meeting than to sit at home.

LMcF That is right. I think God’s sovereignty should affect us more. These sons of Korah were affected by the sovereign mercy of God, and He has taken us up and given us to have part in such a glorious system of things.

RT Yes. We have been taught that the gates of Zion represent the saints assembled and the habitations of Jacob being in our houses. There are many excuses for us to stay at home, we are tired and one thing and another, but it is better to come to the gates of Zion, is it not? We come into a fresh sense of mercy, and divine grace quickens our affections to see the arrangements that God has made and included us in those arrangements. Would that be right?

GDP I was thinking of the living side of things, the city of the living God. It is terrible to get into a half-dead state, is it not? Would that be fitting in with your thoughts?

RT Heavenly Jerusalem is where the sun is always shining, the city of the living God. It is what is above the clouds, above the breakdown. We have come to have part in what is elevated and where God finds His joy and where the saints can find their home.

GDP What would you say about “the assembly of the firstborn”? Does that fit in with the many sons brought to glory?

RT Yes. I am sure you remember better than I do what has been said about this verse, that mount Zion is the country, heavenly Jerusalem the capital, and the assembly of the firstborn the society, see J Taylor vol 40 p279. What would the country be without its society? That has always challenged me, that we have come into a heavenly society, come into divine arrangements, but we have come there into the

assembly of the firstborn, everyone there with a robe on, everyone in their true dignity, everyone there clothed in the worth and the excellence of Christ for His eye and for His pleasure. So the assembly of the firstborn registered in heaven connects somewhat with what we were saying about the holy brethren, what the saints are in the thoughts of God and what divine grace has made us—the assembly of the firstborn. We are there with equal rights, nobody made to feel that they are not wanted or inferior, but they are equal and all like Christ. They are registered in heaven, they would not be on man's registers—the offscouring of the world, Paul says (see 1 Cor 4: 13)—but the assembly of the firstborn registered in heaven. There is not time to go into the details of these things, but the centre of it all is Jesus again. It has come through a Man in whom the whole system is set out and who imparts His own character and features to the whole system in which through grace and mercy we have been called to have our part in now.

CFD Would registered in heaven involve the fact that they are citizens there? That is where their name is, that is where they belong. That is in a sense their point of origin. It seems to stand completely over against the idea of what belongs to the earth, do you think?

RT Unknown yet well known; unknown here, strangers below, citizens above; they are in this divine register. Think of how love has registered our names there!

CFD Would this involve the idea of the book of life? It might not be the same thing exactly but that is another area in which the name is registered in heaven, in the book of life, do you think?

RT Yes, and who registered it? It is very feeling to think of that. We could not register it ourselves. The father usually registers the birth, does he not but here it is our heavenly Father who has registered our names in heaven. What love and what grace has entered into it, and they are never to be removed. It is fine just now and again to take a look at the name that is registered there, despised by men, maybe persecuted. The Lord says, Blessed are ye when men persecute you, Matt 5: 11. It is fine then to have a sense that

God has registered those names in heaven, not only mine but the names of my brethren.

CSE Where your name is registered is where you can vote. It is good to be on that roll. It is like “our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens”, Phil 3: 20. It is very elevating to think of where we are recorded—a heavenly recording. That helps our spirits, do you think?

RT Yes, that is where we have rights, as you say. It is very good that being registered there gives us right to be there. Not that we can ever work up to it, but divine love has registered us there saying, This is where you belong, this is where I will have you, though we are denied our rights and persecuted below.

LDP Is that “my new name”, Rev 3: 12?

RT Well, we are getting into deep waters now. But it is the name that divine grace has placed upon us. It is not named after the Jacob order of things, it is Israel, is it not? God changed Jacob’s name. What marked Jacob was the man after the flesh, but the man of divine choice was called Israel, ‘prince’. It would be a name that is suited to that register. These things are, as we have said, to elevate us in our thoughts, and it has all been made possible as having come “to Jesus, mediator of a new covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling”, the righteous, unchallengeable basis on which the whole matter has been established, so that we may now in the presence of weakness know something of our heavenly part that divine love has purposed for us to enjoy.

NEW YORK

21st May 1994

List of initials

G.Ashby, New York; C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; C.S.Elliott, New York; A.S.Hinkson, New York; D.H.McFarlane, New York; L.McFarlane, New York; G.D.Pfingst, Plainfield; J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; K.N.Pye, New York; L.D.Phillips, New York; L.Stank, New York; R.Taylor, Barnet

THE THINGS THAT REMAIN

Haggai 2: 1-9

Psalm 90: 1, 2

Hebrews 13: 8, 9

I desire to say a word, with the Lord's help, on the things that remain. That severely limits the things we can speak about because there are very few things that remain as they were. Time has made great changes in everything here. Indeed the Lord sums it up: "treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust spoils", Matt 6: 19. That covers about everything, either the moth gets it or rust gets it. Men try to make the most enduring things but they are all perishing. Everything here will be wound up too. When we speak about things that remain we must come to God—"Thou remainest": what a fine word that is!

Changeless through all the changing years.

(Hymn 15)

It is fine to have a point of reference in life, some stable centre from which you can take direction. The seaman needs the stars or the sun to get a point of reference. It has to be in the heavens; there can be no point of reference in things here. A Christian has a point of reference in Jesus where He is. The Man who has been exalted to God's right hand becomes a point of reference for the Christian. 'Changeless', as we have sung, 'through all the changing years'.

So here God, speaking to the people, says, "The word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit, remain among you". What a word of encouragement! What a history had come in from the time that word was spoken, but God had not changed His thoughts about them—the word remains. Then He says, "my Spirit, remain among you"—a faithful God. What a word of encouragement this must have been to the godly remnant! He brings it in here to encourage them to work. That is what I would like to do—to encourage all our hearts to be committed to the work. How much there is to cause the failing knees and the hands to hang down as we look on our

part in things and see what has been allowed in God's ways. God says, My word, my Spirit, remain among you; it has not changed. Laying hold of that would help us to work. You say, Is it worthwhile? Well, God is addressing the remnant here; He says, "and to the remnant of the people". God would be addressing us now like that, the remnant of the people. Few there may be, but God thinks it worthwhile to speak to them to encourage them. However few there may be God looks on them as part of the whole and He is encouraging the remnant to work, to lay hold of what He has left among them—My word and My Spirit remain among you. Oh, what cause there was for Him to take them away! They had broken the covenant, they had proved not only unworthy but unfaithful. What cause there was for that covenant to be broken! God says, The word remains that I covenanted with you. He is faithful to what He has said; He is bringing many sons to glory in spite of what has come in. Then He says, "and my Spirit, remain among you"; it is there to be availed of, it is there to be freely known. As you read part of the word you might say it would condemn them because it was their side of the covenant, but God says, If your side has broken down, my side remains, a faithful promise true to myself. So He encourages them. I would like to apply that to our time. I think the word may be applied to what the Lord says: "On this rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it", Matt 16: 18. Into this dispensation that we are part of there has come to light this vessel that Christ is building: "on this rock I will build". That building has not stopped because of the breakdown, or the poor material, you may say, from man's side, but there is the material under the hand of Christ that is the product of heaven's activities. The Lord said to Peter, "flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens". So there is what remains. You may say, It is hard to point to it. But it remains and the light of it shines in the remnant. In the remnant there remains, as we have been so often taught, all the characteristics of the whole. The only difference between the remnant and the whole is the quantity: the quality is still the same, only the volume is reduced. It is the time we are in dear brethren, the quantity has been reduced but the quality is to remain; and God addresses the quality in the remnant

that is left. The Lord would encourage our hearts as to what has come in through His word as to His assembly, “my assembly” He says, “and hades’ gates shall not prevail against it”. That remains and will remain until the rapture. In this wonderful time there is developed a bride for Christ through divine grace which is to be His counterpart, soon to be displayed in her own beauty and glory because she has a glory that belongs to her and her alone. The assembly will have a glory that outshines the glory of all other families. In a broken time the light of it is there and the remnant would seek to walk in the light of it, mourning that there is not the quantity, but seeking to work that the quality and shining may be maintained. It says, “be strong ... and work: for I am with you”. Think of the Lord’s promise; He said to His few: “I am with you all the days”, Matt 28: 20. In these days in which we are, the days of breakdown, the days of reproach, He says, “I am with you”.

It is very striking in this chapter how often it refers to “Jehovah of hosts”. What a word to the remnant: “Jehovah of hosts”. What an encouraging word that He has His hosts. He has them all. So few are available, so few known to us, but He is Jehovah of hosts, He remains the same, and He will have hosts too, He will have many families. What a company the redeemed will be!—

Hark! ten thousand voices crying
“Lamb of God!” with one accord;
Thousand thousand saints replying
Wake at once the echoing chord (Hymn 14)

What a company—Jehovah of hosts! It is not referring here to angels—there will be hosts of them too—but the hosts would be the redeemed. Jehovah of hosts—what a company! How beautiful to think of them, majesty belongs to them. What an encouragement to them that God should take this title to address the remnant of the people: “I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts”. Then He says, My word, the word that He has spoken. What light has come into this time, as I say, of the preciousness and the uniqueness and the peculiar glory of the assembly, outshining all other jewels as the pearl of great price. The Lord is securing it through these

conditions that we are in. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts". What a mixture there may be around! God, in His disciplinary ways, is not spoiling the silver or the gold, He is refining it by removing the dross in the sufferings of the present time; but "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine", that will not be damaged. God is very particular in His administration and in His government—"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine". O, how precious it is! Much may be surrounding it but it is there and He has His eye upon it, and the remnant would have their eye upon it too. You can just visualise this passage being read to them, perhaps like us, feeling the loss of so many of their brethren, and how the former glory had gone, thinking there had been better days in the days of their fathers. How encouraging this word would be as it was read to them: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine", God unchanged and that same word remains among you. May we be encouraged to work, dear brethren, to work at these great things that we have been brought to have our part in—Christ and the assembly.

