

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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MOTHERLINESS

J.D.Gray

Psalm 22: 9; Exodus 2: 5 (from "And she saw")-11 (to "and looked on their burdens"); 1 Thessalonians 2: 7, 8

I want to say something in regard to what is motherly, what is protective and affectionate. We sang in our hymn 'The manger and the cross' (No 188); they both come into Psalm 22 which opens with expressions of the Lord's deep feelings in the time of His atoning sufferings. It is well for us to ponder these words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?". In the position of abandonment, what it was for Jesus! "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor 5: 21. That was the position that Jesus took up. "My God, I cry by day, and thou answerest not; and by night, and there is no rest for me". No one else could say those words in such an absolute sense as Christ could say them. We never have known those circumstances, the circumstances that Jesus went through. I sometimes wonder what experiences David had when he penned this psalm, and yet it was prophetic under the hand of God that he should have such experiences, to know something of the feelings of Christ, but in its absoluteness only Christ knew those feelings, only Christ knew the abandonment in its awfulness and in its fulness. And in the midst of the psalm the Lord brings out this matter; "thou didst make me trust, upon my mother's breasts", He goes back to that, human infancy, "make me trust, upon my mother's breasts". The Lord had such an experience, of what it was to have a mother, as it says in the gospel, "the mother of Jesus was there", John 2: 1. He knew what it was to be nourished by His mother, what a sphere of protection and affection was in a mother. It is a most remarkable thing that He should touch humanity in such a way that as a babe He understood something of what it was to trust there. You may say, how did He know that He trusted there, a child or an infant has no memory; but a child who is an infant displays the features of trust in relation to its mother. Because you do not remember something it does not mean

that nothing has been wrought in your soul. Memory is good, memory can be used of God, and you should commit the Scriptures to your memory when you are young. Memory of itself is not an indication of spirituality or formation entirely, because you can go through experiences with God that you may forget about to some extent; yet what is formative remains and will go forward to the divine glory. But the Lord Jesus had experiences that it says of Him "thou didst make me trust, upon my mother's breasts". Whatever understanding was there in Christ in relation to that we have to leave. The Lord was a Babe and outwardly appeared as any other babe. Whatever stage of growth He was at physically He appeared in relation to that stage of growth. Being about twelve years old He was a boy and in subjection to His parents. In the hour of His trial He looked at His mother standing by His cross and He took care of her, saying to the disciple whom He loved "Behold thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home", John 19: 27. How the Lord's care in regard to His mother came out even in those circumstances when He was about to complete the matters that related to the work of God in regard to redemption!

In Exodus 2 a child is born. Children are born into this world, into believing households and unbelieving households. I want to speak of the children that are born into believing households. There is an opportunity for the child, but there is a responsibility on the parents, there is a responsibility on the mother. The world was making a demand for these young children; in this time in Exodus the command was to kill them at birth and then subsequently to throw them into the river. The world is after our young people right from their infancy. The mother brings out the sphere of nourishment and protection; that is very important. But you know, dear sister, your time is limited in which to nourish and cherish a child. That child that you may nurse and cherish today is going to grow up, and how is it going to grow up? Not that you or I can impart God's work to them, but we can impart something to them. Baptism and naming the excellent Name upon them is one thing and it is a right thing; the ark in the river here suggests that in type. So they are baptised to

the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. That is a completed matter when it is done. But it is the beginning of your exercise as a mother. Household baptism is in the faith of the parents; infant baptism is practised in Christendom and often there is no more care taken of the child in relation to God's interests. But as we baptise our children to the name of divine Persons there is responsibility on you. What have you that you can impart to the child? This woman here was given this child to nurse. She had a limited time, she had to give it back to Pharaoh's daughter. She nourished it, she imparted something to that child that was out of her body, something of her experiences with God went into the child.

