

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 2

April 1973

CONTENTS

FORMATION OF DEPTH IN OUR SOULS

STOCKTAKING

"RABBONI"

THE CHILDREN'S GAMES

Edited and Published by -

E.C.Burr

50 Red Post Hill, London SE24 9JQ

FORMATION OF DEPTH IN OUR SOULS

J.Renton

1 Samuel 30: 1-8; 2 Samuel 12: 14-23; 15: 25, 30, 32.

We get much interesting detail in the scriptures as to David's history and experiences and the circumstances through which he passed.

There is great variety, and in some instances David rises to a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus; at other times David fails and he sins and is more a type of a believer. Nevertheless he is genuine and he has depth.

David was God's anointed, as we know. He was God's selected and is typical of Christ in that setting. He was anointed three times. First of all in the midst of his brethren, followed by years of suffering and reproach. The Lord was anointed at the Jordan in view of service and in view of suffering, in view of His death and what He would accomplish men. Then David was anointed over Judah in Hebron where he reigned for seven and a half years. Then he was anointed when all the tribes came to Hebron to make him king. The Lord Jesus is spoken of as anointed with the oil of gladness above His companions. This is not in view of suffering but is in view of joy and in view of bringing joy to the heart of God.

The experience at Ziklag was very sorrowful for David and for his men because a great disaster had happened. David was greatly distressed. Just think of what these circumstances were through which he passed with the people so embittered that they spoke of stoning him! But what we learn from this passage the depth there was in David. He goes through the most bitter experience here; he must have gone right down to the bottom in this experience. Then it says "David strengthened himself in Jehovah his God." He had gone right down to the bottom but now he strengthens himself in Jehovah his God. Then things begin to happen. We speak sometimes of touching the bottom in repentance but we are tested as to what *depth* there is with us.

In each of the instances read, David was responsible for the situation. We know what calamity is and what sorrows are. I used to think that the sorrows that have happened amongst us are unparalleled in history because we have brought much of the reproach upon ourselves. Think of the public reproach which we have to face! Are we not humbled that we were responsible for it ourselves? It is not exactly the reproach of Christ. The reproach of Christ is the normal Christian position. The Lord Jesus said that He was hated without a cause (John 15: 25) but when we face facts at the moment some of us could not say that. We are certainly under reproach and we are to blame for a large part of it because we had not represented the reproach of Christ and we departed from the Christian way. In certain conduct that went on among us and by our attitude towards others we are responsible ourselves for much of the reproach. In all these instances David was responsible for the disaster and for the reproach. He had given occasion for the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme (2 Sam 12: 14). We have given cause for persons to reproach us and that causes sorrow. David was responsible here because he and his men had been amongst the Philistines. He had gone to Gath, allied himself with the king there and in fact he had been prepared to go with the Philistines against the people of God. It is true he had been prevented from doing so but he had been prepared to go as far as that. So he would feel he was to blame for the calamity but what you find is that in the discipline of it there was *depth* formed in his soul. He faced it all, he was distressed about it, then he strengthened himself in Jehovah. It brings out me depth there was in David and there will not be depth with us, dear brethren, without facing the responsibility for much of the reproach that has come upon us. No doubt David here had faced the whole situation; he would go over the whole history, why he had fled from Saul and allied himself with Achish, king of Gath, and why he was so involved with the Philistines. He would go over all this in the presence of God and find the root of it all. What do we know about this? We are to know something of it. No doubt David searched his motives as to why he had got into such a position and as doing so depth was formed in him. Luke's gospel speaks about

the man who dug and went deep (Luke 6: 47), not simply that he dug deep but dug and went deep. That is what happened to David, he went deep and as a result you see a fully recovered man. Then things begin to happen: he is like the righteous man who "falleth seven times, and riseth up again" (Prov 24: 16). He strengthened himself in Jehovah his God - it is something inward - a strengthening in his own personal knowledge of God and it produced inward strength. No doubt it involved (speaking in Christian language) the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. No doubt he had previously grieved the Spirit but now he strengthened himself and enquires of Jehovah. From this point there is recovery and from the position of being guilty and responsible he rises to be a type of Christ and recovers all. It shows what is possible, beloved, as we face things and depth is formed in our souls.

