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CONTENTS

REPROACH AND PRIVILEGE

COMMITTAL

THE THRESHING-FLOOR

"I, JESUS"

THE CHILDREN'S SIGNS OF LIFE

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REPROACH AND PRIVILEGE

John 19: 25-30; 20: 11-23

E.M.W. I thought we might speak together about the reproach which is on the outside publicly and then of the privilege which is on the inside. We would look at the passages, therefore, not simply as historic (although they happened and our hearts are affected through the Spirit by that) but, as seems essential, to appreciate the moral significance that they have for us. There is a link between the two passages in Mary of Magdala, and more than one link no doubt - probably with John too, although in the second passage he is not mentioned by name. None of us likes reproach, but it is a privilege to be in it as having affection for Christ - the reproach of the cross.

There is just a handful of persons in the first passage, four women and John. Prior to this it seems that all had deserted Him, so we could look upon them as recovered persons; that is what we are. It is a wonderful privilege to share His reproach on the outside, taking a stand, not only by the name of Jesus in the confession of it but by the cross. Then if we look at the inside I think there is a certain answer: Jesus comes, they have the privilege of seeing Him. He discloses Himself to Mary, no doubt His representative, but then He comes to the disciples. It has been noticed before that it is the disciples He comes to, that is the followers; not the apostles but the disciples, and He comes where they are gathered. I thought therefore, as being brought into the sharing of His reproach on the outside, the Lord would bring us, on the inside, into the privilege of His presence as risen and ascended. As already remarked, we are to see the present moral significance of the passages, not simply their historic value.

C.M. The apostle Paul went so far in this that he can speak of boasting in the cross.

E.M.W. Yes, "far be it from me to boast save in the cross", Gal 6: 14. What is avoided in religious circles generally, and would be by all of us, is the scandal of the cross. As approaching it you hesitate because of the test that the Lord applies to us if we speak of matters like this. Nevertheless He would encourage us to do so and to get

the gain of them. Mr Darby said that the cross is a symbol of honour in Christendom: therefore we need to get the force of it, it is a gibbet, a gibbet of shame; so that the world was crucified to Paul and he to the world, and I doubt not that he also proved, as he shows elsewhere, that he entered into privilege on the inside.

G.W.B. Whilst the Lord felt the reproach, as we learn from the Old Testament prophetic scriptures, would there be the difference, that He is the Second Man, but it is the remnant of the first man with us and his pride that feels the reproach so keenly?

E.M.W. Indeed, yes, we would need to note that difference. He felt the reproach. Elsewhere it says "the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me", Ps 69: 9. Every delicate feeling of a perfect man was there, sin apart. With us, because of pride and the like, we abhor reproach, as you say; but the cross really is an exposure of that man that abhors reproach. In the death of Jesus that man was extinguished in judgment; then in His burial he is put out of sight. I think something of that enters into Paul's statement to the Galatians who might well have boasted in a religious position but who were avoiding the scandal of the cross. Have I your thought right?

G.W.B. Yes, so he got to boasting.

E.M.W. Exactly, he could have boasted in man's strength, his intelligence or his education, but I think he would have apprehended not only the removal of that man but the exposure of the man before he was removed, so that he would have a clear judgment of him. It is not arbitrary, it is moral.

D.E.R. Nothing will bring us greater reproach through the religious man than the acceptance of the fact that the first order of man is completely out of court in God's sight, and the cross is the removal of that man; the religious man hates that.

E.M.W. We have got to get hold of that because Christianity and the teaching of it has attached to that order of man, and that is exactly what Christendom is. We have to acknowledge we have had that, attaching some importance and even attaching the truth in its terms

to the first man as though to build him up. It is a tremendous lesson which I feel I have not learnt, not fully at any rate, that that man has been exposed and extinguished. That I think will help us to take a stand by the cross of Jesus.

C.M. Paul can speak of the cross as the means by which all that was against us has been taken out of the way. He speaks in Colossians (see chap 2: 15) of the element of triumph in connection with it, does he not?

E.M.W. Yes, that is another aspect of it. This seems to be persons taking their stand. It says they stood; "And by the cross of Jesus stood his mother, and the sister of his mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala". They took their stand there. I suppose it was simple affection for Christ that caused them to do that. The same thing obtains today, it is love for Christ that will enable us to stand by the cross.

C.M. I suppose that is what in some degree we begin our Christian experience with, but if we go on with it it is the way of preservation, is it not ?

E.M.W. Do you mean we come to value the cross initially?

C.M. I thought attachment to Christ would impress us in our early days. If only we are true to that we are preserved all the way through and we shall be found with this company.

E.M.W. Yes, although no doubt to arrive at this we are usually some way on in experience. Some reach it quickly. Malcolm Biggs once told me that he thought John Bunyan had put the cross in the wrong place, too far on, but as he got older he began to think that maybe he had put it in the right place. The real significance of it (not speaking of the immediate appreciation of what the cross and the work of Christ brings to the soul), its practical significance, seems to me to come later in Christian experience.

R.E.T. Is there skill in the way the apostle speaks in Galatians: "the world is crucified to me, and I to the world", chap 6: 14? Unless we

come to the scandal of the cross we shall not be able to say "I to the world".

E.M.W. He puts it both ways, does he not? There you have a man, not in the initial appreciation of the benefit that is brought to him, but the way in which by experience he has arrived at it. You could hardly think of him there as in the simplicity of his initial appreciation of Christ. There had been His sacrifice for him and all that He bore for him, but what had entered into his experience was the reality of the meaning of the cross. So that, as you say, he puts it both ways: "the world is crucified to me, and I to the world". What association could a man like that have with the world?

G.W.B. Even then the Lord was superior to the reproach because of who He is and who He was. The verses read show that. Was it so with Paul too, in such measure as a believer can be, in the sense of what he is inwardly, as you were saying? Paul rises above the reproach, he is not crushed by it.