What experiences with God have you had, dear sister, in your life that you could impart to your child that God can use and which will come out in its own time as the work of God? Faith must be active; faith is not inactive, it involves activity. If in faith you baptise your child you must then be active in relation to bringing it up in the fear and admonition of the Lord. You young brethren, listen to this: the exercises of a mother have been imparted to you in your early years in view of formation that we trust in God's time will stand on its own feet. There is no fault in the mother here; she did what she could, she nursed that child which she had travailed to produce. Consider all that has gone in to your upbringing - the travail and the sorrow, the anguish and anxiety as well as the joy, to bring you up for the Lord. And so Moses is brought up, nursed by his mother who was not interested in the wages of Pharaoh but in the welfare of her son who was fair to God. She had in mind the testimony. Dear sister, do you have in mind the testimony for your family as they grow up? The child is going to grow and come to a position when it may exercise its own will for a time, certainly exercise its own mind in regard of matters; but if something has been imparted of your life and your experience with God, it will come out in its own time. Moses left his parents' home, that time came, and he was brought up in the courts of Pharaoh and called Moses by Pharaoh's daughter; but will he stand? O, the exercise! Did that mother give up her concern about the child once he had come into Pharaoh's courts? I do not think so.

That mother would follow in prayer daily her concern in regard to her son.

Young people should not despise the daily family reading because the Scriptures will become formative in you, and they are able to make you wise unto salvation. That is what was wrought in Moses; in type he knew the sacred letters which were able to make him wise unto salvation when he was grown. You have to earn your living, you have to be educated in regard of things of this world that are right and proper in their place, but the time comes when you are grown. What a time! What a crisis in your life! When you are grown, when you are on your own away from your parents, without their eye upon you, how is it going to be? What is the determination in your life when you reach that stage? It says of this man Moses, when he was grown, "that he went out to his brethren and looked on their burdens". What was he going to do? Go back into Pharaoh's court, with a life of pleasure, a life of ease and comfort, skilled in all the wisdom of this world? Is that what it is going to be? Or are you going to look on the burdens of your brethren? There have been men, sons of faithful men, who have gone astray and have made names for themselves in politics and the like who never looked upon the burdens of their brethren and identified themselves with them, choosing rather to go forward with the course of this world and its politics. Dear young brethren, are you going to be true to what has been imparted to you by your mother? Will you despise her nourishment, her skill, her nursing, that bond of affection that she sought to form in you in relation to the work of God in you? Will you despise it or will it come to fruition? Moses looked upon his brethren and their burdens. He did not have the burdens, but he looked upon the burdens and he said, If those burdens are the burdens of my brethren they are going to be mine. He was furnished to become, not only a leader of God's people, but a nurse, who nursed and carried two million people through the desert in his bosom. What a man Moses became! The bosom of Moses, the affection of Moses, the experience of Moses, go back to what was placed there by his mother, Small beginnings, yet how important they are!

In Thessalonians, Paul's concern was not only in regard to an individual but also in regard to a local assembly. What exercises have we in regard to the saints? Who can go into a place and give a sense of "gentle in the midst of you, as a nurse would cherish her own children"? I want to bring out one or two features that are there. One is travail, "Her own children": if a child is your own you have travailed for it. Paul had travail in regard to the Thessalonians. He brings out in Galatians that he had travailed and he said he would have to travail again "until Christ shall have been formed in you", chap 4: 19. I think we can take it, dear brethren, that the allusion to travailing again brings out the normality of Paul's exercises in travail in the establishment of every local assembly. We do not establish local assemblies in that way, but the matter of travail can be that of a minister, an elder or a local brother; the maternal side should be with each in relation to being among the saints. If we have never travailed in relation to the local saints, in relation to assemblies which we may have visited, we will never handle them as our own children, and may handle them as hirelings. Moses' mother never handled Moses as if she was being paid wages· that was not in her mind. Paul said "we might have been a charge as Christ's apostles" (v 6) but that was not how he was among them; he was among them as "gentle in the midst of you, as a nurse would cherish her own children. Thus yearning over you, we had found our delight in having imparted to you not only the glad tidings". That was wonderful in its setting, that Paul should impart the glad tidings to the saints in Thessalonica, but it is not only the glad tidings, it is not only the ministry, but it is our own life also. It is something of our own experiences with God that is imparted to establish the saints. The Thessalonian saints were going to be severely tested and Paul knew that their establishment in the truth was essential prior to his leaving them because the great matter of weaning would bring out the persecution. I hope we understand that, dear brethren. He nursed them and he cherished them; that was private and exclusive, related to an area of protection and affection; but a time came when features of Christ in the brethren, in the saints, came on to the public view in Thessalonica and they became the target of the enemy's opposition.

