

A
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THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE SERVICE OF GOD

Ephesians 3: 14-21; Galatians 4: 6, 7.

J.S.P. We had a distinct impression this morning of the way the Holy Spirit seems to have part all through the service. We started with the hymn, 'While for this moment, O Lord, we have waited, Oft has the Comforter spoken of Thee' (hymn 4) and finished with the hymn 'Strengthened with might by the Father's own Spirit' (hymn 129) in relation to the fulness of praise to God. These thoughts rather strengthened my impression that there might be some help in enquiring into the way in which the Holy Spirit is presented in Scripture, particularly in relation to this great matter of the service of God. The scripture in Ephesians sums up the whole matter because it leads on to glory to God "in the assembly in Christ Jesus", while Galatians refers particularly to the liberty we have in addressing God as having the Spirit of His Son in our hearts, crying Abba, Father.

E.C.B. "Who worship by the Spirit of God" (Phil 3: 3) is characteristic I suppose of 'us'. It would bear on your enquiry.

J.S.P. I think so.

E.C.B. You are not just concerned about that part of the service in which we address the Spirit objectively, as known to us, but about the way in which He helps us in preparing ourselves for the occasion and then sustains us in power in every aspect of it from 'calling Me to mind' onwards; I suppose that would require the Spirit in us.

J.S.P. I was thinking, to begin with, of the way in which we would have part in addressing the Spirit in the service of God; but what you have said is, I think, important, that we should be able to recognise the service of the Spirit and His presence in relation to every phase of the service of God.

A.J.E.W. It may confirm this that we had an affecting address to the Spirit this morning, speaking of the Father's Spirit, the Spirit of God's Son, the Spirit of God and the Spirit in us; it seemed to remind us peculiarly of the great extent of the Spirit's connection with the

service and, if I could put my own word to it, the infinite adaptability of the power and service of the Spirit to every part of what we engage in in the service of God .

H.A.H . I think it was our experience too - the suggestions as to the part the blessed Spirit has in relation to the Father's feelings in relation to the Son and in the affection of the Lord Jesus and His own joy in responding to the Father's love, and the way the blessed Spirit comes :into all that.

E.P. And the way that the Spirit serves so that there might be decisiveness in our committal to what is for the heart of Christ. I think the Spirit of God is calling for this decisiveness of love for Christ.

H.A.H. I wondered in relation to the Lord's day particularly, whether it begins with becoming in the Spirit on the Lord's day as John experienced it.

C.G.H . How does the service of the Spirit relate to the peculiar place that the Lord has in the service of God and the way in which the Lord not only looks for something for His own heart, but is concerned that the Father should be worshipped and that we should have some impression of the glory and greatness of God?

E.C.B. I think we shall find as we enquire that the Spirit enters into all those things. We cannot touch anything spiritual apart from the Holy Spirit and all that we touch in the service of God is essentially spiritual. Hence the Holy Spirit seems to me to pervade it all.

C.H. Is not the Spirit connected very closely with the spirit of the believer?

E.C.B. Yes, I wondered therefore whether what Mr Pugh touched on, as to the Spirit entering in a preparatory way into our coming to the service, did not link with Romans 8 and the Spirit there as leading us, as we say, in the wilderness. In that chapter the Spirit is peculiarly linked with the spirit of the believer.

C.H. And there, do you think, His activity is presented normally? In Romans the believer cries, but in Galatians the Spirit cries, because

of the abnormality of the Galatian state.

E.C.B. Therefore being able to touch being "in the Spirit on the Lord's day" would flow readily out of Romans 8 which looks towards the world to come and to redemption, which will be introduced distinctively by the day of the Lord. But the Spirit would take us in our feelings and in our own spirits as you say. Mr Darby says it is not always possible to distinguish between the small 's' and the capital 'S'. But all that would help us as entering in Spirit into what belongs to the Lord's day.

A.J.E.W. Is it not of moment that that point is brought out in reference to John? Being in Spirit on the Lord's day is brought out in relation to John, that is a seasoned disciple: not to shut anyone of us out of it, but rather to show that the Spirit is very closely connected there with the development of the work of God in a man, which touches what we are speaking about - our spirit.

C.H. It is not just the fact stated, but he became in the Spirit on the Lord's day. It stands connected with what was said.

E.C.B. It touches the question of our ability to enter into that order of things. The cry in Galatians emerges out of the doctrinal disorder and misrepresentation of the gospel and John's becoming in the Spirit on the Lord's day is over against all the chaos in government that is around him, as if the cry of the Spirit and our becoming in Spirit are a way out of whatever disorder there may be, doctrinal or administrative.

W.J.W. Is that what we speak of as our privilege? The Lord's day is something distinctive, different from every other day of the week. That would be the privilege side that we are able to enter into by the Spirit, which is really our eternal and proper portion.

C.H. Does it not bear on what has been said about the state of the individual? The Lord's day is largely concerned with the individual, but the Lord's day can become the first day of the week, and that is really what we are at, the height of things that belongs to the first day of the week.