E.M.W. I think that is important. That Jesus was superior to it is evident. We all know that in this gospel He does everything Himself; and in this particular section referring to His death there is no reference to the Father or to the Spirit. He is sustaining everything Himself and is superior to everything; and that should greatly encourage us, so that if we think of the reproach of the cross we are not submerged by it but, as having His Spirit, are to be superior to it although feeling it publicly.

E.C.B. Is the moral basis for bearing the reproach the same as the moral basis for enjoying the place of privilege? I do not think we fully appreciate that the reproach of the Christ can only be sustained as we are on the same moral basis as in the place of privilege. I was thinking of what Mr Brown said earlier, that the first man cannot be reproached, he is in a world that matches him; but the first man feels the reproach that attaches to Christ in the saints in the position of testimony.

E.M.W. Yes, and seeking to be true would I suppose bring us into it. But the moral basis being the same would greatly help us. I thought

therefore there was a certain balance between them, between the reproach outside and the privilege inside.

E.C.B. As you have been speaking, the impression I have is that we cannot rightly speak of esteeming the reproach of the Christ unless we go into the sphere of testimony in the quality in which we are in the place of privilege, otherwise there is no reproach rightly so called. Touching on what you referred to before, I think we have often thought we felt reproach because we were presenting aspects of the first man that were not acceptable to the world that is marked by the first man.

E.M.W. Hence in that passage it is "the reproach of the Christ", Heb 11: 26. There is a good deal of reproach attaching to us because of our own behaviour, or because, as you say, of something that is not appreciated among men in the world generally. But we need to understand what "the reproach of the Christ" is; and I thought therefore in this passage it is standing "by the cross of Jesus". If we weighed that over I think it would help us in relation to what you are saying.

E.C.B. I think it has been said in regard to this section that you have to be morally qualified to stand there. You do not become morally qualified *by* standing there, but you have to be morally qualified *to* stand there.

E.M.W. That is exactly what is in one's mind in saying that it is not so much in early history, in appreciation of what is brought to me through what Jesus has done, but that the truth having had its formative effect, I am morally qualified to stand there. They stood by; and yet it does not weaken the fact, it seems to me, that they would be regarded as recovered persons.

C.G.H. It would seem that there are two sources of reproach. There is the reproach connected with what we have here in John 19 where there has been the perfect expression of God in the Person of Christ and what He undertook on the cross and the character of the scandal of the cross to which you have referred, then there is also the reproach connected with behaviour which would relate to the bearing

of the iniquity of the holy things - reproach from without because Christians have not been exponents of the truth.

E.M.W. Well, we have to accept that and, as you say, distinguish between them. Of course bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary is bearing it before God, carrying it in our spirits. The thought of bearing (another scripture says "bearing his reproach" Heb 13: 13) would confirm what was said, that persons standing there are morally qualified. So that we are not thinking in this passage of the reproach that we may have to bear because of our own misdemeanour and that of Christians generally, but the reproach that is proper to Christianity, "the reproach of the Christ".

C.H.S. Why is only one man mentioned, John the disciple whom He loved?

E.M.W. I think because the emphasis is on formed affection for Christ; that is where the emphasis would be. It was affection for Him that caused them to be here. As we have said, they were morally qualified for it. We need to note that distinction that it is not because they were there that they became qualified, but they were there because they were morally qualified.

A.K.T. When persons are morally qualified would the Holy Spirit link on with them? I was thinking of 1 Corinthians 2 (v 2); "I did not judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and *him* crucified", then it goes on to speak of a demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

E.M.W. Yes, he was determined there not to know anything save Jesus Christ, that order of man; but "him crucified" would exclude every other order of man. As you say, that would make room for the Spirit, so that the first man is completely extinguished.

A.K.T. The Spirit would be free to link on with such persons.

E.M.W. Yes, and it is such persons, if I apprehend it rightly, that would know something of the privilege within. I think it works both ways; that, if we are to be here as standing by the cross, we must

know something of the privilege. I think the experience works both ways. Would you think that right?

G.W.B. I think we have found that in our experience. The cross, in each case it is recorded but especially in John, is a full exposure of man, is it not? You follow from the beginning of the gospel who He is that was crucified; He is God, the Word become flesh.

E.M.W. That is a sobering consideration, who it was; this gospel emphasises that particularly. It is the simple personal name Jesus that is used here; "By the cross of Jesus stood his mother".

S.D.K.R. Would this bear in a practical way on speaking to souls we may meet or, in a more public way, in the open air preaching?

Someone spoke about the reproach connected with behaviour. In view of all that has come in there may be a reticence to take a public stand.

E.M.W. As far as we are concerned we have much to be ashamed of, but there is nothing to be ashamed of in the gospel. We do not announce ourselves but Christ Jesus Lord. It is a matter of exercise in individuals who may have gift, but I would think it not only in order but very desirable for the gospel to be preached. We come to the distinction already made as to the kind of reproach that we might be bearing. We have to accept the one governmentally, that is our misdemeanour; the other is normal to Christians. We should not hesitate to preach the gospel because we feel ashamed of ourselves, if I can put it plainly.

E.C. While we may feel reproach keenly, because reproach is something which is felt especially by anybody who is sensitive to it, may we not enjoy privilege as we ought to?

E.M.W. I think, as Mr Burr has said, the more we appreciate what belongs to us, which is the privilege of the assembly and belongs to all, the more we shall have power to bear the reproach.

E.C. What actually is that privilege?

E.M.W. Our association with Christ as risen and ascended. Take for instance the immensity of truth contained in those words, "I ascend to

my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God". Think of the strengthening effect that would have, and then for them to be aware of His presence. I have felt increasingly recently that, in the present confusion, we need to have the consciousness of His presence; as Mr Raven said, not only the faith of it but the consciousness of it. I think that would settle us in our souls, steady us, and it would help us to bear the reproach that is proper to Christianity and not simply hang our heads at the reproach that we have to bear because of misdemeanour in which we have been involved.