Then it says, "my Spirit, remain among you". O, what grace! The Spirit has not gone; He has been offended, He has been insulted, but "my Spirit, remain among you". God Himself is there. It is not angel's voice but it is, my word and my Spirit; God Himself has come to be among them, identified with those suffering people. The blessed Spirit of God is still here. As I said, He has been offended, insulted, ignored, despised, yet He remains among you. What grace! I would encourage us to make room for Him. If He is here, what things are possible; He is not in the world but, it says, "remain among you"; the Spirit here with the saints to develop these assembly features, to maintain them in the light of their heavenly calling. It has been remarked before that the Spirit becomes very prominent in what we may speak of as the remnant epistles—in Timothy, which would have that character, things depend on the Spirit when men have broken down; in the book of Revelation, when all is broken up, the Spirit is emphasised: "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies". Those assemblies from Ephesus to Laodicea, whatever their state, my word and my Spirit remain among you; the Spirit is here. It has been well

said that that covers the whole church period from Ephesus—the assembly set up in its freshness and glory at Pentecost—Laodicea—representing the decline and the departure that has come in in the course of the testimony. Yet the Spirit is speaking: “my Spirit, remain among you”. Whatever conditions we may feel, dear brethren, the Spirit is still speaking. This chapter would be to encourage us to have an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. He is not speaking to the world, but He remains among you speaking to the assemblies, “fear ye not”. I think the Spirit is particularly with the saints in suffering circumstances. Peter tells us that, if you suffer, “the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you”, 1 Pet 4: 14. What a beautiful word! You think of the suffering saints, persecuted by their employers, as they have been in this country and others, the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. What dignity marked the suffering saints! How God would clothe them with glory! If men despise them and shut them out from their societies and their arrangements, how God would honour them; the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. I think the Spirit draws near to us particularly in the suffering circumstances of the testimony in which we are today. The Spirit joins His help to us to comfort and to encourage and to strengthen us to work in the light of the whole, to be strong and to be courageous, for there is what remains and will remain to the end. Through all the circumstances of assembly history, decline, departure, recovery and revival, in it all there is My word and My Spirit remaining among you. What a point of reference, as I have referred to earlier, to lay hold of, that God is speaking and He is there to work out His own designs and His own thoughts; “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine ... The latter glory ... shall be greater than the former”. This dispensation, dear brethren, is not to end in breakdown or confusion, it will end in glory. It will end in the whole assembly being caught up to be with Christ. What a view to have before us that the end is glory, the latter glory shall be greater than the former. It does not refer to numbers exactly but to the accumulation of what the Spirit has wrought through the dispensation. We all mourn the limitations of the present time, and many would speak of the former days being better, but I do not think that is spiritual thinking. I think the Spirit is leading on, there

has been progression through the dispensation and the Spirit is developing something that is going to exceed in glory the former. We just need to think of how the Spirit's voice has developed among us in what we speak of as the service of God. The older brethren can think back on how in the Spirit's gentle grace, there has been developed something that is precious to the heart of Christ, and response from sons' affections to the Father that is greater than the former. Now the Spirit is going through and, as we are with Him, we come into the blessedness of the latter glory of this house. He is not building another house because there has been breakdown; that is what men do, they abandon one thing and try to start something else. That is not God's way; He says, My word is still there and my Spirit is still there and "this house", the same house, the same assembly that was there and began at Pentecost and went through the dark ages when seemingly there was very little. What spoils there will be from this dispensation, worked out through the sufferings of the saints and the Spirit of glory and of God resting upon them. It will be said in that day, "What hath God wrought!" Num 23: 23. It will all come in to display to a wondering universe. Do we not look on to that, the day of His appearing, "when he shall have come to be glorified in his saints, and wondered at in all that have believed", 2 Thess 1: 10? The assembly will be with Him. Indeed, I think it is true that the assembly will add something to the glory of Christ as He appears; she will be with Him. The assembly with Christ will be the wonder of the universe and there she will shine in her own glory alongside of Him. We are having part in that today, dear brethren, amidst all the circumstances we are in. The silver is being refined, the gold is being purified, and it is soon to be in its true place when the assembly is alongside of Christ. May our hearts find recourse and encouragement to lay our hands to the work, to be committed to what is here in remnant conditions to which God is committed. Think of the Lord Jesus being committed to it the Spirit being committed to it and the Father being committed to it; may we be more committed to it. May there be proceeding in our local gathering, however small the silver and the gold coming to light, what is divinely wrought in the saints that God has His eye upon, and may we appreciate and value it increasingly.

I refer to Moses; he says he found a dwelling-place in God. He spent the latter part of his life in the wilderness with a complaining people. The Psalm has its added beauty as you think of the man Moses and what he had to bear with the people through the wilderness. He says, "Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations". God remained the same. How many hard days Moses had; they spoke of stoning him and returning to Egypt, what a hard day that must have been! These thousands of people were all against him and saying, Did you bring us out here to die? Think of him going into His dwelling-place; he says, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place". What a comfort, dear brethren, in the reproach of the present time, that we have a dwelling-place in God. The heading of the Psalm is, "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God". We do not have many of his prayers. How sweet this is! He says, "Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations". What times passed over Moses' head. In those forty years, as he saw one generation passing away under the government of God, he says, "Thou hast been our dwelling-place". Have you, my friend, a dwelling-place? Have you a place that you have for yourself that you can retire into—the presence of God? How sweet it is! The psalmist speaks of it time and time again. David, when persecuted by Saul, says, you "come out to seek a single flea, as when they hunt a partridge on the mountains", 1 Sam 26: 20. He had a dwelling-place in God. How safe it was! How secure it was! David speaks of Him as "my rock" (Ps 18: 2), a rock that he stood on; amidst all the shifting sands of men and what men did, David found a place, solid ground, on which his feet could stand. Moses had it here: "Thou hast been our dwelling-place". He does not change. Could I just be very simple about it? He is always glad to see you. However downcast you may be there is a home. That is the impression this verse leaves with you, that Moses had a home, not in the desert sand and complaints of the people but a home in God. "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place"; it was where he lived. He came out to handle the complaints of the people, to speak to the people, to deal with their questions and bear their burdens. He carried them in his bosom. What a man he was! It was because he himself had a dwelling-place in God, the unchangeable One, ever the same; "from eternity to eternity thou art God"; and He has

come into time in Jesus. It says He is “the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come”, Heb 13: 8. It would not be true about any other person, but here is One who is the same, God come into time, “the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come”. I wonder if He is that to you and to me. Maybe He was more precious to you yesterday, the day that you saw the burden of your sins rolled away and you sang—

O happy day that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour and my God.

Philip Doddridge (1702-1751)

Happy day when the burden of our sins was rolled away! Perhaps He meant more to you yesterday: did He? What about today? He is the same—very blessed that! It says, When we were still without strength, Christ died for the ungodly, Rom 5: 6. When there was no response in your heart or mine, Christ died for us. That was yesterday, you may say, in our experience. How about today? Still the same in love towards us, that same grace, not imputing, not raising questions as to us or what we have done, He is the same today, to be relied upon but perhaps not made room for the way He was yesterday. O, He would address the remnant, yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come, Jesus Christ the same. It says He became flesh and dwelt among us, the Man of the gospels, O, what grace, page after page as you go through Luke, the Man of grace—yesterday. What He was there in the days of His flesh. He would touch the leper, raise the dead, feed the five thousand: that He was yesterday. But how is He in your affections today? He is the same Person, no longer limited to the condition into which He came but the same blessed Person today in glory, His grace flowing out unhindered towards all who make room for Him.

Then it says, “to the ages to come”; “from eternity to eternity thou art God”—the ages to come. It is fine that through all eternity there will be a Man, the Man Christ Jesus, who will be our link with eternal conditions. He came into the conditions in which we are in order to make His grace known, to win our affections, to meet our sins and our liabilities; but that same blessed Man will be the point of

reference through all eternity. “To him who loves us”—what a song that will be! —“and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father”, Rev 1: 5, 6. He is a Person who remains the same, in His love and in the appeal of His grace to hold us. So it says, “It is good that the heart be confirmed with grace”. How many strange doctrines abound; what theories abound as to the Person of Christ, undermining His manhood and His deity. But what grace, beloved, to confirm the heart that that Person is “the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come”. May He be increasingly precious to us, that our link and our knowledge of Jesus is not historical. It is not what He was but what He is, what He is today.

May He become increasingly precious to us, as the days go on, to encourage our hearts to work, to be committed. What He has begun He is going to see through, He will see it through to glory. May we, as under the Spirit’s grace and hearing the Spirit’s voice, go through to God’s praise. For His Name’s sake.

NEW YORK

21st May 1994



PEACE WITH GOD

Ephesians 2: 11-14

Romans 4: 25; 5: 1, 2

It is a wonderful thing that men can have peace with God. The verses we have read in Ephesians show how far off we are without Christ, an immeasurable distance. Paul goes over it to these gentiles that they had no claim at all on God. It says, “without Christ ... without God in the world”. What circumstances to be in, without God! Not that God has given men up, God remains in His faithfulness towards His creature in spite of man’s unfaithfulness. He remains a faithful Creator giving food, and seasons, blessing with His goodness in spite of man’s indifference. Yet what despair lies upon the human heart away from God. It is what has come into the world through sin. It has brought in this great distance between God and His creature, distance that man could never measure or remove. But God in His grace and in His mercy, looking on our condition, has moved from His side.