E.C.B. I think it is important for us to relate our thoughts to the first day of the week, because while John became in Spirit on the Lord's day and we get impressions from that as to what we may touch on the first day of the week, it is very much connected with His dominical rights as about to put everything right in the world, is it not, as if John entered into what that was in his spirit already? Later he says, "Immediately I became in the Spirit" (Rev 4: 2) as if that was not quite the same thing to him. But the reference in chapter 1 is in relation to the dominical rights of Christ mainly, is it not?

C.H. Quite so. The Lord's word to the woman of Samaria was that the Father be worshipped in spirit and truth, as though God is effecting something in the believer that can respond in worship, but it is the inwards that are affected, not just the mind.

E.C.B. What the Lord says there is very profound, because He says "God is a spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in spirit", John 4: 24. 'In truth' involves the moral side I think. But God is a spirit and you must worship Him in spirit. Hence we must be ready and prepared for entrance into things that belong to the Spirit, must we not? You may have something more in mind as to the preparatory side of this.

J.S.P. It impresses me as being very important. I was thinking of what has just been said as to the way in which it speaks of John, that John became in the Spirit, as if there is something leading up to it.

So the way we gather together at the Supper on the Lord's day flows from exercises we have been carrying during the week in which the Holy Spirit has been available to us and one would desire to know more of what it is to make use of Him in that regard.

E.C.B. The Spirit is a great stay to us in all our daily life, provided we seek to be with God - the Spirit is not with us in sin - but He is also an outlet from it. I think the more we experience the outlet, the more ready we are for the Supper and God's service.

M.J.W. I feel the need myself and collectively that there should be ability to concentrate the mind. The more we can do that, the more we will be able to get free of the state in which we are and be carried

away in a right sense. We need quietness and composure for that so that our mind is concentrated. If that is so collectively it would give great power to the meeting.

E.C.B. I am sure that is right: I think probably we all feel the need for more of that concentration in quietness during the week. And as we come together for the Supper the emblems help to concentrate our minds, so that they become focused and we have an ability in the Spirit to exclude other than that which is really needed if the Lord is to be 'called to mind'.

E.P. Did you say that the Lord's day is connected with the individual?

C.H. Very largely, I think.

E.P. Would you explain that, please.

C.H. That is the setting in which it is in the scripture; that is I respect the day and keep it for Him, that is my outlook, but the inside privileges belong to the first day of the week, because that is something entirely new. The first day of the week is the beginning of a new order of things altogether, it seems to me, but I think what precedes it and is what is in mind is how we regard the day personally. It is His day, and it is His Supper.

E.P. Would it then be necessary for us individually to accord the Lord the place that is supreme in regard of our whole manner of life during the previous preparation time, so that the Holy Spirit would be free with us. If we fail to give the Lord His place, we cannot expect the Spirit to link on with that, can we?

J.S.P. I have often been challenged in relation to the hymn that I quoted, 'While for this moment, O Lord, we have waited, Oft has the Comforter spoken of Thee'. We must be available to Him to hear what He is going to say to us in that regard, must we not?

C.E.H. Why is it said to a woman, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them", John 20: 17?

E.C.B. I think Mary is presented there as one who was governed by intense affection for Christ. We comment on her lack of intelligence, but I think the Lord soon put that right. She was governed by intense affection and we would keep before us the need for affection for the Father and the Son and the Spirit continually so that They become an object to us. But what the Lord said to Mary, which He has opened up for us through ministry, has given great fulness to God's service. The Lord in what He says to Mary does not mention the Spirit, but I think it is only in the Spirit that we can apprehend "My Father and your Father" and "My God and your God".

C.R.B. Does the discernment of the Spirit's service really flow out of the recognition of the greatness of His person?

E.C.B. Yes; that is fundamental and a truth that the Lord has recovered to us and which we cling to.

A.H.M. I was going to ask in connection with the service of the Spirit throughout the service, which is the subject of our enquiry, whether that would show how appropriate it is that the Spirit should have a place in our worship?

E.C.B. Yes, I think what has just been said would establish that for us, that the Spirit's service is so closely related to the greatness of His person. The more we prove the gain of His service, the more we shall be directed to Him in worshipful acknowledgement of His greatness. We need to touch worshipping the Spirit on account of who He is, not merely on account of His service to us.

C.H. The point as to the greatness of the Spirit highlights, do you think, the conflict as to the Spirit, worshipping the Spirit, speaking to Him and singing to Him, but it really was settled by the recognition that being who He was, having deity, He had a right to be worshipped.

E.C.B. That is to say He is God and we cannot apprehend in any sense what His service is unless we understand that He is God, can we, because His service would not be possible unless He were God? One of the aspects of what Mr Welch touched on before as to the Spirit's adaptability is that He is in us as the Spirit of adoption,

but then He serves us in many other ways too. He never ceases to serve us as the Holy Spirit, known by that title.

