

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

THE GOSPEL LEADING TO THE ASSEMBLY

"HOLD FAST WHAT THOU HAST"

ENQUIRING CHILDREN

THE GOSPEL LEADING TO THE ASSEMBLY

1 Corinthians 15: 1-11; Joshua 5: 8-12; Deuteronomy 26: 1-11

R.T. 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 appearings. 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.

E.C.B. In Romans 16 Paul directly connects "my glad tidings " with the "revelation of the mystery" (v 25). Does that bear on it?

R.T. 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.

D.J.H. 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.

R.T. 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.

E.C.B. 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.

R.T. 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!

J.C.E. He adds "and that he was buried" - a fully completed matter. It is wonderful, is it not?

R.T. 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.

E.C.B. 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.

R.T. 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?

E.C.B. 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?

R.T. 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.

P.M. 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?

R.T. 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.

J.M. 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?

R.T. 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.

D.J.H. 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?

R.T. 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 appearances 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.

D.E.R. 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?

R.T. 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 appearances, 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.

D.A.B. 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?

R.T. 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 appearances. He appeared to Cephas; he preached and three thousand were converted.

D.A.B. 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.

R.T. 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.

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

R.T. 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'.

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.

L.W.B. Would the standing in a way be connected like the boards of the tabernacle and the two bases of silver?

R.T. 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.

L.W.B. 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?

R.T. 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.

J.W. 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?

R.T. Say some more about that.

J.W. 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.

R.T. 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.

B.M.W. 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?

R.T. 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?

J.W. 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.

R.T. 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.

J.S.G. 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?

R.T. Say some more. That is good.

J.S.G. 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.

R.T. 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.

M.A.J.T. 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.

R.T. Is there anything out of order in turning an address into a gospel preaching?

M.A.J.T. You can give out a gospel hymn on Tuesday night.

R.T. I think that helps us about our noticeboards: 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.

J.M. 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.

R.T. 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.

D.A.B. 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 in to that occasion.

R.T. 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.

J.M. 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?

R.T. 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?

R.T. 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.

D.J.H. 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?

R.T. 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".

E.C.B. 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'.

R.T. 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".

L.W.B. Paul says too "Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus", 2 Tim 2: 1.

R.T. 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?

J.W. Is it grace that gives us a place among the brethren, I mean the brethren in the way they appear here? There were appearings 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?

R.T. 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?

D.E.B. 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?

R.T. Yes, "a perishing Aramaean 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.

H.A.H. 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?

R.T. 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.

E.C.B. 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.

R.T. 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.

J.M. 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.

R.T. 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.

D.M. The Lord met the woman in John 4 in grace in view of her having part with the worshippers.

R.T. 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"!

E.C.B. 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.

R.T. 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.

E.C.B. And "he appeared to me" goes beyond the resurrection, does it not? It must be Christ glorified.

R.T. 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.

H.A.H. 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.

R.T. 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.

H.A.H. 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?

R.T. 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.

E.C.B. The passover in the land would remind them of what the original passover was in view of, would it not?

R.T. It would. What was that?

E.C.B. 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?

R.T. 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 doorpost 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.

E.C.B. And then you have new food that you have never had before.

R.T. 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.

D.A.B. 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?

R.T. 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.

E.C.B. Would you find the five hundred brethren in the inhabited land?

R.T. 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?

J.M. 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?

R.T. Let us feed our souls on it! That is what the assembly feeds on.

J.M. It would transfer us in our affections to a Man in another realm altogether and everything that appertains to Him in that realm.

R.T. Beautiful!

S.H. They were at Gilgal, the place of reproach and where they resorted to after their victories.

R.T. 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?

P.M. The experience at Gilgal cost them something but they proved through that the fulness of what God had in Christ.

R.T. 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.

P.M. 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?

R.T. 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 collective 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.

D.E.B. Are the loaves a suggestion of the assembly? They would be made of the old corn, I suppose.

R.T. Say some more about them.

D.E.B. 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.

R.T. 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.

E.C.B. 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.

R.T. 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 appearings, I think, would bring in something of the old corn, touches of Christ as the heavenly Man.

E.C.B. 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.

R.T. 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.

E.C.B. 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.

R.T. 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!

E.C.B. The man in Deuteronomy 26 is living to God, is he not?

R.T. Yes, he is.

S.D.K.R. 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?

R.T. 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.

J.M. 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.

R.T. 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.

D.J.H. 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?

R.T. 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?

H.A.H. The solemn thing is that the wives and the children they left behind when they went over to join the conflict never tasted it.

R.T. Well, that is testing. We might be halfhearted. 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.

D.A.B. 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?

R.T. 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 Aramaean 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.

J.M. The lover of Christ would have no difficulty about that regulation because it flows from that blessed One.

R.T. 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.

P.M. 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?

R.T. 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.

J.W. 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?

R.T. 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.

J.W. 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.

R.T. Yes, he had. "A perishing Aramaean 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.

S.D.K.R. 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?

R.T. 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.

E.C.B. 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.

R.T. 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!

E.C.B. 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.

R.T. 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.

H.A.H. 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.

R.T. 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 thy God 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.

D.A.B. 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.

R.T. 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.

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Key to initials

(London unless otherwise stated)

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"HOLD FAST WHAT THOU HAST"

R.Taylor

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' (No.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). O 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, not 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.T. 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: "/ 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, "/ ... 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: "/ Jesus", no longer in those robes as in the early

chapters, He says, "/ Jesus". How He loves the assembly, how He loves the overcomer! "/ 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.

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ENQUIRING CHILDREN

A time came in the life of Abraham when he was tested as to his obedience to Jehovah. God required that he should take his own son, Isaac, and offer him as a burnt-offering. They two therefore began their journey, taking no sheep with them, and Isaac understandably asked his father "Where is the sheep for a burnt-offering". They did, however, find a ram, caught in the thicket and an offering was made of this. The believer in the atoning work of Jesus and the shedding of His blood knows that they give full safety, and he does not come into judgment.

A girl named Miriam was at the right place and at the right time to be of use to God. She asked to be helpful to her little baby brother. What his earlier name was we do not know but he became called "Moses" which means 'Drawn out' because he was found among the sedges of the river. In process of time Moses grew up to serve in connection with the tabernacle system which required that the Hebrew children should ask about the Passover. For the young this became a sign of the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus as of a lamb without blemish or spot.

J.C.Evershed

Mr Evershed was taken to be with Christ on 25 January 1994, aged 87. He had on his own exercise provided a different piece for more than 240 editions of this publication.