Job in the Old Testament said, “How can a man be just with God?”, Job 9: 2. What could man do? Job, I suppose, an outstanding example of a righteous man in his generation, saw that man could never make peace or be just with God. He says no matter what man brought, would anything be pure in His sight? Would anything that man could bring ever satisfy God about man’s condition and the sins of man’s history? Job rightly assessed that there was no way that man could ever reach or be just with God. If man could not make any move, God has made a move from His own side. In the riches of His own grace and mercy He has made the move. In Christ Jesus a Man has come onto view from God’s side who was able, as Job says, to “lay his hand upon us both” (Job 9: 33), that is upon man, the sinner, and upon God. What a Man! Paul speaks of Him like that, “the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus”, 1 Tim 2: 5. How wonderful that there is a Man who has been able to glorify God in the very scene where He has been dishonoured. That is what it says about Him, “Christ Jesus came into the world”, 1 Tim 1: 15. That Person came into the world to save sinners. There is told out in a Man, God’s heart of love in all its fulness, as

no angel or law could ever express it. He came into the world, came into the circumstances that you and I are found in, came in to save. The hymn-writer says as to mercy—

Brightly it beamed on men forlorn,
When Christ, the holy Child, was born.

(Hymn 366)

What a day in the history of time when God in the Person of His Son, Christ Jesus, came into the world, bringing with Him in His body all that was needed to reach the sinner in all his despair. Oh how accessible He was! The outcasts of society found refuge in the arms of Jesus; persons whom men would have nothing to do with. He reached them and freely handled them. Think of how He spoke to the lepers, how He spoke to the demoniac, these outcasts shut out as unfit for man's company, the Lord Jesus reached them as coming near to where they were. He touched the circumstances in which they were, sin apart, holy, blessed, glorious Man. The whole world under God's eye took on a different colour when Jesus came in. The angels celebrated that. They had seen the guilt that lay upon the world, perhaps they felt the impossible position the world was in. They must have felt what had come into the race, into God's fair creation, marred and stained by sin and all that had developed from it. The angels must have seen that and wondered. But at the incoming of Jesus they saw the world as a different place, they saw something fresh there. They celebrated the One who had come in. How just those acclamations, as the hymn says, when Jesus was born—

How rightly rose the praises
Of heaven that wondrous night,
When shepherds hid their faces
In brightest angel-light!.

J N Darby, The Man of Sorrows

They saw there, as they proclaimed that message, that a Saviour had been born. What a day it was for this world! A Saviour was born to men, "a Saviour has been born to you ... who is Christ the Lord", Luke 2: 11. He was distinguished. Even as a Babe He was distinguished, "who is Christ the

Lord". A Man was there, but a Man of a different kind, "taking his place in the likeness of men" (Phil 2: 8), coming into the conditions of humanity, but coming into them and bringing into them the grace and wealth of divine love that was never expressed before. It says, "I will send my beloved son—perhaps when they see him they will respect him", Luke 20: 13. Think of God's feelings in sending His Son, proclaiming the wealth and glory of His nature, not through an angel or a prophet, but in His own Son. It says, "perhaps when they see him", as if God could hardly understand that man would turn away from the presentation of His grace and love in the person of His Son.

But now in the Mediator there is One who could lay His hand upon the throne of God, and uphold the righteous claims of that throne, and yet could lay His hand upon you and me, sinners in all our need. What a Saviour! He is the Man of God's providing, who could meet all that lay upon the sinner, and yet could uphold the righteous claims of God's throne, because God could never change in His nature. Much as God loved His creature, He could never give up the holiness of His being and nature to accommodate man in his sinfulness. But the wonder of His love is that God in His Son has upheld the holy, righteous claims of His throne and has provided, at infinite cost to Himself, in the Saviour the means whereby man can be reconciled to God.

What a message He thus proclaims in the gospel. Would that all who are without Christ would feel it that there is no hope without Christ. The hopelessness of man's arrangements becomes more apparent day by day, as the years go on and man's intelligence seemingly improves, but yet the hopelessness of his position becomes more and more apparent without God and without Christ. But to bring near those who were afar off, it says it was by "the blood of the Christ". The price had to be paid that man could never pay. The claims of God's throne had to be met in their fulness, and could only be met, by Christ Jesus and the blood of His cross. Not even His person being here alone could meet those claims; but in being here in those days of His flesh, thirty-three and a half years, there was portrayed the worthiness, the substantiality of the Man Christ Jesus. He was tempted

of the devil and the devil had to leave Him. As He Himself says, “the ruler of the world comes, and in me he has nothing”, John 14: 30. No one in His presence was ever left in despair. The hymn-writer says—

Thousands have fled to His spear-piercèd side;
Welcome they all have been, none are denied;
Weary and laden, they all have been blest;
Joyfully now in the Saviour they rest.

(Hymn 169)

It brought out the worthiness and the ability of such a Man to meet the claims of God’s throne, and it is from that basis and through that price that the gospel goes forth; the claims of God’s throne and His holiness have been met by “the blood of the Christ”. That meant that He took our place. Elsewhere it speaks of “the blood of his cross” (Col 1: 20), the blood of those sufferings, the blood of One who was there in the sinner’s place. He endured the wrath and the judgment of God that was due to the race. Who else could have met it? The people cried, “his blood be on us”, Matt 27: 25. Had God taken them at their word there would have been eternal judgment. But there was One who Himself took the sinner’s place before God. He moved in the majesty of His Person to that cross. Men took Him it would seem, but they were powerless. It seemed man’s hour, it seemed Satan’s hour. My friend, it was God’s hour, it was Christ’s hour when He was meeting the holy claims of God’s righteous throne, and meeting it to God’s eternal satisfaction. It involved for Him that He was forsaken there on the cross as bearing the judgment of God on our account—

None could follow there, blest Saviour,
When Thou didst for sins atone.

(Hymn 298)

Those were the greatest three hours I believe in the history of the universe, when Christ was forsaken by God on the cross. What He bore, what He endured, none can ever know, and yet the blessing of that work flows through time and will flow through all eternity. He has met the claims of God’s holy throne so that “now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off

are become nigh". God would tell you afresh tonight how near He wants you. The whole wealth of His house is open to the sinner as becoming nigh through the blood of Jesus. A price that none other could pay, He has paid in full. It says, "now in Christ Jesus", God's anointed Man. He has been given a name that is above every name, because if He went that way to the cross, to the tomb, in holy love, He has been raised from the dead by the Father's glory and exalted. The work is finished; a work that involved the sacrifice of Himself, the shedding of His blood, and that He was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. That is how far, how deep, the Saviour went. He speaks about Himself as the Son of man, being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, Matt 12: 40. What a feeling matter it was to Him as He contemplated that He should measure the distance, He should taste the awfulness, but Christ Jesus is the Man who has been exalted. The cross could not hold Him; the grave could not hold Him. He fills heaven and will fill it for all eternity, the Man Christ Jesus.

From God's side peace has been made; peace that man could never make. The scripture says, "he is our peace", "he". The hymn-writer says that the sinner who believes can point to the atoning blood and say, This made my peace with God. Can you say that? As Paul says, "we have peace towards God". It is one of the greatest possessions that the human heart can have, to have peace with God. It may be it will not change the circumstances of your life, whatever they may be, at school, or work, or elsewhere, but it changes you in those circumstances if you have peace with God in the circumstances. Then whatever they may be or however they may change, there is a peace with God that cannot be changed because it is in Christ Jesus. It is not only His work, that is the basis of it, but He, the Person, the Man whom God has exalted to his right hand, "he is our peace".

So Paul says, "on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God"; faith in what Jesus has done; faith that He bore my sins. That is what peace flows from, that He bore my sins in His body on the tree, 1 Pet 2: 24. He established peace, He laid the righteous basis of it, that all may come into the blessedness of peace with God, but it is on the principle

of faith. Do you believe God, that without Christ you are lost? Faith means that you believe God has paid the price in the work of Jesus, and through faith in Christ God looks upon you as in Christ Jesus. Because He is no longer here on earth; He is a glorified Man in heaven, but He is there for my acceptance. Blessed truth! Christ is in the presence of God for the believer's acceptance. That was the meaning of the type of the burnt-offering. As you look at the offerings, the burnt-offering was the most precious, speaking of Jesus in His humanity, in all His preciousness and His sweetness; it says that the burnt-offering was for our acceptance. Believers are accepted in the blessed worth and glory of that Man. As having put their faith in Jesus about their history and their sins and their condition. God accepts and looks upon them as in Christ. That is peace.

Will God ever change His view of Christ? He has given Him a name that is above every name, Phil 2: 9. He has exalted Him to the highest place in heaven. He is installed there in all His glory, and that eternally. It is impossible for God to change His mind about Christ, and so it is impossible for God to change His mind about believers who have put their faith in Christ, and that is peace. We may lose the joy of it through our lack of faith but peace with God can never be disturbed. Paul says, "we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand". It says earlier, "Jesus our Lord, who has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification". I believe that because we are justified our souls are assured of peace towards God. God's justification means that you are cleared about all your history, "It is God who justifies", Rom 8: 33. If He has justified, does it matter if any other voice is raised in condemnation? What a critic we have in Satan, the accuser of the brethren, it calls him (Rev 12: 10), but it is God who justifies. God has the last word. Satan has no power in the presence of the word of God, which says, "Jesus our Lord ... has been raised for our justification". Our justification is in a Man who has borne our sins, who has been raised from among the dead and is now at the right hand of God. Justification means that you are cleared from all your history.