Now 2 Samuel 12 follows the grievous sin of which David was guilty in regard of Bathsheba and Urijah. You say 'the same David who had learned depth in his soul, who had known what it was to be with God and God with him?'. Yes: what a sin he sinks into, guilty as to the death of Urijah and in relation to Bathsheba. What a scheming man he became! What a politician! What a sin he sinks into, scheming with Joab for the death of faithful Urijah! How serious it was and here again David was responsible. He is under God's hand in discipline: God says that the child shall certainly die. Does David say 'Well, that is going to happen; I cannot do anything about it.' No, he goes through the experience with God. If he had been a superficial believer he might have just resigned himself to God's action and said, 'the child will certainly die, and that will be that.' But David does not do so; instead he besought God for the child. You see, he has depth and affection in his soul and he fasted. He ought to have fasted in chapter 11 and gone with the army when the conflict was on, but God does not say he was too late to fast now. He respects David's fast. David confessed his sins and God had regard to him. So he goes through the exercise even though the elders of his house do not understand what is going on. He fasted and lay all night on the earth. The elders did not understand the

depth of repentance; they must have been superficial persons, yet David goes on day after day, for seven days. When the child died the exercise was over, but when there was life David went on with the exercise at cost to himself. The elders feared to say when the child was dead. What one may go through in the depth of his soul is mysterious to the superficial mind. Dear brethren, we need to know something about this. If we are to be truly recovered persons, truly revived persons, we need to know something of going through these things with God. Misunderstood by many, David still goes through the matter. In the next verse you find that a child is born of these same parents and Jehovah sends by the hand of Nathan the prophet and called his name Jedidiah, meaning the child is loved in Jehovah. What a result from David's exercises; you can hardly understand it!

But surely it is the result of depth in David's soul. Such is the divine way. Superficial persons can somersault overnight - that does not denote depth. David goes through exercise in a deep way and the result was for the pleasure and glory of God. So David went into the house of Jehovah and worshipped. What a result from the discipline through which he passed! We may often face much in the way of discipline and the Lord does discipline us. Some of our dear brethren know it more than others and we all ought to be with them in the experience of it. How many have lost parents, families, children! God would use this for our discipline, that we might go through it with God and in result be able to go into His house and worship as David did. There are to be results from all we have been through and go through, for the pleasure and glory of God.

In the third scripture, we have David and those with him in public reproach. Jerusalem is taken over by Absalom and David has to flee. Think of the public reproach, the shame of it, that David the rightful king flees when Absalom takes over. Alas, again, David is responsible; he had unrighteously reinstated Absalom and the consequence was that this rebellion took place. Oh, do we feel responsible for the public reproach that has come in on the testimony! Once again this is not exactly the reproach of Christ; it is like the reproach due to our own misdeeds and our failures and our

being caught up in wrong things. So David is responsible but see how he acts! He says to Zadok, "Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I shall find favour in the eyes of Jehovah, he will bring me again, and show me it, and its habitation." It is a man in whom there is some depth of soul. He sends back the ark, and Zadok, Abiathar and others go with it too, in the very city controlled by Absalom. The ark is there, and the priests, and the sons. There was a spot in Jerusalem where the ark was and had you been in its habitation you would not have known there was a rebellion. It is what God has secretly in the midst of the public confusion. We see publicly the confusion complete but in the midst of it all there is a spot where the ark is and where the priests are and the service of God goes on.

David had to face the public position but his heart was where the ark of God was, and his longing was that he might be back where the ark was. Meanwhile he faces the public reproach. He, the true king is in rejection and those with him were in rejection too, going where they might; such is the public position. David goes up by the ascent of the Olives, weeping with his head covered and barefoot. He is feeling the reproach of the whole position and those with him are moving likewise. Yet when he comes to the summit he worshipped God! We would desire to be able to move like this, in some way at least. What we go through should result in a deepening with us. We might say that we were led away but we cannot blame anybody but ourselves. It was lack of depth with us that we were so readily carried away by certain things; we were too superficial. But as depth was found here in David's soul, so it is to be found in our souls. We learn thereby to consider for God and to be with God and to know something of God being with us. "Jehovah is with you while ye are with him" said the Spirit of God through Azariah (2 Chron 15: 2).