It was the weaning that brought out in Isaac's case the mocking by Ishmael. The weaning of the saints in Thessalonica brought out the attack of the devil, because he saw features of Christ which had been produced by the nourishment of the mother. When Paul had to leave them to stand on their own feet they were weaned, able to stand and withstand the persecution. Divine Persons, dear brethren, are concerned about the saints. I remember Stanley McCallum saying many years ago, how is it that young believers can stand against the course of this world? He said, it is the holy, unseen, unknown by the world, protection that enshrouds the believer; as the scripture says, "the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you", 1 Pet 4: 14. All divine property is precious in the eyes of heaven. What property that is! In Isaiah 8, when the Assyrian passes through the land, God says "he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel!" (v 8). Think of divine pathos, divine feeling, in regard to the saints! And so in Thessalonica the saints are "in God the Father"; that is where they are left, after being weaned by Paul, left in the area of divine protection that is related to "in God the Father". Well, may the Lord encourage us, dear brethren, with these words.

LONDON

20 May 1978

IMPLEMENTS

N.T.Meek

1 Samuel 13: 19-21

This may be a rather obscure scripture, dear brethren, but in speaking one is assured of a sympathetic atmosphere. I was thinking of how the Spirit would facilitate the use of our energy to make it more resultful. This scripture contemplates the people of God in the land, which land was to be worked. And so it is; our inheritance is to be worked, what God has placed in the inheritance for our enjoyment is to be worked so that there is fruit, fruit for Himself and sustenance for us. I do not think that God ever intended that the tilling of the land, the land, was to be a mournful process. In fact the number of feasts that they had in the old economy was quite outstanding. God seems to suggest that the land would do well, it would repay very well any energy that was spent upon it. He had said to Adam "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen 3: 19) but you do not exactly get that impression when you think of the land where God was settling them, the land that was to be worked, the land that was to fill baskets with first fruits, the land that was to provide sustenance, blessing and enjoyment. You do not get the impression that to till the land was to be an unhappy occupation.

And neither is it, dear brethren, if we transfer it to our own day. It is not intended to be an unhappy one. There is such a thing as the call of the land in a natural sense; persons get taken up with it. And so it is, I think, in a spiritual sense, that if you work in the area of the truth, the truth of God, if you think of the inheritance and what is available for you, what is described for you, if you think of your blessings, if you think of the features that God has in His mind for you, then you will find that as you work it the power of it and the pull of it increases.

But the difficulty in these verses was that there was no smith and the ploughshare and the other implements would get blunt.

Then if the iron is blunt, as another scripture says (see Eccles 10: 10), you have to apply more strength, and then it may become

exhausting. Now the Spirit takes the place of the smith, I suggest. The Spirit would facilitate us, would provide help for us in working the land, working the truth. Here they had to go to a Philistine; that is a poor thing if you have to go to the mind of a man to understand the Scriptures. Of course, you are thankful for learned men who can tell you what words mean in Greek and that kind of thing, but generally speaking, concordances and bible commentaries are not too much to be trusted as regards the truth. The great power to work the land easily lies in the Spirit of God; I am sure it is so. After all, He indited the Scriptures and He knows more about the land than anybody. He knows, so to speak, where the soil is loam and where it is clay or marl or chalk. He knows all about it, He knows the different areas; He will teach you, not only how deeply to set the plough, but also how to maintain an edge. The smith here is not forging, he is sharpening, he is the sharpening smith. It is one aspect of the smith, a particular aspect, and I would suggest to the brethren that it represents the Spirit who provides keenness so that the work is facilitated. Dear brethren, there is help. We may feel that we do not make too much progress in divine things, but there is help available. A smith is available, if one may say so reverently, to facilitate any turning over of the truth that you may engage in.