God has removed it. Something that man could never do. Men's records remain. You can think of a prisoner whose record is there, and it may be written over the record that the court has cleared him, but the record remains. But in justification God has destroyed the record. All that we ever were is removed eternally from His eye, and we are placed, justified, in the Man at His right hand. How precious Christ is to God!

So we have peace with God that can never be disturbed; peace that is to fill the believer's heart through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In the circumstances of life God sets Him forth to be everything to the believer. Whatever comes up, we are justified in Christ. The passage goes on to speak of much more. It is not only that we have been cleared; that is a blessed matter to be cleared of all that we are and of all our histories, but it is only one step. The next step is that we are embraced in the arms of divine love, and that is reconciliation. Justification in Christ means that our past is cleared, but reconciliation means that we are embraced in all the fulness of what divine love has purposed. It is all part of having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. May we know the blessedness of that unchanging peace, through our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our peace. May it be more firmly established in our hearts tonight, for Christ's Name's sake.

ROTHERHAM

5th March 1995



THE LORD'S CARE

John 17: 12, 15-20; 14: 18

I refer to these scriptures as they convey some impression of the Lord's present service to us. We are apt to think a great deal of the Lord's service historically and rightly so, what He did in going to the cross and the expression of His love in dying for us. But the Lord would have us to be up-to-date in the sense of His love for us. He said, "When I was with them I kept them ..." How well they were kept! Criticised by the Pharisees, because they ate on the sabbath, the Lord took up the question. What a sense they must have had of His protecting love and care for them. "I kept them in thy name". He kept them in relation to the Father's name, the Father's love and grace. He says, "I have guarded". How full that service the gospels tell us about!

In this chapter they heard Him pray. He leaves them with the impression that they were going to be as safe in His absence as they had been in His presence. That is what He would convey to us in this time in which we are, a sense of His protecting love in the circumstances that we pass through. In sorrows and family exercises and local exercises He would give us a sense of His love and priestly service of love and grace. He says, "I sanctify myself for them". It simply means that He is fully engaged in serving His own, whatever circumstances come into our lives in weakness of body and other things that cause doubts and fears in our minds. Think of the Lord speaking to the Father about you and me. He reminds the Father of His children and their needs. The Lord says, "for your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things", Matt 6: 32. The Lord speaks there about clothing and our need of food and all these things and He says, "your heavenly Father knows". Here the Lord is saying, "I sanctify myself for them". What an occupation! Think of Christ being received up in glory, His service on earth completed, and while He is awaiting His public vindication, He has sanctified Himself to serve the saints. It tells us more about it later on in Ephesians, what He has given in view of the edifying of the body, in view of that time when He will receive us to Himself, not jaded, not having the marks of the

world about us. He says, "They are not of the world". That is what will be seen when He receives us to Himself, a heavenly company, fruit of His gracious service, through this long dispensation, suited to be with Him in the realm of glory where He is. May we be helped to know more and count in faith on the Lord's present service, as He has sanctified Himself for us.

As I have said, He leaves them with the impression that they were going to be as safe in His absence as they had been when He was with them. Well, we do not always believe that, but I believe He left that impression, and these disciples had a real sense of that. In the Acts when they were persecuted, Peter in the prison, the prison gates open and the angel led him out. That was the Lord's service, sending an angel. Paul was stoned and the Lord raised him up. These were outstanding circumstances maybe, but we could all point to having known something in our own lives of the Lord's real, present service to preserve us. The Lord's movements in resurrection were wholly connected with His own. He was not then feeding five thousand, raising dead or cleansing lepers. He was engaged in the forty days with His own and that has continued through the dispensation, that he is serving His own so that they are not overcome but are sustained in the grace, and the joy that He represents as being there for them before the Father. That is the great point in John 17, I think, that the saints may have some knowledge of the joy of our place in Christ before the Father and He has sanctified Himself that we may be maintained in that place.

And then He says to them, "I will not leave you orphans". What a sense of loss they must have felt as they heard the Lord speaking about going away! Peter, when He spoke to them about it earlier said, Lord this shall in nowise be. He did not want Him to go. The Lord says, "I will not leave you orphans". He has loved us too much to leave us in an orphan condition, however much we may think it at times. We all pass through exercises when we think that nobody has ever known the depths and sorrows that we are tasting. You are never without a friend. You are never without a Father in this sense. The Lord takes a fatherly place, the great Provider: "I will not leave you orphans". How precious these words!

Then He says, “I am coming to you”, coming with all the wealth and the grace of heaven to us in the circumstances in which we are. May we make room for Him! I am sure this is largely collective but it also has an individual side. In verse 21 it says, “I will love him and will manifest myself to him”. That is you in your individual circumstances, at work or school or family life, whatever it may be.

Well, I believe there is a need for faith operative in our hearts to know something of the wealth of what is flowing from Him as ascended above and what He would bring to us collectively and individually. May it encourage our hearts for His Name’s sake!

KIRKCALDY

7th March 1995



FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE

1 Corinthians 13: 13; 14: 1

1 Thessalonians 5: 4-11; 1: 2, 3

Galatians 5: 5-10

Colossians 1: 3-5

You will notice in each of these passages there is a reference to faith, hope and love. These three things are basic characteristics, we might even say principles, of the Christian position. They would be what would mark a Christian however dark and difficult the days may be. We can increase in our faith, hope and love. They are also capable of being suppressed. Faith may become dulled, we may lose our hope and joy, and we may be lacking in love. These things each of us would know something of in our varied histories. I believe the Lord may encourage us now that they may increase with us as using them. Each believer has been given a measure of faith, and hope, and love. The gospel has brought that to us. Once we had no hope. May the sense that we were once without God, without Christ and without hope in the world, enhance the glad tidings to us in all its wealth and blessedness that our faith and hope should be in God, 1 Pet 1: 21. How God has come on to the view of the believer, changing his outlook on this world and his circumstances. Peter was writing to people who would have much to discourage them. We think we are in difficult times, but I think they were in even more difficult times, chased out of their country into foreign soil. Peter was writing to encourage them, that their faith and their hope might be in God. He is the great spring and source of these three things. They flow from God's heart of love and He has given them to us richly. Faith really reacts to divine light. Light comes into the soul and faith answers to the light. Growth and prosperity flow from that. "Abraham, being called, obeyed" (Heb 11: 8), and you see what a great line of things he came into. He moved in answer to the call of God, and he came into great wealth, and God loved to speak to him. Abraham's faith was nourished by divine speaking. God spoke to him again and called to him a second time, Gen 22: 15.

In Thessalonians Paul rejoiced as seeing the evidences of faith, hope and love among them. So here I would use this passage to speak about our individual enjoyment and expression of these features. Paul would say that we have all been given it. How are we using it? There were with the Thessalonians certain doubts and fears, and they may come into our minds too. The enemy is ever active to sow tares among the wheat, bringing in doubts as to the truth, doubts as to the verity of Christ's place above, and doubts as to the truth of the assembly working here in a broken day. Paul is bringing home to them the need for using faith, he says, "putting on the breastplate of faith and love", put it on to guard our affections. You cannot speak about the breastplate without thinking of Exodus 28. There the breastplate of judgment was on the heart of the great high priest, set with the names of the children of Israel. What a strength to faith that is, to think of our place on the heart of Christ; we have a place in the heart of Christ that is unchanging. Those stones were set there never to be removed, nor to lose their shining. Faith would connect very quickly with that, that we have a place in the heart of Jesus above. Think of Him saying to His disciples, "I go to prepare you a place ... I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be", John 14: 2, 3.

That is a great armour against what may be coming in to deflect our affections. He says, "putting on the breastplate of faith and love". It means you have it within your power to put it on. How beautifully these things are bound together so often in the Scriptures, "faith and love", the one leads into the other. Faith is a very fine thing. In Romans it says, "the righteousness of faith speaks thus" (Rom 10: 6); it does not entertain doubts nor does it spread anything among the saints that would discourage them. It directs the heart to another Source and another world altogether. Look at the language of faith in Hebrews 11, in those persons as they looked for a city. It says about those persons that they died in faith. What a fine way to finish! It is very instructive that there is a whole chapter given to each of these two things. Hebrews 11 given over to faith, 1 Corinthians 13 given over to love, that we may appreciate those features, that we may

enshrine them, that we may use them as a breastplate. A breastplate or shield, as it speaks of it elsewhere, can quench the wicked darts of the devil, Eph 6: 16. Faith would not entertain things that would divert our affections from Christ. It would immediately rise up like a weapon the believer has against doubts, or what would come in to discourage and spoil our affections for Christ, the heavenly, glorious Man. Paul is encouraging them to use it.