D.E.R. Mr Stoney frequently refers to the importance of being inside the veil in order to be rightly outside the camp. The privilege of being inside the veil helps us to be in the outside-the-camp place.

E.M.W. I think those are parallel thoughts, outside the camp, inside the veil. So we are not to be crushed and walk about as persons that are apologetic. As Mr Brown has indicated, we should be, as having the Spirit of Christ, superior as He was. The truth has not broken down; Christianity has not broken down. What has broken down is the man who is in ruin and is depraved in any case.

G.W.B. Peter preached very successfully fairly soon after this breakdown.

E.M.W. And without any apology. He does not say, I am very sorry, not long ago I broke down and denied the Lord and I am really very much ashamed of myself. As having a judgment of the man that had acted in that way he is free from him. And as you say, he can preach shortly afterwards.

E.C.B. When we speak of privilege (we use these conventional words) are we not referring to everything that we enjoy, as believers, in a scene before God where there are no moral questions outstanding. Therefore we are free to enjoy things in a perfect scene, and apprehend the way in which perfection or completeness attaches to us there. We can elaborate the detail, but is that broadly the basis?

E.M.W. I think it is, that there is a scene before God, of which Jesus is the centre, where there is no need and where moral questions do not exist. It is very precious to get hold of that, and again quoting beloved Mr Taylor, he says we need to learn in our minds to take the ground proper to us. If we did that I think we should get very much help in being superior on the outside.

R.E.T. Is that why it says in verse 26 "the disciple...whom he loved"? Is this relationship of love known between them?

E.M.W. Yes, as we have often been reminded, that would be because he was lovable. The triumph of love is to love what is unlovely, but with John I think, representatively, there is what is lovable. How the Lord Jesus must value persons who are formed and who are themselves lovable! It is not simply His love for them in the basic disposition of His mind and soul but that there is in *them* what is formed and lovable. That would seem to emphasise that this area is one of affection for Himself.

R.E.T. Linking it on with what Mr Brown said earlier in regard to the breakdown of man, it is the woman that is outstanding here, and again in your next scripture. Is it the subjective side of things that is showing itself?

E.M.W. Yes, life and love, and I think the woman represents that; and I wondered therefore if she becomes a link between the two. It has been pointed out before that there is a relationship in the mother and a relationship in the sister and a relationship in the wife; that is, each had somebody; but Mary of Magdala had nobody. Evidently she is a very fitting vessel to represent the assembly as having no relations here at all; she has no relationships here on earth.

E.C.M. Linked with the Lord in resurrection would really mean that she would never be deprived of Him again.

E.M.W. Quite so, she had to learn that. She was seeking Him - "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him". Would that there were more fervour with us in seeking Him, and that we were not satisfied until we found Him. Would that

there were more of that earnestness with believers! I am certain they would not be disappointed; they would find the Lord and become enlightened as to the truth and the path of the will of God, and enlightened also as to a scene, outside of this broken one, where we are associated with the Lord Jesus eternally.

D.E.R. Moses' face shone through being in the presence of the glory. If we were more in the presence of the glory our faces would shine in that sense and that would bring a reproach. The Lord Himself is an example to us in this; He brought in the light of another world and that caused the rejection by this world.

E.M.W. He brought in the light of another world, and I suppose the affections of that world too, and laid the moral basis for the securing of it and our part with Him in it.

C.M. These to whom He comes are spoken of as disciples. Is what you are setting before us the line that disciples would be learning? If we are truly disciples we are really bound to come to this, are we not?

E.M.W. Oh, I think so. John seems largely to avoid anything official. He does not use the word 'apostle' for example, but he does speak of being sent by God, as though what he is concerned about is the living substance in the saints; if I might use such an expression, the thing itself rather than the knowledge of the letter of Scripture; the intelligent expression of it - "life in His name". We speak together over the Scriptures and the good teaching but it is becoming an increasing concern to me how much I am vitally in the substance of what is presented in them; and that I think should be an exercise to all of us.

G.A.P. Do the disciples arrive at spiritual relationships of brethren consequent upon the Lord's death and resurrection and ascending up? He says "Go to my brethren" and Mary goes to the disciples. Is that something that develops, spiritual relationships understood. We understand natural relationships but spiritual relationships are something greater.

E.M.W. They are. Of course the Lord saying "my brethren" is how He views them. I suppose as Mary conveyed the message, that would become light to them. We are so much acquainted with these words of Jesus: "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father", but to them it would be divine light. I would to God that it were light to us in our souls rather than just knowledge in our minds.

C.G.H. It would be a concern that we should not merely be taking the ground that is proper to the light we have of the place that God has in mind for His people but that we should be formed to move into it in reality.

E.M.W. We need both of course. When we come together, if the Lord leaves us here tomorrow morning, then in the service of God we need power in the Holy Spirit to take the ground that is proper to us, not to think of ourselves as poor miserable sinners in a broken company and that everything has broken down. I do not doubt at all that the degree in which we are formed is the degree in which we shall really appreciate that and respond, but the Spirit would help us to be abstracted, I think.

C.G.H. Then growth comes into that too as to individual experience, does it not?

E.M.W. Oh yes, that would all enter into this.

A.K.T. What would you say about Mary weeping?

E.M.W. What comes out is her deep affection for Jesus. That of course would be evidenced in her weeping; then her preparedness to be associated with Him in death and burial. It has always struck me that she is rather in person a demonstration of what Paul teaches in Colossians 2 (v 12) - "buried with him". It says "she stooped down into the tomb"; where He was, she would be. If we can see the moral application of that it would help us. Then as she goes through this experience she comes into the knowledge and light of an association with Him as a risen and ascended Man. He says "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended"; and I think she would understand from that that her link with Him now was in a different condition altogether.

R.E.T. When He says "Touch me not", does that mean that we face every exercise in the power of resurrection?

E.M.W. We face every exercise in the knowledge of Himself as risen and of our link with Him. Is that what you mean?

R.E.T. Yes, that. Christ's death has removed everything.