A.J.E.W. The sense I have increasingly at the moment is that recognition of the Spirit, and the experience of the Spirit in this sense, is to lead into great wealth in the service of God before the assembly is translated. I believe we should be expectant of that and be preparing ourselves for it. I have thought a good deal of David going in and sitting *before* Jehovah (2 Sam 7: 18-29). There is no actual reference to the Spirit there, but surely in its application to us it would involve that a man is going in before God in the gain of the Spirit's service and reflecting, not only over his own discipline and course thus far, but the grand scope of what God has in His thoughts to secure. I wonder if we do that enough.

E.C.B. That is a realm into which we can only go by the Spirit, is it not? I was reflecting a little while ago too, whether when David says, "I will love thee, O Jehovah, my strength", (Ps 18: 1), that is not an address to the Spirit, or would be in our day.

C.H. In that section quoted in 2 Samuel as to David , he addresses God by quite a number of titles showing the expansive way the Spirit would help us to take in the great range of God's thoughts.

A.J.E.W. David had remarkable point in his mind. He had conceived the thought of a house for God and His rest. He had to be adjusted as to his own part in it, but he conceived the thought. Where did he get it from? Is not this an allusion to what in our time answers to the service of the Spirit? Who sows in our souls a concern that God should have a dwelling entirely suited to Him?

C.H. Has not attention been called to the need of spiritual abstraction and is not that the point, that you sit in the meeting, perhaps at the Supper, and the Spirit gives you ability to abstract yourself from things which can be very distracting but you are sensitive now as to the service of God and your only concern is to move in the Spirit sensitively in the recognition of who He is and the reverence that is due to Him, so that these things might be a reality.

E.P. Does that depend upon resolution of mind or the actual service of a divine Person, this abstraction from what is circumstantial, and preoccupation, and that kind of thing?

C.H. It seems to me it is the help that the Spirit gives, that He can free from pressure of circumstances to be engaged with what really is before us, which, as was said earlier, is a wholly spiritual thing We have to get used to what is wholly spiritual, because eternity will be just that.

A.J.E.W. Is it appropriate to refer to the way that the scripture we read brings it in, "To be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man"; that is we need power. It is not just strengthened, but strengthened with power, and it is in the inner man. It is not exactly the outward man that needs it; that side has to be dealt with, but the inner man is referred to to emphasise the spiritual thought, is it not?

J.S.G. Does the fact that it comes in in the context of earnest prayer on the part of the apostle bring in the side of desire on our side?

A.J.E.W. And it is earnest prayer in relation to an actual company of saints in a locality in which God had wrought, which shows that the real, living operation of the matter is in mind, not just the light of the truth governing it.

C.H. It says it "works in us", not merely for us, but in us.

E.P. I understand that it is the power of God. I was thinking of what Mr Byng said about who the Person is, so that there is no limit really, is there?

J.S. Do you think therefore that the expression of David in 2 Samuel 23 is the more helpful for us, in that he begins with the Spirit of Jehovah. He relates himself to other persons of the Godhead we may say, but he starts with the "Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me, And his word was on my tongue". Then later on he brings in the "morning without clouds; When from the sunshine, after rain, the green grass springeth from the earth". I suppose that would bring us in in relation to the Spirit of God in His operations. But David speaks of himself in connection with the Spirit of Jehovah.

E.C.B. David seems to have understood then what it was to be what we speak of as a vessel of the Spirit . "The Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me". And he looks forward to what we would understand as the Lord's day when the government will be in the hand of Christ. "The ruler among men shall be just, Ruling in the fear of God". But David was conscious that the Spirit was speaking by him. Whether we touch that at all in the service of God, I would like to enquire.

J.S. I remark on that because I believe we do. I believe that it is given expression amongst us that even as David looked forward in his spirit to what will transpire in the coming day in its actuality, we are carried away in a similar manner by the Spirit at the present time in the enjoyment of what is to be actually our portion.

E.C.B. This is the distinction between what we do by the Spirit and what the Spirit may do by us, and whether we touch in ourselves the Spirit doing something by us would be an interesting question, I think.

C.H. I must say it raised a question in my mind as we were assembled for the Supper this morning, as we approached the time of the Spirit with a hymn. I thought what material has the Spirit of God to make use of in the service of God? It is a question, not merely of what He has done for us, but what He has done in us. That is the marvel, I believe, of the Spirit's work at the present time, that there is something substantial in the saints which goes back to God in worship.

E.C.B. I am sure that is right, to have the sense of the Spirit having taken over is a very powerful experience.

W.E.E. I was going to enquire as to the Spirit's service in relation to the new covenant. We have been told, and no doubt rightly, that it is not the Father's supper nor the Spirit's supper; it is the Lord's supper: but in connection with the new covenant the Spirit seems to have some place. I would like some help as to that. 2 Corinthians 3 is in relation to the Spirit, the Spirit's service, and that is connected with the new covenant. In relation to the cup the new covenant comes before us every Lord's day. How far does the Spirit enter into that,

not perhaps in an objective way but the love of God "is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us", Rom 5: 5? It seems to be the idea of the new covenant and I am enquiring as to what part the Spirit has in that part of the service.