You think of the plough, and it refers to turning over the truth. Do you ever do that? It is intended that you should, it is intended that you should know how to use all these tools (I think there are six) and the plough is for turning over the truth. Elisha was a ploughman. You wonder about that setting where he was found ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, you wonder how sharp the plough was if twelve yoke of oxen were needed. But the Spirit is the great help. If you want to understand the truth you want to get underneath its surface. Someone remarked earlier as to a sign, what may be a pointer, what may have some significance. You want to get underneath what is on the surface. Anyone can read the printed page but can you turn the truth over? Can you see what is below the surface? Some of us can plough a little bit with a very shallow plough, but some can plough deeply. You need a very sharp plough to plough deeply, I would

think. If you are going to set it down twelve inches, eighteen inches, if you are going to turn up the deep things, you will certainly need the Spirit of God to sharpen that plough. Think of how deeply the Lord set the plough in John 6. Who of us understands much about John 6? I suppose no one would set the plough or could plough so deeply as the blessed Lord Himself. We are reading John's gospel at home; sometimes we have four or five readings on one chapter and we often find we have not reached very far, certainly not exhausted it. You set it to the depth you can manage and yet you are conscious that there is always more. The Lord said in that chapter when some went away, "Does this offend you? ... It is the Spirit which quickens" (vv 61, 63). The Spirit makes the thing possible, He gives you the power, He gives you the understanding of it. It would be a worth while prayer to ask the Spirit to sharpen our spiritual perception, to deepen our apprehension, of what is in the truth of God.

And then it says "his hoe". Now the hoe is not a deep implement. I do not know much about these things but the hoe, as I understand it, does two things; one thing it deals with is weeds.

Perhaps Paul used the hoe very skilfully when he wrote the Philippian epistle. He said "I exhort Euodia, and exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord", chap 4: 2. You almost feel that the weed had gone, a growth that may have been developing there which would have been a blot on the fair inheritance. Paul was very skilful. It is a great thing to be able to cut cleanly, in that sense, with a sharp hoe. So one thing it does, I think, is to remove the weeds that tend to grow. They should never be there really; foreign thoughts that we may introduce, a skilful person with a sharp hoe can deal with them quickly. Another thing the hoe does is to keep the top surface of the land open, it produces what is called the tilth; that means that when, the rain comes the moisture goes through easily. Sometimes you see soil and the top surface has become baked hard, and when the rain comes, if there is any slope it will tend to run off; but with an open top surface the rain will run in and feed the roots. The hoe is surface cultivation, but it is much more easily done if the hoe is sharp. What I am trying to say, dear

brethren, is that whatever activity you may engage in, and I trust you engage in something (I speak to myself, I trust I engage in some activity), whatever activity you engage in, you will find your work is much more rewarding if you rely on the Spirit. You can call on the Spirit's help as you are going to a reading, or are sitting in a reading and someone asks a question. Have you not known what it is to call on the Spirit's help? I am not saying that you need to leave it till then; I think it is a constant matter to have to do with the Spirit so that one's perception is kept sharp and one's service is effective.

And then it says "and his axe", That is quite a drastic implement, is it not? John the baptist used an axe and he used it well. But then we are to use an axe. It is the truth applied to oneself. "The axe is applied to the root of the trees", Matt 3: 10. I think it relates to feeling the edge of the word. Now the Lord speaks to us from time to time. Ministry is generally gentle, gracious, attracting us; it usually has that character, that element is in it, it speaks of Himself. If you think of the Lord, it must always have that element in it that is attractive. But then sometimes you are made to feel the meaning of the scripture, the edge of it. We used to speak a lot at one time, probably we used to overdo it, about the edge of the word, but the expression itself is quite a good one. The word of scripture and the word of ministry are meant to be effective. You read the scripture sometimes and the meaning of it comes home to you. I regard that as like the axe; not exactly that it cuts you down, but you are made to feel both the weight and the edge of it. An axe has weight, it is not like a hoe. An axe head has weight and it has an edge, and it is always much more effective if it is sharp and if the word is in the Spirit. Is it not so, dear brethren? One could take up the scripture, maybe one has done it, tried to take up a scripture and wield it with all one's might and main, and all one has done is to bruise the brethren. It is never intended that that should be. So one thinks largely of the axe as suggesting the meaning of the scripture brought home, the weight of it and the meaning of it brought to bear upon one. And if I am to do that, if I read the scripture, and if I come across a piece of scripture, I want the meaning of it to come home to