Then he says, “and as helmet the hope of salvation”. Hope is always looking ahead and faith makes it real. Scripture says that “faith is the substantiating of things hoped for”, Heb 11: 1. The hope that we are speaking of is not like the hope that men may have, of hoping something will happen. The hope that we are speaking of is something that is centred in Christ above, “Christ Jesus our hope”, 1 Tim 1: 1. It is in a Person. The Spirit would direct our hearts to what is centred firmly in the Man who has been exalted above. Hope would find nothing here. What we hope for is future, and yet faith gives us the present enjoyment of it. We hope soon to be with Christ, but by faith we know something of the experience of Him being with us in our present circumstances. Hope is nourished as room is made for the Spirit. Mr Darby says—

O bright and blessed hope!
When shall it be
That we His face, long loved,
Revealed shall see? (Hymn 160)

What a hope the believer has! It is not that things will get better here; but everything is secured there, and our portion is secured in Him where He is. We are waiting the time when we shall be in the fulness and blessedness of what that hope is. So there is a helmet to put on to guard our minds and thoughts from anything that would becloud that hope. Peter speaks of some saying that the Lord is delaying, 2 Pet 3: 9. Now hope would put a helmet on against that. We do not say the Lord is delaying as men account of delaying, but He is long-suffering. Hope already in the heart of the believer links us with a fixed condition centred in Christ above where He is. Now Paul is showing us here how this is to affect us

individually. Each of us is to be exercising what has been given us in the way of faith, and hope, and love.

Now it speaks in these other passages of how it works out in the local position. Paul, in speaking about it in chapter 1 of 1 Thessalonians, refers to their “work of faith, and labour of love, and enduring constancy of hope”. What a fine atmosphere in the local meeting. As difficulties arise, they are met by the work of faith. We serve one another in faith. Souls may get discouraged, but we are not to lose sight of them. You may say, There are not many there tonight, it is hardly worth going to the meeting. The work of faith would be that you would be there, bringing your own contribution to enrich the local position, where we have persons working together in faith, hope and love. See how these things work together! Faith enables a labour of love to go on. You may say there is not much encouragement; you may feel there is not much appreciation for what you do. Well, “the work of faith, and labour of love” does not cease because there is not much response to it.

Paul’s service to Corinth was a great “work of faith, and labour of love, and enduring constancy of hope”. You can see these things blending in the apostle’s labour, indeed to the Thessalonians, but to Corinth especially when there was not much to encourage. You think of him labouring there among them those eighteen months. The Lord had told him there was much people in that city. He might have said many nights, I wonder where they are, I am not seeing them, but he went on working in faith. That is how we would carry one another, working in faith, so that what is there will be nurtured and grow by the labour of love. So may we be encouraged to work in faith. Work without faith will not stand, but the work of faith will bear fruits. So Paul was rejoicing in seeing it among these Thessalonians, young Christians, but their work was in faith and their labour was in love and enduring constancy of hope.

I think faith looks at things in a way that would allow the Spirit to come in and bring clarity in our judgments, and give us power in the resolving of difficult matters. In Galatia, the liberty of the Spirit was hindered through the lack of faith.

They were beginning to fall back on themselves and how men would do things. Paul has to bring them up to their true position, “ye are all God’s sons by faith in Christ Jesus”, Gal 3: 26. So here he is encouraging them as it says, “For we, by the Spirit, on the principle of faith, await the hope of righteousness”. How the Spirit delights in the midst of difficult conditions to bring home to us in a real and living way the light and blessedness of another day, to sustain the saints through this whole dispensation; “the hope of righteousness”, alluding, no doubt, to the hour when all things will be put right, looking on to the time when He who should be reigning now will reign in all the glory and blessedness of His person. Unrighteousness prevails here, but the hope of righteousness looks on to His kingdom, when He will shine in His glory, and He will not shine alone. As He appears, the saints will be with Him. Hope would make that day very real to our hearts amidst these difficult times that we are in. It includes the thought that those who have been persecuted here will then be reigning with Him in that day. The measure in which “the hope of righteousness” is embraced in our affections means it will prevail in the local company today, as we give place to the Spirit. He is a divine Person here to sustain faith, hope and love, and to maintain us in relation to another world of which Christ is the centre. May we value the Spirit’s service to maintain in the hearts of believers now what will prevail in that day to come when Christ will reign, and reign with His saints.

May these things operating in the local company help us so that no elements that would bring the saints into bondage are allowed, but that there may be in all our gatherings, in the exercise by the Spirit of faith, hope and love, an increase in the enjoyment of our true position as sons, to enjoy the liberty that divine grace has called us into, “faith working through love”. The great spring of all these things is love, which the Spirit has shed abroad in the heart of the believer. The question used to be often raised. What is your stock of love? I believe it can be raised about each of these things. What is your stock of faith, of hope, and of love? There should be a supply of it, a reservoir of it, as it were, in the heart of the believer, but too in the local company. So

that as questions come up there is someone able to bring in a word of faith, a word of hope and love that would meet every situation. I believe they are part of the divine furnishings that have been given to us.

In Colossians Paul says, “having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus”, not faith in themselves, but faith in the exalted Man, the Man who has been rejected, disowned, disallowed in this world. As Peter says, “the stone which the builders cast away as worthless, this is become head of the corner”, 1 Pet 2: 7. That is where our faith is, in Him, where He is, the anointed Man, “faith in Christ Jesus”. We may be in circumstances where we are feeling the reproach, but our faith is in Christ Jesus. As God has exalted Him the saints too will be honoured in bodies of glory. Difficulties that come in are met in this fine way by “faith in Christ Jesus”. And then he says, “the love which ye have towards all the saints”. Think of these expanded affections, not only love for God and love for Christ, but love for the brethren. That is how these things operate, they operate in the circle of the local company. We would embrace all in our hearts. There is nothing sectarian or parochial about that, “the love which ye have towards all the saints”.

You can see the believers in Colossians were being expanded into the wealth and glory of the inheritance. They were overcomers, they had overcome the pressures and sorrows of the wilderness and the trials of the desert. Their life was hid with the Christ in God (Col 3: 3), and from that realm, having enjoyed divine affections, they themselves were coming out in love towards all the saints, “on account of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens”. Things are passing here, but the hope of our eternal home gives us to be active now in faith and love. It brings you back to Hebrews 11, where you can see faith substantiating the hope that was before them and enabling them to endure. It is a sure blessed hope indeed that nothing of time or man or breakdown can ever alter. May the blessedness of it be increasingly in our affections, to enable us to labour in faith and love on account of the great Centre in which our faith is placed, “faith in Christ Jesus, and the love which ye have towards all the saints”.

Well Paul says, “Follow after love”, follow after it, as if it is the great leader in the believer’s life, that he has come to know love. In the coming day, when hope is realised, faith and hope shall cease, but then love will be enjoyed without alloy. There will be nothing to divert or discourage it. In the meantime we are to, “Follow after love, and be emulous of spiritual manifestations, but rather that ye may prophesy”. I believe the working of faith and hope and love would make room for greater spiritual manifestations among us, enabling our hearts to expand into the glory and blessedness of our heavenly position making room for the prophetic word.

You think of Caleb and Joshua in Numbers 13 and 14, when the people were despising the good land, and you can see there something of faith, and hope, and love in these two men; it enabled them to bring in a word of prophecy. Amidst all the confusion and voices that were being raised Caleb says, “If Jehovah delight in us, he will bring us into this land”, Num 14: 8. Think of the people wanting to go back to Egypt, but Caleb says, it “is a very, very good land” Num 14: 7. There was a man of faith, and hope, and love, encouraging the saints to go forward. So as these things are made room for by us individually and collectively, I believe the prophetic speaking will be more marked as linking our hearts with the glory and blessedness of our heavenly calling, encouraging us through the days of darkness until that day when we see Him in His glory. Then we shall see, no longer through a dark glass obscurely, but face to face, 1 Cor 13: 12. Then we shall know in fulness what faith, hope, and love give us some foretaste of now. May it increase with us in its preciousness, for His Name’s sake.

ROTHERHAM

4th March 1995



PERSONS MARKED BY CHANGE OF POSITION

Exodus 3: 1-8

Revelation 1: 12-19

Acts 10: 9-16

John 20: 13-17

What led me to these passages of Scripture was that each of these persons changed their position, and in doing so they became an object of interest to heaven, thus they came in for a divine disclosure. The Lord said to the disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a little". Mark 6: 31. There is a danger of the surroundings we are in, and the circumstances of life, limiting us from entering into the great wealth and provision of divine grace. The Lord said, "Come to me", it meant a change of position; they had to move from where they were to come to Him, to enter into the wealth that was there to be enjoyed. So we find in these persons that they moved from the circumstances in which they were; I am not saying they were in wrong circumstances, but they turned; they opened their heart and put themselves in the way of a divine disclosure. I believe there is a need for that in these days. We sung in our hymn—

Come!—the Father's house stands open

(Hymn 154)

no doubt the hymn writer had in mind that young man in the far country, oppressed with the famine, while there was the father's house. He needed to change his circumstances, to make a move. The father's house was ever open with its wealth and love, it was all there for him, and yet there he was in that far country enslaved in the circumstances that he had gone into in his own waywardness.

These persons of whom we have read were not in wrong circumstances. We may console ourselves that we are in right surroundings, yet there may be a need for us turning aside for a moment. The surroundings that we are in may tend to becloud our vision and hinder us from seeing the greatness and grandeur of what God may be doing today very near to us; we

may be missing it through being engaged in the surroundings. More than once in the prophets God says. What do you see? It is a good question for us just now. What are we seeing? You may say, Well, we are seeing confusion, in what has come into the public surroundings of Christianity, in what bears the name of Christ but is far from Him. Is that all we see? Sometimes the Lord says to some to lift up their eyes again. God said to Abraham to lift up his eyes from the place where he was. Abraham was not in wrong circumstances but God told him to lift up his eyes from those circumstances to see something greater. God is looking for someone to be a confidant. He looked for that with Abraham. He is looking for someone to whom He can confide something of His precious thoughts. But it may be that we are too busy, too engrossed in our own surroundings. Think of Paul in prison; a man who had a vision into eternity; a man who was not hindered in the circumstances he was in, but had an insight into those holy courts above. He could write so freely about them to encourage the saints.