E.P. Does it touch the matter of conscious liberty, because I suppose there is one thing among others that marks the new covenant and that is that God is free and that we on our side can be free too, because of what He says in regard of the new covenant.

We know that it is made with Israel, but the spirit of it can be enjoyed and entered into by saints now.

E.C.B. Has it been said that the new covenant involves for us the forgiveness of sins and the giving of the Spirit? As we have the cup and understand what has been ministered to us in regard to the cup, we know the forgiveness of sins, but does not the Spirit given to us correspond with God's law being put in our inward parts and written on our hearts? So that the response is not from fleshy tables, but is the response of the Spirit's formation in us. And the Spirit, according to 2 Corinthians 3, occupies us with the glory of the Lord.

C.H. I would like to ask what is the meaning of 2 Corinthians 3, 17? "Now the Lord is the Spirit, but where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty". Do you not think at times that the question of the terms of the new covenant are more in our minds than Him who filled out absolutely the representation of God towards us? Is that implied in "Now the Lord is the Spirit"? It is really a reference back to the covenant.

E.C.B. I think it is a reference back, as you say, but what you say only strengthens me in the impression that what the Spirit does would be to occupy us with the glory of the Lord. So that it is not the detail of the new covenant that we are engaged with, but the One who has made it good for God and for us and for Israel.

C.H. It seems to me that that is really the important thing, because we can discuss how far the terms apply and that kind of thing, but it says, "The Lord is the Spirit, but where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty", as though the Spirit is so near the Lord. It suggests the

peculiar place He has in the representation of all that is in the heart of God to us.

E.C.B. Yes, and the direct connection is with the Spirit as quickening, is it not? That comes before the parenthesis in that chapter. "The Spirit quickens" (v.6), "Now the Lord is the Spirit" (v.17), as if in that quickened realm we would understand both the glory of the Lord and the position of the Spirit Himself, in the place He has as Lord.

A.J.E.W. Is it right to say with reverence that the Lord and the Spirit do not need to support each other, but there is holy collaboration in the saints to secure them as God would have them to be. It is a wonderful conception to realise how the saints are acted on by two glorious Persons of the Godhead in view of God getting His full portion.

C.H. One of the impressions that we often get at the Supper is their consideration for One another as well as collaboration; that is the Spirit considering for the Lord and for the Father, the Father considering for the Son, for He has given Him a suitable companion. It all enters into this matter, I think, of our ability to be restfully there and take in spiritual thoughts.

W.T.A. What is in the thought of our being strengthened by the Father's Spirit?

A.J.E.W. Being the Father's Spirit, it is the Spirit in relation to the Person who has the supreme place in love's economy, so that it would be a very wide area of thought that would be embraced by the Father's Spirit, leading on to what is for God Himself in the fullest sense. To see that the section runs on to "To him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus" shows that a very extensive and elevated course of things is in view, does it not?

C.R.B. The immediate bearing of it seems to be that there may be a dwelling-place for Christ.

W.T.A. Yes, I had in mind that it follows on "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts".

C.R.B. Does it not all link on with any measure of experience we have in the service, that we are really learning to know God as experiencing the way that the three Persons of the Godhead are so wonderfully working together? The result is we know God and are able to worship God? Any thought of any of the Persons of the Godhead working separately is foreign to the whole spirit of Scripture, is it not? But our experience helps us to value the Father, and to value the Son, and to value the Spirit, because They are all drawing attention to One another in a sense, and yet we learn to know God as the spiritual result. Is that as you understand it?

C.H. Do you think, as considering that, that we should recognise the particular place that the Father takes in the economy?

C.R.B. Is not that one of the inward results in us of the service of the Son and the service of the Spirit ?

C.H. And practically, do you think, in the course of the service, without being too dogmatic, the Father should be given that place, because that is how They have been revealed and He represents God in the economy, does He not?

C.R.B. Yet we would recognise, would we not, by experience the place of Christ as the Minister of the holy places, as guiding us, in one sense, right through the whole service.

C.H. And the Spirit, do you think, sustaining us?

C.E.H. Did not the Father remain "in simple Deity" (JND)?

C.G.H. The reference to the Lord guiding us throughout the service was what I had in mind in my enquiry at the outset because, according to what was subsequently said, that guidance would come from the Lord, and must be by the Spirit as far as our apprehension of the leading is concerned.

C.R.B. Is not that something we prove whenever we are together, that we depend upon the Spirit to discern the 'leading of Christ'?

W.E.E. And alongside that would there be what has been called 'the light which governs the position,' so that we would be intelligent as to what we do. I was thinking of the reference to the place the Father

has. It has been said that, in view of the place that He has, normally a good portion of the service would be for the Father's pleasure and addressed to Him. I wonder whether, perhaps in view of a limited number of brothers to function, sometimes the Father does not get such a large place in the service as perhaps the Lord would have us give. I do not know.