The great need is to be with God and with the Lord. We often pray that the Lord might be with us; that is good too but the important thing is that we should be with the Lord. David came to be with God in all these instances we have read; in the disaster at Ziklag, in his exercise over God's dealings in relation to his sin, then in this matter of the rebellion. He arrived at this point in his soul by facing things in depth and the Lord means, I am sure, that we should deepen in our

knowledge of Himself. As we do so we shall deepen in our feelings for Him and for one another, and we shall be increasingly knit together and more fully committed to the service of God.

May it be so, for the Lords Name's sake.

MALVERN

27 January 1973

STOCKTAKING

E.C.Burr

1 Chronicles 22: 14-16; 29: 1-5, 22 joy.

We know that it was in David's mind from a very early time in his life that a suitable place should be found for the ark of God. How he heard of it and how it was spoken of in Ephrathah we do not exactly know. We may infer that it would be the subject of general conversation in his father's house; maybe that was true. Jesse does not shine altogether as one who is consistent with the ark when he first comes on to view, although he is distinguished in that he comes into the end of Ruth, and David is frequently referred to as "the son of Jesse". Therefore there would be ground for thinking that occupation with the ark of God and its suitable resting place was part of the setting within which David was brought up and in which his thoughts would be cultivated and, indeed, thoughts would be exchanged.

He lived a long life, he 'was old and full of days' (1 Chron 23: 1), indicating I suppose that at the end of his life there was a maturity and distinctiveness which represented the aggregation of everything that had been formed in him day by day. He is a man like Jacob who at the end of his life speaks of "the days of the years of my sojourning". Jacob says that they do not attain to the days of the years of the life of his fathers (Gen 47: 9). I suppose he was comparing himself with Abraham and Isaac, yet Jacob appears there as a man who has greater dignity than the greatest dignitary on earth in his day, a man who is measuring himself spiritually and who is able to assess what he is and think of himself in the spiritual realm as a man who perhaps has not arrived at the greatest growth, yet in relation to things of this world he reminds us that the least in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than anyone in this present order of things. So that Jacob transcends Pharaoh, and David comes to the end of his life old and full of days as if the accumulation of what he had been growing in with God was now manifested in him.

And at the end of his life when David is seeing the possibility of the fructification of things that he had set his heart to he gives himself to perhaps the greatest stocktaking that has ever been set out in a man: clearly for him it is a time of stocktaking when he is able to look back and see what accumulation there is from all that he has been through during this long life. A man who had accumulated all this wealth that David had accumulated was clearly a man who never let an opportunity go by of acquiring something as substance in relation to the thoughts that were governing him all the time. If there was gold or silver available, David laid hold of it in relation to the house of his God. You do not acquire a million talents of silver by letting opportunities go by, but David had a thousand, thousand talents of silver. You will not acquire that kind of substance unless you have before you some distinctive object to which your life spiritually is being devoted.

We are not told, from day to day, that David was putting by gold and silver and brass and iron nor that he said, 'One thing I must see to is that I have a storehouse for all this wealth that I have begun to accumulate for the house of my God'. When he comes to the end of his life, in this great stocktaking, we see what he has actually acquired. I think it suggests to us that this substance, for us, must speak of what is spiritual, and therefore it reminds us perhaps to do some stocktaking ourselves, to see what we have acquired. That perhaps is one thing that we are inclined to let slip by. We go on through our circumstances, our families and our businesses, the particular circumstances in which God has set us, or allowed us to be; we take account of smallness and weakness, even loneliness, where we may be, and we just go on from one day to another. But, beloved, let there come a day when we take stock and see what actually is in the ledger to our name, whether there is gold or silver, brass, iron, precious stones, timber, marble - all these things - see if they are there.