me. It is all very well to say, Yes, that refers to Israel in a day to come. Well, that is good, there are lots of very interesting scriptures that refer to Israel in a day to come, but often you find if you think about it that it also has a bearing towards yourself, because it says that those things were written for our instruction.

And then it says "his sickle". The sickle is used for gathering in the crop, is it not? It is quite a skilled thing, I think, to gather in the crop without damaging it. Now, if you have ever used a scythe (the nearest I have ever got literally to using a sickle is to use a little scythe, a hand-scythe, for cutting the long grass), you will find it requires skill. If it is not sharp all you do is to bruise the crop. It needs to be sharp. Who was good at using the sickle in the scripture? You young people now, you think about it, who would you say was good at using the sickle? O, you say, the angel in Revelation. Yes, that is right. How clean a cut, dear brethren, in God's judgment! Now think of someone in the Old Testament.

Persons in the Old Testament who I think must have been good at using the sickle were the men of Bethlehem in the book of Ruth.

The reapers surely got the harvest in. Such was the state there dear brethren, and there was a servant over the reapers. And I think that servant, amongst other things, would ensure that the sickles were sharp, so the crop came in with the greatest facility. You are always working against time when you are harvesting, you have always an eye on the weather, because the aim is to gather it all in.

A lot of expenditure might go into a person's life, a lot of preparatory work might be done, and it would be a sad thing if it was all going to be spoilt at the time of harvest. So in the wielding of the sickle we are getting nearer to the actual fruit. The sheaf of barley that was brought in needed to be gathered, it needed the application of the sickle; if it was to be a successful operation that sickle would need to be sharp. Sometimes you feel that you spend a lot of labour and you hardly gather anything. Might it be that the sickle is not sharp, you did not have to do enough with the Spirit? You did not ask Him. How skilful divine operations are! If the sickle is sharp you will be able to get a larger crop in a given time, you will find that you have

embraced a larger crop, you have more thoughts, you have gathered more fruit. You can see the benefit, dear brethren, therefore, of having to do constantly with, and having recourse to, the blessed Spirit. The precious crop has grown, maybe of wheat or of barley, it has come up, there has been labour it has been watched, been cared for; it needs to 'be gathered, and gathered skilfully.

Sometimes the final operations in a process become the most critical because the crop, the value of the crop is there, and all the labour that has already been expended on it.

And then it says "and the forks". I did have recourse to Dr Strong and his concordance. It seems to be a fork with three prongs that is spoken of here and the reading might be 'the hay fork'. Now the hay is also a crop, it is a crop for living creatures. Even in this day and age they still feed hay to the cattle. That hay needs to be turned over in the sun; that is one use for a hay fork. There is nothing like sweet hay: you get contented cattle if you feed them on the best hay. That hay has been out there and it has taken up the moisture and it has now been harvested and turned over in the sun.

The farmers speak of contented cattle when the hay is sweet, when it was good hay the year before. It all involves skill. Who had to do with hay in the scriptures? Sometimes I wish these addresses were like a school class and you could ask somebody! At school a teacher never asks those who he thinks will know. You try and ask those on the back row because you find that the more difficult ones usually get to the back of the class. I am not saying anything about you dear sisters. Pardon me, you probably know a lot more than I do, but who had to do with something like hay in the Scriptures? Start at Genesis if I give you a clue, did anyone there say anything about hay? I do not think so actually, but there was a sister there who said something about provender, was there not? Do you know her name? I think she may have gathered it. She says "There is straw, and also much provender with us; also room to lodge", Gen 24: 25. You know who it is now, do you not? It is good to think about the Scriptures; as we said at the commencement, this is a somewhat obscure passage.