E.M.W. "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended"; Mary would have resumed a relationship with Him which she had known before.

E.C.M. She could have had no link with Him in the condition in which he was in flesh and blood. Is not our real link with Him as He is now?

E.M.W. Yes, that is it.

H.H. I think Mr Taylor sen said that ascension is the true ground of Christianity. Resurrection is the place of power but ascension is the true ground of Christianity.

E.M.W. I think so. So looking at it broadly John 12 is like Colossians but this is more like Ephesians: "has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies" (chap 2: 6); that is the ground that is proper to us in the fulness of Christianity. So, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended". Mary could never know Him again in the way in which she had known Him before; as Paul says, "if even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know him thus n longer", 2 Cor 5: 16.

E.C.M. It is the same Jesus, the same Person, but in another condition. Is that where we are tested in the change of condition?

E.M.W. We need to lay hold of that, it is the same blessed Man. This Man who was speaking to her, this Man Jesus that came into the midst, was the same Person that was on the cross in a different condition.

S.D.K.R. Would you say a little more as to how we are formed? We all want to be formed. We may have the light of these things, and thank God we are able to speak about them; but we feel the lack of formation.

E.M.W. We are formed by keeping company constantly with the Spirit I think. That is perhaps almost too-simple an answer; but we need to be in closer relation with the Spirit, more simple in our relations with Him, more dependent, more real in our appeal to Him; because, after all, He is the One that forms us.

G.W.B. Jesus is the object, the Spirit the power for formation in us.

E.M.W. Yes, and the more we are with the Holy Spirit and our links close with Him, the more He presents to us the object, the Lord Jesus. "We all, looking on the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor 3: 18), that is the object, "are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit". I have an impression that my own relations with the Lord and the Spirit, with the Father indeed too, are not nearly strong enough.

G.W.B. There is not much wrong with that expression 'faith in the Spirit'. It describes a need with us.

E.M.W. Yes, I have found the expression in Mr Taylor sen's ministry but I was not too sure whether he meant faith in the Spirit as an object. You said, Yes, Mr Burr?

E.C.B. Yes, I have noticed that expression. I suppose the question of formation can be expressed fairly simply in our seeking constantly to be true to the ground that we take. There will never be formation unless we know the ground that we are on. Once we have identified the ground that we have the privilege to take, formation comes about by our seeking constantly to be consistent with that ground, does it not? For this the Spirit is needed. Then the Spirit is needed to apprehend the ground in any case.

E.M.W. We must apprehend the ground first. In other words, to use a simple expression, what is objective must be understood first. We can never, for example, be formed in the affections proper to brethren if we have not the light that we are His brethren.

E.C.B. That is in Mr Taylor's ministry as well. If I could go back to what was said as to "Touch me not" and its bearing on what you are bringing before us, is the Lord not indicating to Mary that He is

moving into a scene in which there is no reproach at all, and that that is the first thing for her to learn? The disciples begin with a message that relates them to that scene, then they come out like Him into the world in which there is reproach, sent as the Father sent Him. Is that right?

E.M.W. Yes; indeed. There are no tears in that world either.

E.C.B. Does it also help us that in Psalm 69, which is the great psalm about reproach, the paragraph that begins "Reproach hath broken my heart" ends with "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving; and it shall please Jehovah more than an ox".

E.M.W. Yes, that is a good help to what we are considering because that psalm is very experimental. "Reproach hath broken my heart": prophetically that would be the Lord Himself, but no doubt the spirit of it would be known by the remnant and the spirit of it is to be known by us.

E.C.B. Yes, I wondered if the spirit of it was known by Mary of Magdala.

E.M.W. I think so. That is why I believe the Lord uses her, if we may put it simply, as a link between these two incidents.

E.C. In connection with the ground on which we are, is it essential to know the peace that the Lord would give us in order to know privilege? He says this twice to the disciples, the second time after He had shown them His hands and His side.

E.M.W. When He says "Peace be to you" it is not what we might call the initial thought of peace towards God but rather the conveying of the peace that presides in the Father's realm, in this realm referred to where there is no reproach. One finds it very testing but there it is; the truth is there, and if we could lay hold of it the Spirit would help us into the enjoyment of it.

E.C.M. Do you think too that, as we make room for the Spirit 's service, there would be a greater brightness in our testimony here? I was thinking of what Peter says: "If ye are reproached in the name of

Christ, blessed are ye; for the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you", 1 Pet 4: 14. Do you think that would be reflected in some way testimonially?

E.M.W. I think so, so that we should not be submerged. As we said earlier in the reading, as having the Spirit of Jesus we should be superior to it; not unfeeling but superior to it, and therefore we should be brought along in triumph, not in despair. The testimony is to go through in persons who are triumphant.

E.C.M. So Paul speaks of "God, who always leads us in triumph", 2 Cor 2: 14.

H.H. It was said many years ago that our power with men is according to our at-homedness with God.

E.M.W. If we are going to be with men and with the brethren for God, we must be with God for them. I think that is vital.

C.M. So He says "Peace" to them prior to what He has to show them, and then He says "Peace" to them again in regard of sending them forth.

E.M.W. Yes. Do you not think that the consciousness of the peace that presides in the world where there is no reproach will enable us to have our part in the testimony where there is the reproach?

C.M. Yes, our peace would not be disturbed by how the testimony is received.

T.B. Would it be important to lay hold of the fact that we need the strengthening power of the Spirit to be here in testimony? I was thinking of the importance of representation as coming out from the immediate presence of the Lord's supper.

E.M.W. Quite so, and so it is the Spirit of the heavenly Man. It says, "And having said this, he breathed into them" (that is most intimate) "and says to them, Receive the Holy Spirit". It seems to me that that is characteristic. He was the heavenly One in whatever circumstances He was, and they are to be heavenly ones, are they not? All this would greatly encourage us, so that we should not be submerged by the conditions in which we find ourselves publicly.