It appears by comparison with chapter 22 that what David speaks of in the first part of 1 Chronicles 29 are the things that he had acquired in the course of his affliction: in chapter 22 he speaks

of what he had prepared in his affliction for the house of Jehovah, and it seems to me, beloved, that it might be well for us all to consider some stocktaking as to what has been acquired for God out of affliction. Affliction has come upon us in our day to a degree that we would never have anticipated. If say fifteen years ago, you had been asked to say how you thought things in the testimony would progress, what would you said? I think I would have said, 'Well, the brethren seem to be getting on, and going on, and we have a rich heritage of ministry and of the truth; there seems nothing to hinder progress'. But, beloved, in the interval there has been affliction such as has not previously been known. I need not go into the detail but the bearing of affliction in relation to the testimony of God has come home directly by now to every one of us: nobody has escaped it.

There is probably hardly anybody here who does not find at the present time that fellowship which they had once enjoyed with someone or another - perhaps in their own family - has been interrupted. If I may just interpose a word, I like to speak just of fellowship being interrupted with those from whom we have had to separate for a time. We look forward to the possibility that fellowship will be resumed and look to the Lord that He may work in recovery, but for the meantime fellowship is interrupted. Affliction has come upon us in that sense. Affliction, of course, comes upon us in the other ways in which God allows the children of men to be tried with illness and sickness and other circumstantial things. In the mercy of God, the brethren have in recent years been largely preserved from the affliction of such things as unemployment. Yet there was a time which most of us can remember when that affliction was very, very acute.

But, beloved, when you look back, can you say that out of my affliction I have prepared a hundred thousand talents of gold? And a million talents of silver, brass and iron without weight - too much, even to be able to assess. Have you taken stock, say, of the last fifteen years? But most of us here are older than that: probably the majority have perhaps fifty years at least that they can look back on. And God has not allowed the life of any one that He has to deal with

to be without affliction of some kind, at some time. Therefore, take stock. Consider. Have you any gold as a result of that? Have you acquired any gold in the period that is conventionally spoken of as 'the last ten years'? That period, beloved, has not been all to waste. It has not been all loss. Out of that period there should be gold and silver and brass and iron and wood - we won't forget the wood - and onyx stones and glistening stones and white marble in abundance.

Now how much of these things have you in stock? Suppose you went and spent the afternoon and sat before the Lord as David did. Could you say to the Lord that out of the past time I have acquired some fresh knowledge of God, gold for things of gold; I have acquired some new knowledge of God that I did not have before. Just take time to see what you have acquired. Weigh it up.

Think what spiritual substance you have now that you did not have at some previous time, no matter what time you like to take but consider. whether now, out of affliction, you have gold for things of gold. Have you something of God that is for God?

As I think of David's affliction and what he says that he has accumulated out of his affliction, I think back over some of the occasions in his history. I think of the time, for instance, when he took the wife of Urijah. Psalm 51 shows that out of that David had gold for things of gold. He will offer "burnt offering, and whole burnt offering" on the altar; gold for things of gold. Silver for things of silver - a man who is deepened in the sense of what Christ is as made to us redemption (1 Cor 1: 30). Think of a million talents of silver.

Could it be that some reflection back on the history of one's own life leads one to appreciate increasingly and to acquire wealth in relation to what Christ is as redemption, made to us from God redemption.

You go back over your life and think that it has not been a time of unmixed perfection. I daresay all of us would have to say that. There have been incidents in our lives on which all of us look back with sorrow and mourn over, things that to say the least you wish you had never done. But, have you, out of them, acquired silver - discovered that Christ was made to you just what you needed, that He became the basis on which every wrong thing that had entered

into your life could be put right, not to your satisfaction only, but to the satisfaction of God. And as you go back and reflect you acquire silver for things of silver, that is to say a deeper knowledge of Christ as the One on whom the whole system of things for God rests as Redeemer. Israel awaits the day when it will know Him as Redeemer. The creation awaits the day when it will know Him as Redeemer, but we know Him as Redeemer now and we should be enriched with silver every day. As you look back over your life you should be finding fresh things in it which lead you to a new appreciation of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. At night you reflect over the day and see what has entered into it; things for which you have needed the advocacy of Christ; things you have failed in - in relation to your work, or your wife, or your children, or something else - that calls for your revival in the knowledge of Christ as Redeemer: and you acquire silver for things of silver as you close another day. It is for utensils and candlesticks; that is what David intends it for; but it is essential that we acquire silver for things of silver out of our affliction.