Here is Moses of whom it says, “Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see”. He sees if you are interested. He sees if you are a suitable confidant for the great disclosures of His love. God called to him, “Moses, Moses!” How beautiful that is. God calling his name twice. It is an interesting thing to look at in the Old Testament, persons whose names are called twice. God saw something in them that He would call attention to, and He calls them by name. He saw that Moses turned aside. How quickly He would enlist your interest! How He appreciates if someone turns aside, and is prepared to give Him a moment of their time, to give an ear, to open a heart, to hear the disclosures of His grace.

I have not in mind to go into the wealth and detail of what these persons saw, but Moses received some impression of God in His grace that dwelt with him for the rest of his life. I am sure it is something that every believer is to have some experience of; it is happy if you have it early in your life. Samuel had it, he is one of those God called twice. He had an experience as a young boy of God gaining his ear for he listened. God makes a good deal of Samuel; as a young man he had an early impression of God having an interest in him. He will give you that if you give Him your ear early in your life. I can assure you He will give

you an impression of His grace and love that will be with you the rest of the journey.

I think of Moses going through this journey in the wilderness; he writes a psalm about it which begins, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations", Ps 90: 1. He got an impression of God here on this mountain, and he went through a life, far more difficult than any of us could ever go through, in the wilderness with a complaining people, but he says, "thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations", and "from eternity to eternity thou art God", Ps 90: 2. He learnt that at the bush. May our younger brethren particularly have some impression of the kind of God that He is; He would enlist our interest. He would give us an impression of Himself as we give Him our ear, as we turn aside. You may say, the sheep had to be looked after; they were not even his own, he was there as a servant with a great deal of responsibility placed upon him; but it was no mistake he came to the mountain of God. In the midst of his work and the pressures of it, he came to a place where he could be in touch with God alone; that is where these impressions are gained, alone with God; he never lost the sense of it—"thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations".

What exercises he faced (and we may be called on to pass through exercises), but there was a secret in his soul of a link with God, received because he turned aside to see this great sight. What a sight it was! God says, "I am come down to deliver them". God in His grace came into the circumstances in which the people were, in Jesus, in the incarnation. It is very instructive to see the people who were affected by the incarnation; the shepherds who were outside the city saw it, and the wise men from the east. These persons turned aside to see the greatness and glory of how God had come down to deliver them, come down Himself. What a message it conveyed to Moses, light that remained in his soul in all its preciousness! God not only says, "I am come down to deliver them", but also, "to bring them up out of that land unto a good and spacious land". How often Moses must have fallen back on this impression. It is a very great rock to have an impression from God in your own soul that you can fall back on in troublous times. The people spoke of stoning Moses and of making another captain to lead them back to Egypt. I can think of

Moses falling back on this word from God, 'I will bring them up into a good and spacious land.' Without this experience he could never have gone on, but in the light of this he went through to see the land with the tribes at the end of Deuteronomy. Moses saw there the completion of the promise, but it was enshrined in his affections all the years of that wilderness journey. I call attention to it to show God's interest in persons who are prepared to turn aside and give time to hear the personal word of God. God spoke in all His grace of His love to strengthen His servant for the great place he was to fill in the ways of God. He strengthened him with this precious impression because He saw that he turned aside.

In Revelation it says John turned. He was in very limited circumstances; he might well have been lying on his bed complaining, wondering and thinking, Is this what it has all come to? He was there a prisoner on the isle of Patmos, but it says, "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day". There is something of John's own action in that. Had he been complaining about the circumstances and chafing under them, he would never have become in the Spirit; but he is there with some sense of the treasure in his heart of the love of Jesus that he knew so well, so he says, "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day". It would bring out the distinctiveness of that day. As you think of John a prisoner there, you may say. Is every day not the same in prison? It might well have been for others who were in prison, but the Lord's day was different for John, he marked it off in his calendar. You say, What is the point John? There is no one else and you are here in such circumstances, what is the point? Well, it says that he became in the Spirit on the Lord's day, he put himself in the way of what that day meant, and he came into something of the blessedness of it.

So it says, "And I turned back to see the voice which spoke with me"—he turned back. It means that he opened his heart to what the Lord was doing. His was a heart oppressed with sorrow, no doubt, but he turned back to see the voice. That voice must have had the appeal of the voice of Jesus! Think of the appeal in grace of that voice calling us, calling to us not only as sinners, but calling to us to turn back, to turn aside, to turn round. The voice is calling because He has something to say. Alas, how oft the call may go unheeded; we would feel that in

our own circumstances. That would be like Laodicea where the Lord is knocking, calling with His voice, calling to open to Him. John is not like that, he turns back to see the voice and what he sees is a Person. He did not see the Person at first, he heard a voice, but he wanted to see the voice. What he sees is one like the Son of man, and what he comes into is the light of the ways of God through the whole dispensation.

John wrote his gospel after this, and he wrote it with this impression, that he found everything was in the hands of Christ. What events were to take place in this world; John saw them all, but he saw that all was in the hands of the Son of man. What a solace and stay for his soul to see the Son of man “girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle—his head and hair white like white wool, as snow”. He sees an impression of judgment that was what was to come in, but it is all in the hands of the Son of man. There is no fear in that. God has placed judgment where it will be executed in perfect fairness, perfect justice; judgment has been given into the hands of the Son of man. John could rest in that because he turned aside and made room for these divine disclosures.

I believe they are happening today, the disclosures have not ceased, they are going on. God in His grace and love would look for persons who are prepared to give an ear, that is the call in this book, he that has an ear let him hear. It is not an ear that is given to the gossip of this world, but an ear that is tuned. The ear gets dulled if it hears too much noise, and there is a great deal of noise abroad. We live in an age of great noise, and the ears are apt to get dulled with all the messages going abroad, the confusion that is in them, but it says, “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies”. So He is still speaking and the call would be. Have you an ear? Is there an ear to hear the Lord’s voice? What a word to get in these circumstances that would overwhelm you, “Fear not”.

The One into whose hands the judgment has been committed, and who will execute it, says, “I am the first and the last, and the living one—and I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages, and have the keys of death and of hades”. In his links with Jesus here John gets an impression from the Man who is above, that is a stay for his soul, and

enriches his experience of the Lord he knew so well. The One that John saw, into whose hands everything had been committed, says, "I became dead". He became dead, it was His own action, but He went that way for a reason. It was not that death enslaved Him or came upon Him. He was only a young man of thirty-three and a half years. He laid down His life of Himself. What volume is in those words; the Lord of life and glory, the Creator of all, became dead; but He says, "I am living to the ages of ages". Death has no claim upon Him. How beautiful are those words that we sometimes sing—

Death had on Thee no claim,
Thou sinless one!

(Hymn 152)

He became dead but death could not hold Him, death had to bow. Peter speaks of it so beautifully, saying it was not possible that He could be held by its power. The way He took gave Him, may I say, the moral right to be the Judge of all. He went that way in His own movements of power and majesty, but death did not hold Him. The psalmist wrote about it many years before, "What ailed thee, thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou turnedst back?", Ps 114: 5. Death could lay no claim on that holy One. He says, "I became dead, and behold, I am living to the ages of ages", that is beyond time. He would show John something of what was coming in, but what a stay for his soul, that in it all there was One whom he knew who was alive to the ages of ages. What a secret for a man who turned aside! He turned as drawn to the voice that was calling him. Maybe He would call you in the night season; that is what He did with Samuel. He was a young boy, of course, and maybe there were a great deal of activity at other times. God is looking for an ear. He found it in John and what a treasure He is ready to give him. It says, "Write therefore what thou hast seen".

How thankful we are that John has written what he has seen. He says, I "have the keys", it is plural, "of death and of hades". There is not a created power that is outside of His reach. The heights above or the depths below, He is in control of them all. What a comfort that a man who turned to have this disclosure has written it for our instruction for our guidance. So we are thankful for these persons. We have spoken of two of them but there are many, many more since, who have turned

aside and have written down what they have experienced in their own souls, and left it for our guidance, comfort, and strengthening. It says, "Write therefore what thou hast seen". It is very substantial, it was not a theory or something in his imagination, but "Write therefore what thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are about to be after these". The whole period is covered in the disclosure that John received because he turned to see the voice that spoke with him.

Peter puts what I have said perhaps in a simpler form for us to understand, it says where he was lodging and that he went up on the house to pray about the sixth hour. It means that he turned aside from the circumstances there and, through prayer, made room for a divine disclosure. One of the most important disclosures in history was given to this man because he turned aside to pray. It shows the importance of a very simple act. He did not know he was going to get this, nor did he go deliberately to get it, he just went to pray, and God saw that he had turned aside to pray. God takes advantage of the opportunity of Peter praying to give him a disclosure of something that was entirely new; He gives him an impression of the glory of what has been introduced in the assembly.

Peter, a godly Jew, had been accustomed to God's dealings with the Jews, and he had light beyond that in many ways, but it is made good in his soul in this instance through his turning aside to pray. Indeed you see his Jewish instincts rising up, but what he saw was a great sheet "bound by the four corners and let down to the earth", it came from heaven. Peter had been accustomed to things on the earth, and his ministry largely was to encourage persons who already had looked for an earthly inheritance, but now he was to encourage them as to their heavenly inheritance. The words of Scripture are very precise. Peter sees "a certain vessel descending, as a great sheet, bound by the four corners and let down to the earth", in which there were all these things that, to Peter, a godly Jew, were untouchable, but now they were cleansed by God as redeemed by the blood. Peter was brought to see that the work of Jesus on the cross, in His blood being shed, met not only the sins of the Jews, but there was power in what was done to bring every soul, Jew or gentile, or whatever they may be, through confessing His name, into the glory of a new system. There were

all kinds of creatures but it says, "What God has cleansed, do not thou make common". What an opening of eye it was to Peter, that God was able, through the blood of Jesus, to reach out to men to touch these untouchables, to cleanse them and bring them into this great vessel, let down from heaven.