E.C.B. What do you understand was involved in Moses esteeming the reproach of the Christ, because it is clearly in a sense an interpretation by the Spirit in the writer of the Hebrews as to something Moses did? Is it at the point where he identified himself with his brethren in the condition in which they were?

E.M.W. That is what I thought, with the people in the condition in which they were. It is not subsequent to the setting up of the tabernacle system; that is rather a picture of the universal glory, is it not?

E.C.B. In Hebrews 11 it says "when he had become great", and in Exodus 2 it says when he "was grown", that is at the same point in time. I wondered if it did not bear on what you have just been saying as to the reproach in the confused situation that exists, that is, the readiness to identify ourselves with our brethren and with His brethren in that confused situation; and the Lord identifies the reproach of the Christ, in Acts 9, with "me"? Is that right?

E.M.W. I think that is helpful. That should be an encouragement to our younger people. One would love to see a definite committal to the saints in the position of reproach in which they are; not the reproach in which they are because they have made such a mess of things responsibly but through identifying themselves with a rejected Christ.

G.W.B. The Spirit says particularly as to Moses in those circumstances in his negotiations with Pharaoh, "the man Moses was very great", Exod 11: 3. I thought it was in line with what we have been saying, that though you face and feel reproach you are superior to it; the Lord pre-eminently so.

E.M.W. I suppose Moses was morally great.

G.W.B. And the power of it was evidently felt by Pharaoh and all his.

E.M.W. I am sure that would be the effect with us if we took this course, there would be moral power. Mr Hatcher said, if we were more with God about we should have greater power with them; and

when we speak of men we are also thinking of our brethren of course.

A.J.E. It says it came into his heart to visit his brethren, not exactly into his mind? Do we need to be more feeling about these things?

E.M.W. That applies to all of us I am sure. Definiteness in this would greatly help us.

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30 March 1974

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COMMITTAL

E.M.Walkinshaw

Acts 7: 22-25; Hebrews 11: 24-27; 13: 10,15

I thought these three scriptures might serve to encourage us, dear brethren, in a more definite committal to the Lord and to His testimony. One longs to see younger men and women more definitely committed to it; prepared on the one hand for the reproach of it, but also able to understand and appreciate the privilege of it.

You will see that the context in which I am putting the word 'privilege' now is that of association with God's testimony. One prays very much, I am sure we all do, for the younger men and women, because we would love to see them more definitely committed.

What I observe is a readiness to acknowledge what is right and to be associated with those who walk in the truth, but an apparent (I hope I may be forgiven if I am mistaken) lack of definite personal committal. No doubt this is the case with many, perhaps all of us in some degree, but I think Moses would serve to encourage us in a definite committal to the Lord and to the testimony and a readiness to esteem "the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt".

The first passage refers to him as thinking of his brethren. It says "It came into his heart to look upon his brethren". He would have been a young man then; and they are called "the sons of Israel". This is no doubt the point where he came to some definite acceptance of "the reproach of the Christ". It says he thought they would have understood "that God by his hand was giving them deliverance. But they understood not". That must have been a test to him, nevertheless he begins by a committal to, and love for people that were very definitely in reproach. Egypt held them in bondage, typical of the world's system, Pharaoh no doubt in that setting the god and the prince of it; but Moses himself, although the way was open for him to have a prominent place in it in his own life came to a definite decision and readiness to commit himself to a people who

although poor and afflicted were supported by God, and a people to whom God had committed Himself. I suppose, dear brethren, we could think of persons in our day like that, who might have had great advent in the world, yet prepared, as it comes into their heart to associate themselves with a people outwardly despised, crushed, unknown, but among whom there is a wonderful testimony to God Himself and an enshrining in their hearts of what is precious to God in the very presence of opposing forces. Egypt must have been attractive; as appealing to the younger men and women, you will find Egypt attractive. It is useless to say that it is not. In fact in our second passage it says quite plainly "the temporary pleasure of sin"; so that the world has that to offer which is pleasurable that is to ourselves naturally, and no doubt Moses found the same thing. I have heard it said, whether or not it was true, that he was probably put in the position of commander-in-chief of the Egyptian army, such was his power and his greatness. None of us here I suppose could hold a position such as that or its equivalent, I know I could not. It was the Spirit of Christ in him that prompted him to leave it; and the persons to whom he was committed were persons to whom God had committed Himself, and that I believe is the reason that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says it was "the reproach of the Christ"; not the reproach of the position in which they were through failure, as we have already noted, or through anything that had come upon them in the governmental ways of God, although all that might have been accepted, but it is specifically called in Hebrews 11 "the reproach of the Christ". Now I judge, dear brethren, that that is an interpretation. What is in the mind of the Spirit of God is that "reproach of the Christ" is what is connected with a people to whom God is committed. Take the position today, it is an extremely testing one, but God would help us to understand that there is to be the consciousness and reality of the anointing; that is, whatever the position of the saints, whatever the outward reproach, whatever may come upon us there is the committal of God to His people. I believe there are those here in this world in whom the testimony of God and the testimony of the Christ is enshrined, it is held in their affections in the very presence of opposing forces. If we get an impression of

those in the circle of the truth like that I think it will help us, young or old, to make a more definite committal and a more definite turning away from the world, to esteem "the reproach of the Christ" greater riches than everything it may have to offer. Have we seen the brethren like that? Outwardly we see them as part of a broken revival, that is the public position; nevertheless God would help us and give us light as to where His testimony is cherished so that we might learn what it is to commit ourselves to it however outwardly weak and bedraggled it may appear to be. There is associated with those in the circle of the truth the dignity of the Christ, and I think Moses had some impression of this. You could hardly say that he could speak of the Christ in the sense in which the writer of the Hebrews does, but he had some impression, I believe, of a wonderful committal of God to His people; in fact he was enlightened about it a little later - "I have seen... the affliction of my people...