If you look back over assembly history of recent years do you bear in relation to it any sense at all of the iniquity of the sanctuary? It would be easy to say, 'Oh, I was not there'. I could not say that, but the iniquity of the sanctuary involves that you bear things as if you were there. And as you bear the iniquity of the sanctuary in your own soul you acquire, out of affliction, silver for things of silver. You are driven back to Christ as the only One who has provided a means by which God can go on with you. In Psalm 51 you discover a man who is acquiring silver for things of silver, a man who desires to be washed from his iniquity and delivered from blood-guiltiness is a man who in his sorrow is acquiring silver for things of silver out of affliction.

Therefore, let us take stock, beloved. Have you a greater appreciation of Christ as Redeemer today than you have had at any time? You should have. Every believer should have that. I know that the great occupation of the Spirit at the present time is that saints should be secured in the light of the assembly for the heart of

Christ, but you will not come into that unless you have some sense of what He is as Redeemer - and, of the things that are quantified, there is more silver than anything else. Therefore are you out of the affliction of the past richer in regard to what Christ is as your Saviour today, than you have ever been? That is what is expected: that is what David was.

If you think of him again in regard to his numbering the people, you find a man who is providing gold for things of gold - (again he offers up burnt offerings and peace offerings), a man who is in the light of what the silver is. He would rather fall into the hands of Jehovah than into the hands of man. Why? Because if you fall into the hands of Jehovah there is a Saviour there. And you grow in the sense of redemption and acquire silver even out of self-inflicted afflictions. David need not have had the exercises of Psalm 51; he need not have coveted another man's wife; he need not have disported himself on the roof when the rest of the people had gone out to war. If he had done what he ought to have done as king he would have been saved. It was a self-inflicted affliction, yet out of it there came gold and silver and brass and iron.

When a man says to God, "that Thou mayest ... be clear when Thou judgest" (Ps 51: 4), he is acquiring brass for things of brass. When a man says, "it is I that have sinned ... but these sheep, what have they done? " (2 Sam 24: 7), he is acquiring brass for things of brass. He is bringing Judgment to bear on himself in relation to things in which he has been involved.

I think that the iron, while it is prescribed earlier in 1 Chronicles as being for nails and for copings, involves that something firm and substantial and permanent is arrived at in the soul as a result of having come through affliction.

Therefore I venture to urge the brethren to see what kind of stock they have acquired as a result of the history through which they have been. Are you consciously enriching the house of God's a result of afflictions of the past time? Are you just thankful to have got through them? If all we felt has been relief our reactions have been

superficial; what is needed is that out of affliction gold and silver and brass and iron come, so that there is more for the house of God.

The Lord does not lightly afflict the children of men. If He afflicts them or allows them to be afflicted it is with a view to this kind of substance being provided for the beautifying of His own house.

When David refers to these things in chapter 29, he does not have only the gold and silver and brass and iron and timber, he has "onyx stones and stones to be set, glistening stones and of diverse colours and all manner of precious stones". Think of the beauty that is brought out of affliction. I do not think that these are the things that he gave in his affection: I think he gave them out of his affliction. And as you look round on the saints you can take account of "stones, and stones to be set", stones that you would not in any way wish to be without. "Stones to be set", things that have come through in substance in the souls of the saints, that are going to have a place that will never be lost, that cannot be taken out of their place. One thinks of the sorrows and the burdens, the trials, the closeness home with which afflictions have come to many of the saints, and you see now stones to be set; stones that are going to add beauty and adornment and even light, stones however, that are not going to be taken out of their position. At present there are relatively few of us and you feel an attachment to every one that is still in fellowship, it does not matter where they are local. It is not difficult actually to know everybody who is in fellowship, and you regard each one as a stone to be set, that is to say someone to whose position in the fellowship you yourself attach great value and which you are not going to see taken away. So that if somebody falls out of the testimony now we would feel it. If somebody fell out of the testimony in Tunbridge Wells we would feel it in London. If a saint is taken to be with Christ in the diminished situation of the day, we feel it ourselves. A beloved aged brother may be taken, or an aged sister and you think that the Lord has finished His work in them and you triumph in it. But, you feel the sense of loss, whether you are local or not. Why? Because David had 'stones to be set', and there is a stone that you will miss if it is not in its position. And glistening

stones, that is to say stones that sparkle and are alive, in which you see the animation of the Spirit, all the result of affliction. It is not a time for us, beloved, to come among the saints, even in the smallness of the day, as if we were depressed and overcast by things: be in your place as a glistening stone.