C.R.B. I think that is something we should carry in our exercises and not forget what Mr Taylor taught many years ago, that the greater part of the service of God is normally in song. We do not want to forget that, do we? That would still, I think, be the mind of the Lord.

A.J.E.W. It would not be inappropriate in the circumstances mentioned if a brother got up twice; if he spoke to the Lord and later to the Father. I remember in some circumstances Mr Taylor said that a brother should.

C.R.B. Last Lord's day, in the Eltham part of the city, there were just three brothers and three sisters and I think we had an outstanding occasion with an experience of the eternal character of the worship of God. I think perhaps each brother took part more than once and gave out more than one hymn.

W.J.W. I was linking that thought with what it says here, "That ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length". Could you say something about that - "All the saints". How are we to apprehend that? Does that come into our minds and affections at such an appropriate time, do you think, to take us out of our fewness of numbers?

C.R.B. Does it not link with what was said that, as Christ takes His place in the midst, you are carried by the Spirit's power into a sphere which is far beyond the limitations of a small room, into the consciousness of the place that Christ is functioning in in relation to all! saints.

A.J.E.W. You do not start counting the brethren present when that point comes; your whole thought is in the direction of the completeness, the whole thought of what God has.

C.R.B. You are almost surprised at the end of the meeting to find there are only still the same brothers and sisters you started with.

E.C.B. In those circumstances you also lose count of the number of times you take part, because when 'from one heart, divinely pressed, Bursts forth at length the loud exclaim', and the chorus joins in again, Mr Darby does not say they were singing it a second time. Going back to the earlier remarks as to the closeness of collaboration between divine Persons, do you think that sometimes we may tend to divide up verse 18 of chapter 2 too much, almost as if there were three compartments, "through him", "by one Spirit", "to the Father"? We need some greater impression of God being involved in that, so that we are not dividing things up?

C.R.B. Yes, I think it all would link on with the experience which perhaps we need to be deepened in more in the reality of the worship of the Trinity. We had some measure of help on it, no doubt, in doctrine, and perhaps in procedure we were rather active, but do you think the reality of the worship of the Trinity would bear on all these matters?

E.C.B. Yes, I do, and I think, while it is an Old Testament expression, we should carry forward what is said "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah", Deut 6: 4. And our God is one God, known to us in Father, Son and Spirit. I am sure what you say is right, and it needs to be said, that the worship of the Trinity would be a very great help to us in spiritual understanding.

H.J.T. Is that where the use of hymns is particularly serviceable to us? Speaking for oneself, one feels how little one could say in that setting but join in the spirit of many of the hymns that are appropriate then.

C.R.B. Yes, and it provides a great vehicle for the Spirit to transport us, does it not? And it brings all the sisters vitally into it; it makes us all conscious we are sons worshipping God.

C.H. But in moving on to the full thought of the Trinity, which I suppose is connected with 'the Fulness', we must not forget the way, the relative way, the Persons have come out. Hence, do you think,

more place could well be given to the Father in worship to Him, because He has that double designation "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"?

C.R.B. We have been helped by experience, have we not, that worship flows to the Lord Jesus first, and then to the Spirit? There was a time when we tried to reverse that order; it never worked, it was not spiritually right. But do you think the more sensitive we are as to the feelings of Christ in relation to His assembly, the more alert we should be as to how to move on under His touch in the response to the Spirit and a fuller response to the Father. I do not think the Lord would want us to wait too long, if that is the right expression, in response to Himself; He would lead us onward, would He not?

C.H. And in regard of what has been said about sort of dividing the service into parts the fact is, do you think, that the passage from one to the other should be smooth, should it not? It is not exactly you come to another part or phase of the service exactly - I know that expression has been used - but in regard to each of the Persons, the Lord, the Spirit and the Father, it is God that really is before the soul, is it not?

E.C.B. You would regard the present order of the service of God as a thing established by the Lord?

C.R.B. Yes, I think so. Without dwelling on history, some of us remember a time when we tried to work another way and it did not work, did it? But, as you say, I think we have been abundantly confirmed by experience that the way the service normally flows forward now seems to be of God .

C.H. Was not that due to the logical conclusion arrived at by an able mind? It was not a spiritual understanding at all, do you think, of the setting of the Supper.

E.C.B. No, and what it gave rise to was that we come together, of course, in relation to the Lord Jesus for the Supper and we are engaged with Him and in the order in which we have the service as established by the Lord, we go on with Him, and then we turn to the Spirit, then to the Father; but what was done for a time involved that

we were engaged with the Lord, and then with the Spirit, and then with the Lord again, and that seems to me contrary to things that have been taught for very many years. One is asked the question sometimes elsewhere, whether one regards the present order as established by the Lord and I always say 'yes'.

C.H. The brethren say 'yes' with you, because it is confirmed in spiritual experience, is it not? Not just a certain regularised order, but the rightness of it appeals to a taught mind as right.