And I am come down to deliver them", Exod 3: 7,8. He had the light of it, dear brethren, but I think he had that light after it had come into his heart to go out and look upon his brethren. They did not understand; and maybe (and I think it has been so) that persons have been known to commit themselves and the brethren have not understood. That has been the case generally with many of the Lord's servants, a desire to go out and look upon the brethren, a committal to serve them; but, it says, "they understood not". What a test that must have been to Moses himself (and what a test to every servant of the Lord!) for it to come into his heart to go out and look upon his brethren to serve them and to find that they did not understand!

Now Stephen takes this up in a setting which is judicial, and a setting again outwardly of weakness, and yet what moral power marked that man as he stood in that council, able to set out the truth, able to set out the history of the testimony not only of Moses but of others! I have selected Moses because of what was said about him in the reading in both these scriptures, one that "it came into his heart", that is how the Spirit of God puts it, and the other that he esteemed, came to a definite judgment, "rather to suffer affliction

along with the people of God than to have the temporary pleasure of sin... for he had respect to the recompense". I have often thought of Moses like that. You think of Pharaoh and his hosts, where are they? Where is the Egyptian world? But then you might ask, where is Moses? What a privilege was his as he with Elias was able to stand and converse with Jesus on the mountain! What a recompense for a man of faith who made that committal so many years before! Would that not be an encouragement to us, beloved brethren? Often we say we regard the early days as though everything went on publicly in triumph. Was it the case? Was it the case with Moses? Was it the case with Paul? "At my first defence no man stood with me", he says, "May it not be imputed to them", 2 Tim 4: 16. Everything did not go on in outward public splendour and glory when Paul was here, it was outwardly in weakness and shame and reproach, and at one point everyone abandoning him; but he went on. And so it is today, in the presence of very severe tests, that the Lord would encourage us to come to a definite committal and learn what it is to esteem "the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt". I believe it applies particularly to young men and young women. A point of decision is reached. There are wonderful openings in the world as there were for Moses, wonderful openings in the world for Paul I doubt not, and for Mr Darby and Mr Raven and suchlike men. Is it true that Mr Gladstone told him that he was wasting his time amongst the brethren? What a thing to say to such a man! But these men, dear brethren, had come to a definite committal, not simply an acceptance of what was right or of where the path of the truth was, but to this definite committal to the Lord and His testimony which caused them to abandon all else and devote themselves both to Him and to it. Whatever circumstances it may be found in there was the committal. Another person comes to mind, namely Ruth: "Do not intreat me to leave thee, to return from following after thee", Ruth 1: 16. And who was that? That was a poor old widowed woman; what hope would she have? And yet Ruth clave to her. I think that is like the outward position in which the saints are today: poor, widowed, no visible means of support, no one outwardly to refer to for guidance, but returning to where the

saints are, having heard that Jehovah has visited His people to give them bread. She is a sister prepared to commit herself to that poor widowed woman who I think represents the testimony in its reproach, yet coming back to where God had visited His people to give them bread. Orpah returned to Moab. The challenge in our day is not to see the beauty of the picture but the moral application of it to ourselves. Am I to return to Moab in all its self-indulgence? That is rather like Laodicea, the condition of things which is so prevalent today. Or am I like Ruth, prepared to go ahead, and then not only to understand the committal to what is outwardly weak and widowed, but to come on the inside to the greatest privilege possible, that is union with the mighty Man of wealth?

Now just to proceed into the last chapter, here we find the Lord Jesus Himself referred to: "Wherefore also Jesus, that he might sanctify the people". How essential that we should understand that all the blessing that has been received, whether by persons in previous dispensations or in this, is based on the Person and the work of Jesus. How unique He is! As we commented in the reading, they stood by the cross of *Jesus*; it is such an appeal - His personal name. In this epistle, as most of us would know, nine times His personal name Jesus is mentioned. That makes an appeal, does it not, to every lover of His? It is not now the testimony of the Christ, viewing Him as the Head of a system which is for God's pleasure, although that exists; but the simple references to Himself personally by His name which always make an appeal to our affections; and that is the appeal in this passage, it is Himself: "Wherefore also Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate". It does not say here that He died without the gate, that was no doubt true; but the emphasis is upon the fact that He suffered, and yet how superior He was to it! We should keep this in mind, that Jesus was superior to it, He bore it, He was equal to it. There is no question of Him being submerged. In Luke it says "he expired"; in John it says "he delivered up his spirit". As one old brother once said at the correction of that hymn which we used to sing, 'The storm that bowed Thy blessed head'; no storm ever bowed

His blessed head, He bowed it Himself; so it was changed to 'The storm that burst o'er Thy bless'd head'. So that while He suffered without the gate He was not submerged, He carried everything through. That is to make an appeal to us: He suffered without the camp. I fully accept that it says "that he might sanctify the people by his own blood". It shows without question that He died and that that was essential for sanctification, but the emphasis seems to lie on the fact that He suffered, and that is to make an appeal to our affections; "therefore let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach". As having His Spirit we are not submerged by the reproach but are able to be superior to it; hence He adds immediately "for we have not here an abiding city, but we seek the coming one". I wonder if we do; the Lord would encourage us to do so. Can each of us, brothers and sisters alike, put ourselves in this 'we', "we have not here an abiding city". We all like to build things up here but the Lord would help us to understand that our part is to "seek the coming one"; and then, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God!". Is the outside position one of despondency, one of depression? He says "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of the lips confessing his name". May the Lord encourage us, dear brethren, to come into these things increasingly. May He Himself encourage each one of our hearts to make a more definite decision, maybe in youth; maybe some of us who are a little older need to do it too, to commit ourselves to His people, though they be in reproach, and to esteem "the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt" and know what it is as outside the camp to have our part in the praise of God itself. I believe, as we have already said, that these things very largely go together. A brother remarked in the reading, Outside the camp, inside the veil. In the order of the epistle it is inside the veil, outside the camp, but I noticed a little while ago that Mr Taylor sen teaches us that what is set out in the truth in the first two chapters is learned experimentally as we consider the details of certain subjects from the end of the epistle back to these two chapters. But the immediate point of my exhortation is that each of us might with more definiteness commit

ourselves to the Lord and to His testimony in its reproach and also in the privilege that belongs to those that are in it. May the Lord encourage every one of us, for His Name's sake.