I do not go over all these other things. I would just like to say a word about the wood because I think it is essential that out of the affliction there should come something that corresponds to the humanity of the Lord Jesus. That expression has been abused, and we should feel that as one of the iniquities that we have to bear. But there should come through something that has the moral characteristics that were seen in Him. We could all test ourselves by this. Consider Luke 4 and say, 'Has anyone ever wondered at the words of grace that came out of my mouth?' It would be a feature of Jesus, that words of grace came out of your mouth. Has anyone ever found in you compassion, or kindness, or tenderness? These are displays of the humanity of Jesus; "wood for things of wood".

I have noticed before in looking at this chapter that David said to the people, "Who is willing to offer to Jehovah this day?" He had prepared gold and silver and brass and iron and precious stones and wood, and the people offered; but nobody offered wood. In verse 7 they offered gold and silver and brass and iron and stones but nobody brought wood and therefore Solomon had to send away to Hiram to get wood. Does it not test us as to whether formation in the humanity of Jesus has actually been arrived at as a result of affliction, or whether it is missing so that it has to be sent away for. It will not be deficient in the end; there is a vast supply of it in another world, to be brought in from Lebanon; it may have to be floated down on the rafts but there is an unfailing supply of it. The tree of life is there, as Mr Darby says, 'to its own rich soil transplanted'; it is there, the tree of life. But what should be looked for are the features of that kind of humanity in those who have been through affliction.

Now, beloved, David is not finished when he has summed up what has come through affliction. I do urge the saints again to check what has come through in them as the result of affliction, not to

become introspective, but just to be able to say, 'Out of all the history I have acquired this. I know God better in this respect. I know Christ better in this respect. My judgment is better in this respect. And I have something more secure in myself in this respect. And I have something for adornment and for beauty in this respect'. But then, having arrived at all this wealth in affliction David says, "in my affection ... I have given of my own property of gold and silver ... over and above". That is to say he has given something that in one sense was rightly his own, but he will use it in relation to the house and the service of God.

Miss Havergal's hymn comes into my mind:

'Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee,
Take my moments and my days;
Let them flow in ceaseless praise,
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love'.

"In my affection ... I have given of my own property". What David gave in his affection was, if one may use the word reverently, a bonus towards the house of God. What he acquired in his affliction was all being set aside day by day and accumulated in view of the central object of his thoughts. And when he has accumulated all that he says, 'Now I will add to it. In my affection, because I love the house of God, I will give this as well. It is my own' (and nobody could say that he should not keep it if he had wanted ,to), 'but I will give it because I have such affection for the house of God'.

Well, beloved, who is giving things out of affection? I think the saints are giving things out of affection for the house of God. They give their time: perhaps nearly a hundred here this morning, having given what was in a sense their own, a Saturday morning, in relation to the house of God. We do need to be reminded continually to keep our priorities right in regard to these things to see that it is much more important to be relating ourselves to what is concerned with the up-building of the house of God than for instance the up-building of

our own houses. They are to be held in order, and held as regulated by God and in regard to His whole system of things, but what is involved in being together with the saints is something that has priority . The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob (Ps 87: 2). Therefore, we would want to be there.

They also, to speak simply, give their money. The way in which the collections and the special collections are sustained among the saints shows that in affection for the house of God there is this what is "over and above" in relation to what is of God and for His house. So David gives all this.

The last verse which I read was to show that even then David was not finished. He has taken stock and out of his affliction he has this vast wealth - probably no one has ever been richer than David was in this chapter - and he has given all that for the house of God. Then he adds this extra benefit and brings in out of his affection gold and silver. He urges other people that they might follow his example. But even then he has not finished. Even then he has still something in current power flowing out of him for the adornment of the saints and the benefit and blessing of the people seems to me that David was not content with saying, 'Well, I have done my bit'.