R.W.F. Does God delight in order Himself? I would not say that to the detriment of life, but there was an attempt to bring up the ark not after due order. God loves order in His own arrangements, does He not, and in our entrance into them?

C.H. I think that is right. And it is a spiritual order.

J.S.P. I was just thinking as to what we have been saying, that the last verse of chapter 3 is the filling out of the response to God Himself, is it not? "To him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus".

E.C.B. I wondered whether the subject would bear further enquiry, because there are things that could well be touched on for general edification, such as the way in which the Lord comes to us in relation to the Spirit in us, and then the diverse titles of the Spirit that have been alluded to, and the way the Spirit Himself who is God sustains us in relation to God. Christ as Man sustains us in relation to God too, but it might be profitable to the brethren to look further at the subject.

C.H. Well, you have supplied substance for two or three readings.

Our brother's prayer gave me the impression that Ephesians was likely to be touched upon, because what are we here for but that God might be served and suitably served. And the overall control of the Lord over the service, as the Minister of the sanctuary and the presence and power of the Spirit, the Father's particular place, are things that need to be spiritually understood, I think.

E.C.B. Well, there is immense scope for instruction in regard to the Spirit generally. It has been said, and I think it is right, that the

believer is secured for two things, the testimony of God and the service of God, and the way in which the Spirit helps us in both would be a very great gain to us.

E.P. Is it not wholesome for us too, to consider the chapter where it says, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph 4: 30), because whilst we might have desire to enter into these things, we need to be sure that we are answering to what is in that chapter.

LONDON

4 March 1973

THE LORD AND THE BOND

C.Hammond

1 Corinthians 15: 58

One impression that I have received at this time is, that in spite of the unfaithfulness that has marked the assembly publicly, the Lord has not repudiated the bond. He did not repudiate the Corinthians though their state was low, but through the apostle, whilst insisting on His rights, on His side He did not repudiate the bond. Our presence here is evidence of that; we need not look abroad at the general course of Christendom and the profession, but at the history of brethren as we know it, and one outstanding fact is that through it all, we can say the Lord has not repudiated the bond with the assembly. That gives great encouragement, because it implies that His authority is still owned by some. It supposes, as in this very letter, that lordship in Christ is insisted upon; and the authority that belongs to Him by that designation is not arduous. It has been said that God has placed authority where it is most attractive - it is in our Lord Jesus. Paul insists on that in this epistle, that the Lord was to be affectionately known in the assembly as "the Lord Jesus", a title, I believe, that is peculiar to the assembly and can be understood by those who in any sense know what the Lord's thoughts are for the assembly; authority combined with affection, the affection of a Man, a real Man.

So there is not only the recognition of the Lord's rights, the Lord Himself, but there is a sphere in which those rights are owned. Both thoughts are in this verse I have read. "So then, my beloved brethren, be firm, immovable, abounding always in the work of the Lord". Are we engaged in the work of the Lord? That is a challenge. Not are we just attending meetings, are we relieved to have escaped the things that have occurred; but are we engaged in the work of the Lord? We are to abound in it, Paul says; not apologising for our existence, not saying we are a feeble few; but we are to be abounding always in the work of the Lord. Whence does that

abounding come? From the sense that the Lord is still amongst His people and He has an area in which His lordship and rights are owned, and a sphere which characteristically is "in (the) Lord", as it says, "Your toil is not in vain in (the) Lord".

As to our brother and sister, the apostle has a word for them.

There was the sister to whom Paul referred in chapter 7 of this letter; "she is free to be married to whom she will, only in (the) Lord" (v.39). What a thing it is that there is an area which can be thus designated as in (the) Lord; it is to be entered into, and we can take up the relationships of life in it. As indeed, in a day to come, those who carry on the testimony will have said of them, "Blessed the dead who die in (the) Lord", Rev 14: 13. So the thing is carried through, even beyond our dispensation there will be a sphere in which the Lord's rights are owned.

I believe we can say of our brother and sister - what we know of our brother certainly, and our sister by report - they are those who have sought to addict themselves to "the work of the Lord". Well, let them abound in it. Let this marriage not be in any sense a hindrance in the work of the Lord, but rather a combining, as Mr Raven said, 'The coming together of two persons in marriage should be for edification and encouragement'. There are tests and trials, as we all well know, there are sorrows that have to be faced; but through it all, the pattern is seen in the faithfulness of Christ to the assembly, that He has not repudiated the bond. So the word here is "So then, my beloved brethren, be firm, immovable, abounding always in the work of *the* Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in (the) Lord". I say again, what a privilege it is to touch a sphere where these things are known; not merely to know that Person who has supreme rights, but to experience a sphere in which those rights are owned, in which we can work out the truth together.