But if you begin to think about a scripture for a while, and then think

of other scriptures, you find that the thing begins to come together. And Rebecca said "There is straw, and also much provender with us". O, that is good, is it not? "Also room to lodge". Those camels that had made the long journey across the wilderness found provender. In some sense, dear brethren, we are like the living creatures. After all, there should be some element of an ox with us patient, steady; there should be some element of a camel too that can go through the wilderness and be independent of what is around, because we have the Spirit within. So these implements that handle this provender need to be kept in the best shape. In one sense, I suppose, I am the implement myself. It is a question of whether the Spirit is sufficient. And, dear brethren, the Spirit is sufficient for entry into the truth. How sad it is that all around, alas, things have come down to the mind of man to sharpen this and to sharpen that.

Then it says, "to set the goads". Now who set the goads? Who was able by the Spirit to set the goads? Well, you have thought about Paul at once, have you not? As soon as you heard the word "goads" he was the first one you thought about. Perhaps Stephen was one who knew how to set goads. And Paul was made to feel their keenness. They were not intended to damage him, it was the truth coming into his conscience, some divine impress, something coming in that actually affects you and you cannot remove it. The Lord said to Paul "It is hard for thee to kick against goads", Acts 26: 14. At one time certain ones of Cilicia and other places disputed with Stephen (see Acts 6: 9). Paul came from that area and I have often wondered whether those early pricks that he had, began when he realised that someone had something that he had not. Although he knew the law, he saw in the spirit of Stephen something that he had never had and this remained with him. How skilful you would need to be to set goads. They are just intended to urge you onward, to keep you going. Dear brethren, I would not willingly damage the saints, I trust not. One is conscious as one looks back on one's own history, of times when one may have been almost prepared to damage the saints because I thought something drastic was needed.

One would not like to do that, but one would like to urge the saints on, not to hurt them. I think Stephen was one who knew how to set goads in that sense. What a beautiful spirit he exhibited, did he not? Perhaps the greatest goad that he ever set for Paul was the way that he died.

There have been hunters, men of the world, unchristian men, who have given up hunting as a result of seeing the look of a dying animal. Have you ever thought of Stephen's face? What an impression it must have made upon Paul! Now you cannot, dear brethren, exactly work up to these things, but it is possible, I think, by the Spirit to set, in that sense, goads, so that the saints are kept moving on.

Well, these things are just submitted to the brethren as food for thought. The overall impression one has is that if we are going to work the inheritance we need the Spirit's help. You want to be clear of the mere mind of man, but the Spirit will make your service and your work effectual, firstly in yourself, and then it may extend to others. May each of us be helped in our measure, for the Lord's Name's sake.

DORKING

24 June 1978

THE INHERITANCE

J.C.Evershed

Joshua 13: 1 "... and there remaineth yet very much land to take possession of"

We have sung, dear brethren, of the certainty of promise (hymn 184); it encouraged me to bring forward this scripture to urge ourselves to explore the inheritance the more. This prophetic word was given directly by God Himself over three thousand years ago, but it may well be given tonight because it has a present application. Joshua was able to admonish the people to go up into their inheritance. I have not the moral power to do that, but I can say that I feel concerned that we should explore more of the inheritance than we have done so far. We have all often read this scripture. I have to admit that my own attitude in reading it has usually been, well, that is bound to be so and it always will be so. But that is unbelief. It is reading this scripture as if it said merely, "and there remaineth yet very much land", missing out the four vital words, "to take possession of". We are content, maybe, to leave it that there is very much land, and always will be, and we do not concern ourselves with the taking possession of it as much as we should.

For one thing, we need to value the inheritance for the way in which it has come to us. It has come certainly in God's purpose for us, but it has come through the death of the Lord Jesus. One has often related in the preaching, that in business we used to have to write to persons and tell them that we were sorry to say so-and-so had died, but as a consequence they had come into an inheritance.