He says that to Solomon, 'I have done all this, now you add to it'. It is interesting to note that he says that in the context of things that would relate to his affliction. 'You add to it, out of your affliction you bring something as well. Here he says, 'Out of my affection I have given this, who is willing to offer today?' David does not say, 'Well, now I have set all this on, we can go home'. Oh no! What David is then going to have is something currently, today - something fresh for God today. "They sacrificed sacrifices to Jehovah, and offered up burnt offerings to Jehovah on the morrow after that day; a thousand bullocks a thousand rams, a thousand lambs, and their drink offerings and sacrifices in abundance". David had not finished, his wealth was still there. There was still wealth for today, not just the accumulation of all the past, all this great stock that he had already taken account of, he still has something more, something for

today, something new, still something to add to it, still something to offer to God today, just as yesterday, just as in all those past many years, he still has something fresh again today. "And they ate and drank before Jehovah on that day with great joy".

I suppose what they ate was mainly peace offerings, and what they were eating therefore was the token of the general state of prosperity. Think of the foundation for it being laid in affliction and then it being added to by way of affection, and you say, 'Well, think of all that great wealth that we've had'. 'Oh', but David says, 'You don't have to stop there. There will still be something fresh today. If you are here tomorrow, there will still be something fresh tomorrow.

There will again be burnt offerings and all these offerings and all these bullocks.

What a great occasion! The books were not ruled off when David had taken stock. He was back in trade, he was back active in producing fresh things for God, back again producing not only something for God but something for the saints. So that there is no sense, beloved, in which, having come through assembly conflict, we in any way rest on our laurels, even if we had any. And we do not think, 'Oh well, we have been through this, and we have been through that, and, now we think about it, we have acquired so and so'. What is there for today in addition? What is there that is fresh? What is there that is new? What is there that is going to delight both God and men? "They ate and drank before Jehovah on that day with great joy". Affliction still there? Oh, yes, the affliction still underlay it. Affliction was not ended for everybody. Affliction would still go on, and it will go on for us: until the Lord comes, affliction will go on. But it is transcended in the sense of this great stock having been taken and what is current brought out.

We need to see that the Lord still has what is current; He has, as it says here, a current of "great joy" for His people.

Well, beloved, let us be in it. The foundation for it is wealthy. The mass that has been acquired out of affliction transcends, I think, even what is added out of affection. And then, as it were, to top all

that are the beasts, and the food, and the sacrifices, and the great joy that is brought in for the people.

As I say, this is a stock taking time; a time when we would do well to pause and consider what have we acquired in the history through which we have been, but not to allow the stocktaking to preclude the present great joy in the eating and drinking that the Lord is giving us. The Lord is giving us rich things at the present time. You would hardly need to be told that. The liberty that there is to enquire into the truth when all the brethren are much of the same mind is something that we have not experienced, hardly in the lifetime of some of us. Certainly in the intelligent assembly. In the lifetime of many of us there have been cross-currents, and doubts and questionings, and words behind the hand even when beloved servants who were sustained by the Lord were ostensibly being supported. But, beloved, the Lord has brought us through into a state where there is a consistent outlook and frame of mind among the saints. And it provides great opportunity for getting into the truth, and the Lord is using that opportunity. Therefore we would be sure that we are eating and drinking before Him with great joy in what He is giving at the present moment.

But that moment would never have taken place if David had not first referred to his affliction, and his affection, and then brought in this current enjoyment as a kind of crowning touch.

Well, beloved, may the Lord just help us, both to be renewed in what is present, but to be renewed in it as discovering, freshly, wealth that may have come out of a period that has been sorrowful and sad. So that we may be set forward to be sustained in sobriety in relation to everything that may yet be before us, but exuberant, may I say so. in relation to the current testimony of God, finding that it has a good foundation and that there is something to which we can add. May the Lord help us in it, for His Name's sake.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

30 December 1972

"RABBONI"

James S. Gray

Mark 10: 49-52; John 20: 16-18.