I think I have observed, as many others will have done, that where 'lordship' is in evidence, that is lordship in Obrisit, not in men, things and persons find their level. How important if the maturity of which we have heard comes to light even through the exercises and concerns of local assemblies. Think of what has been accomplished

since last year. We trust that will continue. Numbers reduced, but I trust, abounding always in the work of the Lord increased. There is so much to be done; the work is great and the labourers few, "supplicate therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth workmen unto his harvest", Matt 9: 38. So, dear brethren, we are going to get through and the Lord is going to be with us, "knowing that your toil is not in vain in (the) Lord".

So our brother and sister are setting up a household - in one sense it already exists but it has been added to - may that addition be for the strengthening of what the Lord has, not only in this part of the city, but in the city as a whole, an addition to the maturity of which we have heard. Paul speaks in this epistle of maturity. What does he say in the next chapter, verse 13? "Be vigilant; stand fast in the faith". We are to stand fast *in* the faith, dear brethren, and what has been committed to us is to be received on the principle of faith.

Do we believe that we belong to a faith system, or is it still a sight system? If it is a faith system, then we are to stand fast *in* the faith. We shall stand *for* it if that is the case. "Quit yourselves like men".

What is required, dear brethren, is manhood according to God. "Quit you selves like men ... Let all things ye do be done in love".

You can be militant and still have affection! That is the marvel of Christianity. In the affairs of men, when militancy occurs it is anything but being done in love. Political motive and intrigue, and personal, vested interest, on every hand; but not in the Christian company. "Quit yourselves like men; be strong. Let all things ye do be done in love" .

So, dear brethren, let us be encouraged. The Lord has not repudiated the bond. In Exodus 18 where the father-in-law of Moses is mentioned several times, although there had been weakness, nevertheless the legal position is insisted, on, as Mr Taylor has ministered. So, dear brethren, we can say for one another's encouragement, the Lord has not repudiated the bond with the assembly, and we are not going to be unfaithful to that. We are going to give some answer to that faithful love, that in spite of all that has transpired, even since the recovery, the Lord is going on with His

own thoughts. Our brother has reminded us of that remarkable prophecy of a man who said what he did not want to say: Balaam.

That is how God can overrule things. Balaam set out to discredit the people of God, but God says I have my own view, and the Lord has His view of what is in these cities, what is in that small gathering up at Alnwick. How much history that recalls, when you think of it! It stirs up memories of one of the conflicts for the truth. The Lord has a handful, but He still says, I am not repudiating the bond. May we be encouraged, dear brethren, and go forward, "abounding always in the work of the Lord, knowing that our toil is not in vain in (the) Lord".

On the occasion of a marriage

LONDON

10 March 1973

THE EPHOD

D.L.Stewart

1 Samuel 21: 8, 9; 30: 5-8; 2 Samuel 6: 14-16.

It may be difficult to see the connection between these Scriptures and a wedding meeting but perhaps as we proceed we may get light as to that. We were in this section on Lord's Day and I was reminded of the place that the ephod has in this section of Scripture. In fact, it is the only section of Scripture in which the ephod is brought forward in a functioning way. It may be that these passages do not all refer to the same thing, but at any rate they refer to priestly garments. There is the ephod in connection with Aaron's garments and there are the linen vests that the priests were clothed in. This is a great section of recovery leading up to the ark having its place (Christ having His true place) and on to Solomon, and what comes into view from time to time is the ephod. Perhaps it might suggest the emergence and growth of spirituality.

It begins with Samuel serving Jehovah, "a boy girded with a linen ephod", 1 Sam 2: 18. This occasion has some special link with the young people, a young couple and their friends are here - not that any word would be limited exactly, it would need to be of a general application - but I think it would be good if the young people could get an impression of the vital part that they have to play in the recovery. We are in the days of recovery, recovery within a recovery. Things were broken down in Samuel's day as in our day and the beginning of the recovery refers to a boy, showing how young persons can begin to take on spirituality. The ephod, the priestly garment, speaks of what is spiritual. We want to encourage one another today to go in for what is spiritual and to be contributors to what is spiritual. We are not ignoring the natural but what is spiritual is greater than that.

The scripture we have read refers to the sword of Goliath and it is "wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod". Mr Taylor said the sword was of no use there. David is setting out on a new course at this

point. Our brother and sister are setting out on a new course; they have never gone this way before. They are going to set up a household, going to become part as together of what is local assemblywise, and I would like to suggest that one of the things that they need is a sword. It may be that that seems extraordinary. It is not the kind of thing that they get among their wedding presents! A household is a most vital thing connected with the assembly and the testimony. Our brother and sister are to have a household. Our brother is going to become a householder and he has not been that before. As a householder he is responsible for everything that enters his house and everything that goes on in that house, and the enemy would seek to get in through the households of the saints.