They always answered in effect that they were sorry to hear the news, but when was the soonest they could have their inheritance! As far as I know, we never had to write to anyone and say, you have so far taken only half your inheritance, do you not want the rest? So the inheritance has come to us, as I said, through the death of the Lord Jesus. It is a remarkable thing that the rending of the veil took place immediately after He died; in, fact, in Luke's gospel it is

mentioned before He yielded up His spirit, showing the great concern that God had, that as soon as Christ had died, the inheritance should be fully available to all those who would enter in.

We now have boldness to enter into the holiest of all "by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way which he has dedicated for us "through the veil, that is, his flesh", Heb 10: 19, 20. And though going into the holiest is not the only way of looking at the inheritance, I think we would all agree, that to have liberty to go in there and to contemplate the varied glories of Jesus, the way in which He devoted Himself to the will of God and the maintenance of the truth, and every other feature that came out in Him; all those are regions of the inheritance which we need to penetrate into further.

There may be difficulties that hinder us; as I said, there is unbelief which probably accounts for more than we think; there may be weakness with us, but a good deal of our lack of faith is culpable. A believer might say that if I go up into the inheritance I must first be careful of my ordinary life and other matters so that the enemy does not come in somewhere where I do not expect him. Well, one can understand that but John, writing in the presence of antichrists and all kinds of departures, weaknesses and sins, said "he that has been begotten of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him", 1 John 5: 18. Our entering into that may be by measure but in itself it is an absolute statement. We might say also that we have to care for our business and other duties that take up a lot of our time.

No doubt that sphere of things can be viewed as an inheritance on the other side of the Jordan because it is a sphere in which we learn to explore the grace and longsuffering and care of God. As we have been singing, the Lord Jesus has set Himself to care for us, but those things should not be made an excuse for not penetrating into what is more spiritual. And an interesting thing is that while the men of the two and a half tribes were helping the others in conquering the land, we do not hear of anything untoward happening to their wives and families, flocks and herds on the other side of Jordan in the meantime. The only trouble came when those men gave up the fighting and went back. They felt that they needed to have

something to remind them of the unity of the people and they, therefore, put up that great altar. The idea was perhaps right, but it showed a certain weakness with them, yet God was able to maintain the people in whatever inheritance He had given them.

Then as to conflict we might say we do not like the idea of fighting; we are peacefully minded and the idea of warfare is not an attractive one. It was, however, not everyone who had to fight for the inheritance. The daughters of Zelophehad did not have to fight for theirs but obtained it by establishing their right to it which they maintained consistently in the wilderness and in the land. And I think they are a great example of the way in which the sisters can support one another, as those dear women did, in connection with the entering in to their possession. They form a kind of subjective setting of Caleb and his concern for the inheritance; as has often been said of him, the inheritance was in him before he was in the inheritance. He said it was in his heart, and it was certainly in the heart of those daughters of Zelophehad. In any case God had said that He would send the hornets before them and drive the enemies away. In Exodus 23: 28 He says "the hornets", in Joshua 24: 12 He says "the hornet", as if all He had to do was to send one. It shows the power of God, dear brethren, to make a way for us into the inheritance, whatever the latent opposition may be. On the other hand it is essential to be ready to enter into conflict. The enemies, mentioned after this chapter and elsewhere are the various nations that were left. They represent features in the old condition which God in His wisdom has left with us and which we have to learn to overcome in a definite way; and it entails suffering, as we find. Yet it is a very good thing to be fighting on the side that can be always victorious, because God said that He would support them in their fighting in faith for the conquest of the land.

There is therefore every encouragement for us, dear brethren, to go in for the fulness of what the inheritance would represent.