How beautifully Peter speaks of his experience, he says. Who was I to forbid God? His thoughts were changed radically, dramatically because he went up to pray. What a change took place in his outlook; instead of looking at things through Jewish eyes, he now looks at things through assembly eyes; he sees that God is bringing in from the nations those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus. Through his experience with God he did not try to reason any more; he did not bring up these chapters in Leviticus that would have shut out these unclean creatures. A fresh divine impression helps us to turn, not to bring up past things to set aside what may be fresh and new; he could have done that well, but he says, Who was I to forbid God? I just leave with you the simplicity of it, regarding a man who went to pray, who comes into this great and precious disclosure.

In John 20 I refer to a woman. We have spoken of these persons of whom you may say, Well, these were gifted. But it did not come to them as gifted persons, it came to them as persons who, in the midst of a busy and difficult life, gave time to hear the voice of Christ. Here is a woman of whom it says, "she turned backward", and again, "She, turning round". In circumstances she could hardly understand, she tested things by her affection for Jesus. She says, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him". She is saying, What will I do without Him? How interested heaven was in affections like that. You may say. Where was Peter? Where was John? They had more light, where were they? It says they had gone to their own homes. Here is a young woman with affection for Jesus, and the Lord makes use of the affection that is there; first of all He says, "Woman, why dost thou weep?" Dear friend, He sees your sorrows, He knows your tears. He knows the difficulties, and as we give room to our love for Jesus, He would say, "why dost thou weep?" How quickly He changes those tears as He would wipe them away. He listens to her you know. He has not an upbraiding word. He just says, Why do

you weep? What grace! He had been into death. He had been three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and here He is listening with an attentive ear to a distraught woman.

What these words must have meant to Him as she poured out her heart. She had said, “they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him”. How quick He is to tell her about it. It says, “Jesus says to her, Woman, why dost thou weep? Whom seekest thou?” Then He says to her, “Mary”. He is addressing individuals in all these passages I am speaking of, and again He is calling her by name, not twice, but He calls her by name—“Mary”, and “She, turning round, says to him in Hebrew, Rabboni, which means Teacher”. She is turning, opening her heart and mind to hear a message from Jesus. May I say, there has never been a message fall on human ears like it: “go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”. What a message it was, given to a woman, alone, her heart rent with sorrow, face covered in tears, but who gave time and turned at the voice of Jesus. What an appeal in His voice, what an appeal in His love to cause us to turn, to hear what He has to say. How often we are ready to hear what men have to say about this or that, the world is full of voices and many sounds, but in the midst of it all, for those who are prepared to turn round, there is the voice of Jesus. There is a message of love, in each of these passages from which I have spoken, suited to the particular circumstances at the time. May we open our ears and our hearts to hear His voice, to know something of His love and the disclosures in grace that He is ready to give to an open ear and heart, for His Name’s sake.

BENDIGO

15th April 1995



HOW WE RETURN FROM GOING ASTRAY

Isaiah 53: 6

The first-fruits of the gospel were for God. God feels deeply that men have gone astray, but He found in the Person of His Son, our Lord Jesus, a way to bring man back in righteousness. A glorious morn it was for God when He could look upon men and shine upon them in blessing and forgiveness. The pleasure of God in the work of Christ is seen in that preaching by Peter when three thousand souls were saved. God, as it were, announcing His joy, that in virtue of what Christ had done He could bring thousands at once into the blessing of His house.

This chapter is most beautiful. A gentleman reading it many years ago said, Who is the prophet speaking about? He was a learned man, he must have known the society of his day; as he read the chapter he could not think of anyone who would fit into it. He said, Who is it? Philip says, It is Jesus who is the theme of the chapter. He is the One who came here and grew up before God as a tender sapling. All had gone astray, every one had turned to his own way, but here was a Man who grew up before God as a tender sapling. What winds and storms there were, but there He is, a tender sapling bending against those winds. He drew no resources from the circumstances in which He was found, but there He is, a tender sapling growing up before His God. He could say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven roosting-places; but the Son of man has not where he may lay his head", Matt 8: 20. It says, "He is despised and left alone of men", Isa 53: 3. Think of the Lord Jesus; He fed five thousand at once, cured lepers, raised the dead, and yet He was left alone. The hymn-writer says, 'None cared His worth to know'. There was nothing there in the way that they treated the Saviour to encourage God to bless men. It says, "like one from whom men hide their faces", Isa 53: 3. They had no room for Him in their arrangements. There He is a tender sapling, growing up before His God, the pleasure of heaven centred upon Him. At last, upon this earth, there was a Man for God; and a Man who was expressing towards men, God in all His grace.

He had not come to raise questions. He had not come to condemn. They brought to Him one of the most guilty cases they could think about and He says, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more", John 8: 11. O, the grace of the Saviour! Whatever need there was He was ready to meet it. It says about the lepers that He handled them freely. He entered into the sorrows of humanity as He bore them in His spirit day by day. The very children were the objects of His grace. The disciples would have turned them away, they thought they were not important, but He said, "Suffer little children to come to me", Luke 18: 16. He had room for them all. That man called Legion who sat outside the city, think of the Saviour taking a journey to reach a man like that whom men would not touch. One beloved servant of God, as he was contemplating the gospels, said, His holiness set Him apart from the race. He was holy, different from every other man, but His grace made Him a Servant of all. How beautiful! Holy, blessed Man, the Servant of all. He came to serve men.

Even in the hour when they rejected Him, and put Him on the cross, think of those precious words that have come down through this present dispensation in all their blessed fulness, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do", Luke 23: 34. There is that tender sapling, there is the Man that has come in here to glorify God, oppressed and afflicted, every ignominy that the enemy could heap upon Him was heaped upon Him, and in that hour of deepest sorrow, the hour when the nation was guilty as never before. He says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". How beautifully the scripture speaks about Him, "as a sheep dumb before her shearers, and he opened not his mouth", Isaiah 53: 7. I often contemplate the Lord Jesus in Pilate's hall, He opened not His mouth. He could have spoken. What accusers there were and He could have met them all. Where were those He had raised from the dead? Where were the lepers He had cleansed? Where were the thousands He had fed? In His hour of need no eye was found to pity, no heart to share that grief. He was alone. What delight God must have found in Him! He opened not His mouth. Had He spoken and taken up His own case, there would have been

eternal damnation for the race; but there in the presence of His accusers He opened not His mouth.

Wherever He was placed He was perfect; be it on the mount, or in the desert, or in Pilate's hall, or on the cross; He was the perfect, precious, glorious Man, and yet men would have nothing to do with Him. There in the presence of Jesus' hour of sorrow, in the presence of Pilate's questions, it was said, "Not this man, but Barabbas", John 18: 40. Think of the guilt that lay upon the race as they refused God shining in grace. God had sent the prophets. Jesus Himself says in that beautiful parable, that God had sent prophets to appeal. Here is one of them, the appeals of Isaiah how beautiful they are, and He has sent other prophets, and they refused them. The Lord Jesus says, Last of all He sent His Son. I think of the feelings of Jesus as He said those words, "And at last he sent to them his son, saying, They will have respect for my son", Matt 21: 37. O, the feelings of God! As if He would pass by that they had neglected the appeals of His grace in Isaiah and the others. He says, Perhaps when they see My Son they will reverence Him; but it only brought out how far we have gone astray—"All we like sheep have gone astray".

This passage will be the language of Israel in a day to come when their eyes are opened and the veil is removed. In their hearts they will come to see how beautiful their Messiah is, they will come to see then that God was there in all His fulness and all His grace. Friend, it is here for us tonight, that you and I, who like sheep have gone astray, may come to see that in the Person of Jesus, there is a Man in whom God's love, grace and mercy are shining in all their blessed fulness. In those very circumstances He was always perfect and perhaps more beautiful to heaven's eye, than anywhere else in His pathway here. There He is in the presence of His accusers, as Mr Darby says in 'The Man of Sorrows'—

Priests, that should plead for weakness,
Must Thine accusers be!

And again he says in the same poem—

A Judas only owns Thee—
That Thou may'st captive be.

Judas identified Him to betray Him. Oh, the betrayal of the heart of man. How precious in those circumstances that He opened not His mouth. He had something greater to do. What a work was laid upon Him! What a mission He had come to accomplish! And in full devotion, committed to the will of God, His Father, He opened not His mouth. He went to the cross and took on the liabilities that had been incurred by the race, the race that had gone astray. He went forward there into the circumstances where it says that God “laid upon him the iniquity of us all”, and He was able to bear it. You think of the enormity of what has come into the race, and God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. That was from Adam right down, and blessed be His name. He bore it to God’s eternal satisfaction.

The types are full of those animals upon whose head the iniquities of men were confessed. The animals were slain, their blood was shed, some were led away into a land of forgetfulness, and God looked in mercy afresh for another year upon His people. But friend, in the offering of Jesus and what was laid upon Him. God has looked on for nearly two thousand years, upon the race in blessing. He is offering mercy, forgiveness, wonderful blessings to those who put their faith in Jesus. God alone could estimate the glory and value of what was done on the cross by Jesus, when alone, forsaken. God is fully satisfied with that work; involving His death and that His precious blood was shed; and that He was buried in the grave for three days and three nights; and that God raised Him by His glory. The work was completed, and He has given Him a Name that is above every name.