This word "Rabboni" seems to involve some particular link with the Lord which is open to each one of us, and the sorrows of the recent weeks and months seem to me to point, at least in some cases to lack of this strong personal attachment to the Saviour, to the Lord. If we have this definite, personal bond with our Lord we will be held.

It seems that on this occasion, going out from Jericho, there may have been two blind men but the point for Mark is that each one has to have his or her personal link with the Lord. Dear brethren, there would be less turning aside I believe if we had this bond of attachment to Him and submission to His authority. The question is raised as to what is to be done, "What wilt thou that I shall do to thee?", and the blind man addresses the Lord as "Rabboni", then it says, "he saw immediately, and followed him in the way". We must be convinced as to the truth that there is one way, there is one way for all Christians, and we are responsible to be in it. It is a way of suffering but it is open to us, and it is the only way. It is not a way which involves sorrow all the time, although sorrows are in it; and for Jesus, dear brethren, it was a way involving sorrow; a way of love, but a way of sorrow. What a comfort it would be to the Lord to find such a one on the way of suffering, prepared to submit to His word and follow. In fact, it seems as if it is an almost spontaneous movement of the man, that, having received his sight, he follows. So I thought of this section as involving our submission to the Lord in relation to the course of the testimony. That is an important thing for us, especially in view of all the history we have had of departure, and confusion, and turning aside, that we should have a clear link established with the Lord in relation to His movements in the testimony and be prepared to follow. This man has something to ask for, and there are needs in the testimony which the Lord is able to meet.

When we come to Mary, the question is not so much one of meeting a need in the testimony, but of personal attachment to the Lord being developed in relation to His interests. The Lord is looking for those who are available, in submission to Himself, as having had experience in the testimony no doubt, but as available to Him for what He has in mind. With the man in Mark 10, his name is not used by the Lord, but with Mary, the Lord addresses her by name. There is the other side of our intimacy with the Lord, dear brethren. We should be concerned about that - I am for myself - that we should have some understanding with the Lord for ourselves in relation to matters in the testimony and in relation to His interests, too. I believe that if we simply submit ourselves to Him without stressing the side of our need in the testimony, that the Lord will open up everything to us. If we do not bring forward our needs prominently, the Lord is able to bring in the way of progress, the way of movement upward, the way of entrance into eternal things. So she says simply, "Rabboni, which means Teacher". She has not anything to ask about as to the testimony, but the Lord has something to say to her in view of upward movement. And I believe, dear brethren, that the Lord has not finished speaking to us as to upward movement, and we should therefore be concerned as to submission to Him in view of that. What a message this was for this woman! "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father" - the elevation of the Lord's thoughts for His own, immediately, in resurrection. How wonderful! But if we are to enter into them, it requires that there should be this personal submission to Him. So I feel the importance of this, that we should not come along to the gatherings with indifference or with any sense of being out of things, but we should be here as having had our personal transactions with the Lord, being in relation to Him as we: are here and looking for His Word; not only desiring that our needs as to the testimony and the course of it should be met, and He will surely do that, but that our sight should be in the direction of His opening up things according to His own mind, which He is ready to do, and there is no limit as to what He may lead us into.

LONDON

6 February 1973

THE CHILDREN'S GAMES

I often wonder whether any of the children of Judea knew that Jesus was watching them play. Of course, it is right for children to play together. Indeed, when God gives salvation and peace on earth to the Jews, the streets of Zion will be full of boys and girls playing together (Zechariah 8: 5).

But I am sorry to say that the children of Palestine did not always play their games properly and fairly, and Jesus saw that too.

They played in the marketplaces, but often some of them had to complain at the others for not doing as they should. "We have piped to you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept" they said (Luke 7: 32).

And the Lord Jesus gave a lesson from this. The grown-ups, too, were not doing what they should. John the Baptist had come and the people thought him so severe that he must be a wicked man. But really he was the forerunner making way for Jesus. And not only did they refuse John, but they refused Jesus Himself, and complained because He was a friend of sinners. But the sinners did not complain: they loved Him. Do you?

J.C.Evershed