ST ALBANS

30 March 1974

THE THRESHING-FLOOR

D.Steven

1 Chronicles 21: 14-30

I wondered if I might say a word as to what is involved in the threshing-floor. It is a very searching and yet a very necessary exercise that needs to be worked out, often, I think nearly always, in a very unseen kind of way. It is very interesting to see where threshing floors appear in the Scriptures, and I read here because it appears at a time when David is being adjusted. Not that we would dwell on that except to show how beautifully Scripture presents great servants such as David, how he repents, and the very high lines of service that come out from him as a consequence of adjusting himself, getting right and repenting of his sin. Scripture is very instructive, how persons like David, great persons, have their errors recorded, not in any sense to make much of the error but for our instruction, to see how quickly they get adjusted; how, as a result of it, a very rich line of ministry in relation to the service of God is secured. Here it proceeds at a point where the threshing-floor comes to light. It says "And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it". How solemn it was! What a terrible thing had happened! It says that "Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel". What a solemn thing was happening! the people were going to be destroyed; but it says that God "repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, "It is enough; withdraw now thine hand. And the angel of Jehovah stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite". That is where he was; and what was proceeding there was what the threshing-floor would speak of. I am sure there is something in it for us to learn, that there is an exercise proceeding, unseen it may be, but proceeding all the time, that is in accord with God. It is the process of separating good from evil, the wheat and the chaff were separated. What is useless, what would in that sense be evil and wicked, is separated from what is good, and the good is maintained; and there are persons who are working to this end all the time. How fine that is! how encouraging as we think

back over our sorrowful histories and see that there are persons (thank God for them!) who have been going on all the time working on this principle of separating the good from the evil; and God in His goodness has maintained a position (I speak carefully about that word) on account of those few who have been worthy.

So David comes through this sorrowful time. When he saw this threshing-floor he would know what it meant because he had come to one before, as we would remember. The ark had been brought out of the house of Abinadab (see 2 Sam 6) and another threshing-floor comes to light, just at the point where things are handled wrongly; Uzzah puts his hand out to the ark of God and it happens at Nachon's threshing-floor where what is going on is in accord with God; and God deals with something there. Here what happens is that there is judgment as a result of David's sin, and it is coming on the people, but then there is this man Ornan who is working in accord with God's thoughts and the plague was stayed on account of this. How beautiful that is! The word challenges my own heart: Am I working in this way? Are we working in an unseen way where nobody sees what is going on? Am I upholding this principle of separating the good from the evil, in my life, in my circumstances, where the enemy is active all the time to bring in things that would hinder the service of God? The slightest little thing - chaff! It speaks in Matthew of the Lord Himself purging his threshingfloor; the winnowing fan is in His hand, it says (see chap 3: 12). It shows that the Lord will not have anything that would be of an adverse character, or anything that is not real amongst us in His threshing-floor. So the plague is stayed; and David is moving in a beautiful spirit here, he would take on the whole thing himself. He said to God "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? It is I that have sinned and done evil". How beautifully he takes it on! But then the word is: "the angel of Jehovah commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and rear an altar to Jehovah in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite". What was to be for God's pleasure was to be built on this basis, the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. What a foundation for the house of Jehovah Elohim'

So it is that there will be nothing for God on any other principle than that of the separation of the evil from the good. Here is a man and his four sons who are working this out in a beautiful way. It says "Ornan turned back and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves". They hid themselves; it is something that is going on in a hidden way. "Now Ornan was threshing wheat". What a fine thing that was! Threshing wheat, as you know, is a very severe matter. They now have mechanical means but in those days it was a very arduous thing to thresh wheat. It brings out the purity of the grain for the people of God. Therefore, for us, what is for the service of God is to be pure and nothing else; the chaff, all the looseness and whatever else there would be is threshed out, discarded and separated from. There is a separating process going on, beloved brethren, which I believe we need to be really committed to.

Then it says "And David came to Ornan, and Ornan looked and saw David". What a beautiful picture this presents to us! Ornan and his four sons are working out this great principle of separation, separating the evil from the good, and David sees it. He has been told to go there and he goes immediately, but I think it also shows that he sees that here is the only basis on which the house of God can be set up, and he moves into this position therefore and enquires whether he can purchase this in order to build an altar to Jehovah. And on the other side you see Ornan ready to give it all.

These two men show two great principles. Ornan would give everything; he had been working to this end and would not hold it for himself or take anything for it; what a beautiful principle that is - "Take it to thee"! On the other hand David would not have it for nothing, he would pay the full money. It says: "David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of the threshing-floor, that I may build an altar in it to Jehovah: grant it to me for the full money, that the plague may be stayed from the people". He could see that this could not be acquired on any other principle than that it had to be paid for. That would surely point to something for us, that we only acquire these things on the basis of payment; that means that we pay, and it involves what that would mean. Where would it come from? It

involves suffering. That David paid the full price involves committal. Ornan said "Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his sight: see, I give the oxen for the burnt offering, and the threshing-sledges for wood, and the wheat for the oblation; I give it all". Think of that, how beautiful an expression that is! He has the wherewithal to fulfil the whole sacrifice - the oxen, the sledges and the wheat for the oblation. He said "I give it all" but David said "No; but I will in any case buy them for the full money; for I will not take that which is thine for Jehovah, to offer up a burnt offering without cost". So the agreement is come to "and David gave to Ornan for the place in shekels of gold the weight of six hundred shekels. And David built there an altar to Jehovah", and he says later "This is the house of Jehovah Elohim", chap 22:1. How fine that is! The whole matter is completed in a very short space of time, I might say; from the moment that he numbered the people and sins he is brought through in his history in repentance and receives forgiveness, and then purchases this place for the house of Jehovah. How beautifully this represents a person who repents and is forgiven and is established again, so quickly, I am sure that this is the essence and the truth of the gospel, that one can repent and be forgiven and fully established in the presence of God as David was, although it meant much to him in suffering and sorrow as a result of the judgment that came in. He had to bear that but he got right and was free in relation to the house of God, the service of God, on the basis that he purchased this threshing-floor from Ornan the Jebusite.