Now we come back to the verse that we read, “All we like sheep have gone astray”. How far you have gone you would know. However far the distance, Christ has measured it. You remember that parable where it says that He went after the sheep until He found it. No journey was too long, no circumstances were too grievous, He went after the sheep until He found it. As I said, in the day to come, the distance and the guilt of Israel will weigh heavy upon their hearts, but they will come to see that there was a Man in Jesus who met the distance. You read these chapters of the Old Testament

and see how grievous was the sin, how deep the mire into which they had sunk, but it is all met in the offering of Jesus.

The gospel is proclaimed that there might be on the one hand conviction in the soul that we have gone astray. There are none excused from it. Some may think they have not gone so far as others, but they have gone astray. Who in the presence of this chapter, reading of this precious sapling, a root out of dry ground, could say they have not gone astray? Tested in every circumstance, perfect, there is God's standard, there is God's Man, and in contemplating Him we have to say, "All ... have gone astray". My friend, the gospel is proclaimed, the work that God had laid upon Him has been done. In the work that Jesus has accomplished, once and for all. God has found a way that there is forgiveness preached in His name, to those who believe. Alas, the darkness and distance of sin has hardened our hearts so much. Maybe you have heard the gospel time and time again, you have heard of the Saviour and His saving grace, but you are still astray, still perhaps feeding on these foods that would lead you further away. The sheep keep going further away, they do not realise how far they have gone from the shelter of the shepherd's care and environment; each step is going further and further away till they are arrested as to how far they have gone. Maybe God brings in certain matters so that you realise that you are no longer under the protection of the divinely prescribed environment. His love, my friend, comes to meet you where you are that you may return.

Another beautiful word of the prophets is to return, return. The value of the work of Jesus remains the same in all its value and efficacy. It is not only that we have confessed our sins, but maybe we have confessed our sins and know Jesus as our Saviour, and yet we may have gone astray. The work of Jesus is enough—it is never to be repeated. I may have to come afresh to the appreciation of it; but the value of the work of Jesus remains in all its efficacy however far astray we may have gone. John tells us, speaking to believers, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins", 1 John 1: 9. Things come up and cause us to wander away from the circumstances in which grace would have us, but the work has never to be done again. God is

ready in the fulness of His love, as we return in confession of our sins, to forgive in the precious name of Jesus. Precious substitute for all that was due to us; He has taken our place. He has taken the place of believers. The wider aspect is He has taken the place of all. John says, "*he* is the propitiation for our sins; but not for ours alone, but also for the whole world", 1 John 2: 2. That means that the work of Jesus is enough for all that has come into the race; but those who get the gain of it are those who put their faith and trust in Him. Ah, friend, where are your sins? Are they lying upon your heart? are they upon your conscience tonight? Or are they gone, as the hymn says—

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,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

(Hymn 238)

What a rock, that what He has done He has done once and for all!

Then there is a need to see that there is a present enjoyment and a present realisation that our sins are gone; they are gone before God and they are gone for me through faith in what Jesus has done. The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son has met God's eye; and the precious character of the offering is what meets my eye; I know that those sins are gone in His death, they are gone evermore in the fact that I have put my faith and trust in Him where He is at God's right hand, a Prince and a Saviour.

The chapter is full of the down-stooping love of Jesus from the manger to the cross, but God has given Him a Name that is above every name. A very beautiful verse says, "he was with the rich in his death, because he had done no violence, neither was there guile in his mouth", Isa 53: 9. God took care of Him. When men had done everything they could do, crucified Him between robbers, they appointed His grave with the wicked; but the Spirit says that He had done no violence, neither was there guile in His mouth, and He was with the rich in His death. God saw to it that He was taken care of. When men had done everything, God took over and

raised Him from the dead, raised Him from the tomb into which men had placed Him, and He has given Him a Name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.

What blessing comes by putting our faith and trust in the Man whom God has appointed, the Man whom God is proclaiming as a Saviour, the Man who is to be trusted in all His grace. This chapter shows how trustworthy He was in the presence of all that was against Him. It is not only in what He has done but in who He is. It says, "Surely he hath borne our griefs". Can every one here put themselves into verses 4 and 5, and say, 'Surely He has borne my griefs, He has carried my sorrows; I did regard Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He was wounded for my transgressions, He was bruised for my iniquities; the chastisement of my peace was upon Him, and with His stripes I am healed'? There is the language of faith. Another prophet says that he would put the very words in your mouth; and there they are in verses 4 and 5, the words are put into your mouth that you may put your faith and trust in the Saviour that God has provided. How beautiful it will be to hear Israel use those words, "he was wounded for our transgressions". He was there in our place, that is what Israel will be saying. My friend, can you say. He was there in my place? He took my place on the cross; He took my place in the grave; and in virtue of what He has done He has given me a place in glory. O, what grace! He was there in the grave for me but tonight He lives at God's right hand, for all who put their faith and trust in Him.

May all have a fresh assurance of the great love and kindness of God towards men. He has done everything possible, He has cleared the ground entirely, and He puts these very words in your mouth that you may say, He bore my griefs; He bore my sins. Peter puts it so beautifully—"who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree", 1 Pet 2: 24. That is where they have been judged, and the Lord Jesus has also put them out of God's sight. May it be, my friend, that through faith in His Name, they have gone from your sight, so that you are no longer a sheep gone astray, but you have been brought under the Shepherd's care to know the food that the Shepherd gives, to know the grace and protection of

the Shepherd's love. Instead of being a sheep who has gone astray, may you be one of the sheep that hears His voice; He calls them by name. Maybe He is calling you, calling you by name, to come into the shelter of all that is provided in the Shepherd's care. May no one here turn a deaf ear to His voice. He calls as a shepherd calls in His grace; calling, calling, and calling again that you may come to prove the blessedness of abiding in His love, and abiding under His care, for His Name's sake.

BENDIGO

16th April 1995



FINISHING WELL

2 Timothy 4: 6-8

One thing that marked our brother was that he finished well. May that be a comfort to our hearts! I believe it would be normal for a Christian, to finish well. God said to Israel that He had fed them with manna and led them through the wilderness that they might have a humble mind, to do them good at their latter end, Deut 8: 16. Of some of us it might have to be said, “Ye ran well; who has stopped you ...?”, Gal 5: 7. But scripture is full of persons who finished well through divine grace. Jacob’s closing days were his best. Of Joseph it says, “when dying ... gave commandment concerning his bones”, Heb 11: 22. Great men whose closing days were very precious to heaven! That was peculiarly true of our Lord, perfect in every circumstance and every day, indeed, but at the close of His days, how precious to heaven that in the presence of adversity the will of God was His paramount object—pleasing His Father to finish in a note of triumph. What victory has ensued from those closing moments of our Lord, the pressure that was there bringing out the substantiality of who was there, pressures unparalleled, betrayed, denied, even forsaken, and yet in those closing days, the present dispensation a tribute to it all! Paul would bring this forward here that we may look to how we finish. It is peculiar to this dispensation that things are going to finish well. In Israel things broke down, but this dispensation will finish in glory, not any tribute to men, but a tribute to the Holy Spirit of God that this long dispensation will end in glory.

Paul here is speaking of his finish. He is already being poured out. Prison had not hardened his spirit. The pressures of all that was rolled in upon him had not hardened his spirit. He was looking for the time of his release from these things, but in the midst of the pressure, he was finishing well, finishing in confidence in his Lord, finishing in the spirit that marked his Lord in spite of the pressure.

So he writes here that he had “finished the race”. Our brother has finished his race: he is now with Christ, but what he has left in those closing years is not only a comfort to us but an encouragement to us that we may finish well. We do not know when the finish may be. For him it came very quickly, but may it exercise our hearts that the Spirit would give grace that we may finish well.

He says, “I have kept the faith”. That had not been easy. Many pressures there have been in the history of the saints, but there is power and there is grace that we may finish, God’s work in us completed. In earlier years it may be other things command our attention, but I believe particularly the start and the finish of a believer’s course are peculiarly pleasurable to heaven. It says, “I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth ...”, Jer 2: 2, and here we have the finish, but what about in between? It brings out many features sometimes, but I believe that God in His ways would work with us that there may be an end to the ambitious and commercial spirit, the self-pleasing spirit, that there may be in His grace an end to these things, and to the bitterness and emulation that may arise in the human heart, that there may be something formed that can be ready, we may say, for translation. Paul calls attention here that in that race he had his eye on the goal. I believe that is of all importance if we are to finish well that our eye is on the goal, not on things here. We can never finish well if things here are our object, but Paul said he was looking for His appearing, not only the rapture, blessed as that will be, but if we are to finish well and if we are to finish the race, our eye is to be on the goal; and that is that Christ and Christ alone is to be magnified in His glory. Paul was looking on, not only for that chain to be taken away or even to be with Christ, blessed as that would be, but he was looking for the day when his Master, the King of kings, would come to be displayed in His glory. Our brother had that in his heart too and may it be increasingly in our hearts, looking not for anything here that would justify us or please us, but our eye on the goal that Christ in the day of His appearing will come to be glorified. He whose right it is will come to reign and there will be seen the once despised Jesus as the King of

kings and Lord of lords, worthy by all to be adored. May our hearts and our eyes be kept on the goal that we in grace and the Spirit's strength may finish to the praise and glory of God's Name!

KIRKCALDY

26th April 1995

At a burial meeting