Joshua here was aged and shortly to pass off the scene, which, as we have been taught, suggests something like apostolic energy making way for other features in the ways of God; and we have no

apostles now. But although Joshua's death is mentioned we do not get a record of the death of Caleb, so that he represents the continuing and secret cherishing of the inheritance that would take it up and leave nothing unoccupied. Then Achsah, his daughter, desired a land and was given a southern land, well situated as ours is. We might wonder how we are going to maintain it when we do enter spiritually into it and form a perception of divine things beyond us. Well, the way in which that is done is by the Spirit, because Achsah had the insight to say that she needed springs of water and she was immediately given the upper springs and the nether springs. So it shows that everything is really available for the maintenance of the saints in the full gain of the inheritance.

To describe the inheritance would be beyond one; we often speak about it and its features, and God brings forward certain matters in this book that relate to it. And it is interesting that, although the scripture says more than once that the people were slack in going up to possess the land, it does not say that God took away their right to it. In this very chapter the rest of the land is referred to. Joshua later on (see chap 18) took three men from each tribe to send them up into the land to describe it, so that all should know just what there was to go in for. That, interestingly enough, was just after the tent of meeting was set up in Shiloh. I feel, therefore, that the more we apprehend and practice what is unifying in connection with God's service and testimony, the more God will raise up those who are able to describe and outline some great features of His purposes which we may not have apprehended before. Hence the value of every meeting that we have, fellowship meetings, and indeed every occasion when we come together, so that there might be something fresh brought before us as to the land to whet our appetite for it. We might, of course, say that as there has been a break-up publicly in Christendom it is not possible for us to go up together into the inheritance, as the people had to. Well, God sent a prophet amongst us a fortnight ago and he spoke to us about the tribes at the beginning of the book of Judges going up, Judah saying to Simeon "Come up with me into my lot", Judg 1: 3. I

have thought over that a good deal, that we can say to one another whatever breakdown there may have been, Let us now go up together into the inheritance. Going up into the inheritance will give us a greater idea of what the whole company is, than if we did not do so; just the same as an apprehension of the whole assembly will encourage and urge us to go up together into the inheritance. So that the thing works both ways. The matter with us, therefore, is to have faith in connection with the word of God as it comes to us.

I venture to say these things so that we might all be together in a further penetration of the truth; not be unduly cast down by events that have taken place, difficulties and differences of thought here and there. Let it be our great concern to go up together into what God has set out for us, and what His sovereignty has given too. We are not each given a little piece of the inheritance, but we are all given the whole, and moreover, we are all joint heirs with Christ. There is no thought of our having an inheritance apart from Him, but what we do enjoy is what is related in every aspect of it to the Lord Jesus with whom we are joint heirs. May the Lord bless the word.

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THE CHILDREN'S VALUE

In writing to the believers at Corinth Paul twice told them that they had been "bought with a price". He did not say what that price was or even that it was a great price. It was left to the men, women and children who heard the reading of the letter to find out. No doubt

most of them, if not all, knew already, as we do, that it was at the cost of the precious and shed blood of Jesus. Who can say what the value of that blood is in the sight of God and of His redeemed ones! It is "with the blood of his own" that He has purchased for Himself the assembly which is composed of all believers who have received the Holy Spirit.

Let us remember that in the balances of the holy places - balances far more accurate than any electronic device and fail-free - God weighs both our hearts and our spirits. As to our bodies "by him actions are weighed". Therefore our value for His present use depends upon what we are and not just on what we possess as some may think. Three men once met in the City of London. One said, 'I hear that so-and-so has died: he was worth a lot, how much did he leave?' 'Oh!' said another, 'He left everything, of course'. Said the third, 'Are you sure he left everything? Did he leave his sins or did they go with him to judgment?' Solemn words! But our God does not only value the world as something that His hands have made, with all those in it, but He has loved it so much that He gave His only-begotten Son that all - young or old, poor or rich - who believe on Him may never come into judgment.

Do you ever rebel a little inwardly at the thought of being bought by the Lord Jesus and feel that it hinders you from doing your own will and pleasure? At one time slaves were sold and bought at public markets and often at high prices. In one instance a slave was very indignant at being purchased by a man whom he knew to be a Christian and opposed to slavery. But when his new master told him that he had bought him to set him free, he said, 'You have taken my heart captive! I am your willing servant for ever'. Does he put you to shame?

J.C.Evershed