Well, that was what I was moved to say dear brethren that we might be encouraged to move on this line: I am sure that the Lord would help us because this is what He requires of us, a pure and holy place maintained for Him in His absence; for He is absent from this scene and oh, what a scene it is! Surely we are all feeling what a world we are living in, what is around us, what we come in contact with daily. Then we hear of other places too, worse than we are, other countries where conditions are more than deplorable for Christians. The suffering and the persecution that is going on in the world at the present time we know little about, but it is all under

God's eye; the whole world and the suffering that is going on is under His eye and His hand; but I am sure that this principle is being worked out, and thank God for it. My exercise is that we may be more committed to it to maintain things for Him here in order that there may be a richer, brighter note of praise to Himself for His Name's sake.

GLASGOW

January 1974

"I, JESUS"

G.A.Brown

1 Kings 8: 6-9

This passage is most attractive, dear brethren. I think we all would find it so as having some appreciation of Christ. Reading these scriptures is not to be just an intellectual exercise but to direct our hearts and affections to the Lord Jesus. The ark of the covenant is one of the most remarkable types in Scripture of the Lord Jesus, and I suppose its particular bearing is that it is the centre of the divine system. We might well ask ourselves then as to whether Christ is the centre of our lives or whether something else might be the centre, with the Lord Jesus merely added. That was what it was, you remember, at the marriage in Cana when no doubt the bridal couple were the central attraction and the mother of Jesus was there and Jesus too; He was invited as well. That showed a very poor appreciation of the Lord Jesus. It might be to their credit that He was there at all but, like most of us in our experience, other things, perhaps what is natural, are the main things. As Christians we must have the Lord included as it were, but that is far below the divine intent. Christ is to be the central object - "*He* is before all", Col 1: 17. He is the centre of God's universe and will be eternally, and He is to be the centre of our lives now.

David, in his young days, was thinking about the ark. "We heard of it at Ephratah, we found it in the fields of the wood", Ps 132: 6. It was never far from David's thoughts. The ark was the thing that really dominated his life. May it be so with each one of us, that the Lord Jesus should be the dominating object in our lives and all else will take its right place as He has His.

The ark has been through many vicissitudes, as we know, in the course of the history of God's testimony. It has been into battle, it has even been into captivity. What all these things mean is known to the saints. Think of what it was when they came to take Jesus and He was actually in captivity, what it was when He went into

death and the waters of the Jordan were driven back! All these things, as you contemplate them, make Christ greater and more attractive in the way He has gone. Then too, at one time, the golden pot that held the manna was there, reminding us of the preciousness to God of the lowly life of Jesus; and how we need to be reminded of it! The rod of Aaron that budded was there also. It was put there, as the Scripture says, as a token for the sons of rebellion. It came about because of rebellion; and we know what this means, too, in our own experiences.

What I want to point out in this section is that there was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone that Moses put there at Horeb. This is the end of the journey, all is complete. There are no sons of rebellion present here. There is no need here for anything that has come into God's ways. It is just like the Lord Jesus at the end, as we have been reminded - He says " I Jesus ", Rev 22: 16.

There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone that Moses put there at Horeb. It is just as it was at the beginning, it is the same Jesus. I have often been affected by the fact that the ark is just the same size at the end as it was at the beginning. If you compare the dimensions of the oracle in the temple with the corresponding dimensions in the tabernacle system everything is much greater, much larger, much more magnificent; and how fitting it is that at the end of God's ways there should be something in display that redounds to His own glory. Everything returns to the God who has been behind it all; but the affecting thing to the heart that loves Jesus is that the ark is there just the very same, and there was nothing in it but the two tables of stone. It speaks to our hearts of the One who said, typically, "Thy law is within my heart" (Ps 40: 8), the One who answered perfectly and fully to the will of God; and as come to the end He is just the very same, the same Jesus. He is the One that we can know tonight, every one of us. Whatever the needs may be in the wilderness way there is provision for hem; even to the extent of rebellion, there is a divine answer to rebellion, God has righteously answered it. All these things come into our lives but we find He is just the same, there was nothing in the ark save the two

tables of stone that Moses put there at Horeb. How fitting then that glory should fill the house of Jehovah! Beloved, what we are having tonight is intended to make Christ more attractive to every one of us. May it indeed be so, for His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

April 1974

THE CHILDREN'S SIGNS OF LIFE

A mother will agree that life in a new-born babe usually shows itself first by a cry. Perhaps it shares, without knowing it, in the sorrows of sin in the world. But the Lord Jesus spoke of being born anew which means that God begins in persons, often quite young, an entirely new kind of life. This helps to explain why children may sometimes feel uneasy and even unhappy when they begin to learn the gospel but do not yet know the Saviour. When Samuel was first aroused he became quite disturbed, but when he knew the Lord he was at rest and listened to His word.

It may seem strange that the Scripture speaks of a boy sneezing seven times and then opening his eyes. He had died, but these were signs of new life. For the believer this is a beautiful picture of the way in which God works with power and perfection within his soul so that his eyes may be opened to see spiritual things anew and clearly.

The disciple, Mark, who wrote so much about "the way", tells us that when Jesus raised a girl of twelve she began to walk and was given food. We also have the exact words that the Lord spoke to her. You, as a child, may have heard something from Him that has made you know that by the Holy Spirit's help you can live and walk to God's glory. For this, your soul will need the food of life which is Christ Himself.

The youth to whom Jesus said "Wake up", outside the city of Nain, sat up and began to speak. What wonderful signs of life by the power of the Son of God! Just what the youth said it must have been some answer to Jesus. Have you yet with your mouth confessed Him as Lord?

J.C.Evershed