They are so valuable as contributing to the assembly that they are one of the main avenues of the enemy's attack. This is the sword of Goliath. Goliath had been defeated and his head taken off with his own sword, speaking of the death of Christ, so glorious; what a victory! What a moment of victory, the victory of Christ! The fact is that the enemy comes back again and we need the sword. We need the application of the death of Christ in relation to everything that would interfere with the rights of Christ in a household, in everything. There are times when our sister might need a sword. If the husband is away, she is responsible for the household. She is responsible to act for him in the way he would act and act for Christ in relation to the household - a most important responsibility. There was a sister who did not have a sword but she took a hammer and she dealt effectively with the enemy in her own household setting. The Spirit of God speaks about her in song. It says, "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be", Judges 5: 24. She took the workmen's hammer and she refused to allow the rights of Christ to be interfered with and she brought about a tremendous victory that day. I just suggest in this way that a sword is a necessity. It is, of course, "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6: 17), it is the word of God, but it is that which will meet the efforts of the enemy to interfere with Christ's rights in the household and therefore in the assembly. The ephod would be needed, along with it for the sword can only be applied rightly in priestly feelings and intelligence.

The second scripture relates to the great time of recovery and David recovering all. What struck me about it was that in this opening section there is a reference to David's two wives and to the people who were going to stone him "being embittered every man because of his sons and because of his daughters" I could not help thinking of the family connections that are in this setting. Our brother and sister are entering new family conditions today and both will have new relatives. It is most important that we should know how to act in relation to family relationships. We can go back in our minds and think even in recent history and how many have been diverted and deflected by family relationships. The Spirit of God and the Lord Himself are very tender about these relationships. It shows the need of the ephod. David says in these bitter, difficult, confused circumstances, "Bring near to me the ephod". That is to say he is going to relate whatever course he is to take to divine thoughts, priestly thoughts, the thought of acting for God. If a difficult situation arises involving family relationships how are we to know how to act? Are we to be swayed? Are we going to seek divine light, the divine way? David says, "bring ... the ephod". Of course, the scripture has a much wider application but I am only seeking to bring out something from it that relates to the matter of new relationships and the need that these relationships should be held, not just according to what is natural, but held in every respect in relation to divine light. The ephod would bring in divine light.

I want to suggest as to the other passage an application which is in contrast to what we have in 2 Sam 6, not just to take up this scripture as it is, but to use it to seek to encourage one another in the development of what is spiritual. We have a woman here who did not do that. The Spirit of God would impress us today with the need that in this relationship of husband and wife we should seek to encourage what is spiritual. It is only what is spiritual that is going to abide. What is natural will not abide, but the great need is to use these natural relationships, these close, happy, relationships of love, not just in what is natural, but to encourage one another in what is spiritual, the wife encouraging her husband in regard of what is

spiritual, the husband encouraging the wife. There is a need for wives and for every one of us to be more spiritual. What spiritual women we have seen and known and how they have entered into the fibre of the testimony and into the fibre of the local assembly!

We want our brother to be a spiritual man and our sister a spiritual woman. So they need to encourage one another in this line. David here is dancing with all his might before Jehovah. We do not want to misunderstand what is spiritual. It says that he was clothed with a linen ephod, nothing natural here, nothing of the excitement of what is natural, but controlled joy, controlled ecstasy, what a thing, to be before Jehovah, what a matter! This is the kind of thing that we all need to be encouraged in and also to encourage our brother and sister as starting on a new path to start on the line of encouraging one another in what is spiritual. May the Lord bless the word.

On the occasion of a marriage

EDINBURGH

24 February 1973

PRINCELINESS IN GOD'S FAMILY

E.T.Maynard

1 Chronicles 4: 37-40.

I want to say a few simple words on the way things are to be maintained, because I do not think there is a soul here who would not want to have things reached and maintained. The maintenance is the test - how things are going to be maintained. I refer to two features here in this short scripture; the family, and what is princely.

There is no doubt that our dispensation began with princes.

Those persons mentioned at Antioch were princes. You will remember that God took delight in the princes when they brought their dedication-offerings to Moses in Numbers 7 - when they approached with their offerings, Jehovah said, "Take it of them" (v.5). There were twelve of them meaning that love was at its best and that, administratively, it was to be maintained on that level. Twelve princes, "each prince on his day" (v.11).

I trust the Lord will help us to promote amongst us what is princely in relation to the family of God, because things are to be maintained on that level. God, from His side, will see to it that there will be no lack. The people lacked nothing from God's side during those forty years in the wilderness - there was abundant supply in view of continuance (Deut 29: 5).

Ezra evidently wrote this book from which we have read. He was with Nehemiah in the matter of recovery, and things were recovered. Ezra starts his book with Adam. Stephen went back to Abraham to emphasize the greatness of the call, but Ezra goes back to Adam. He begins with Adam - and he goes right through. He leaves out certain persons in the genealogy, but certain persons you do not hear about elsewhere are brought in abruptly. But to speak of these persons of whom we have read, it says, "Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Atlon, the son of Jedaiah, the son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah: these mentioned by name were princes in their families; and their fathers' houses increased greatly". I would just

encourage each brother and each sister to desire to be princely in our families. What a family this is! The local meetings will be prospered and the Lord will help us if we seek to be princely.

Princes are magnanimous persons. Mr Taylor made much of this feature of magnanimity, beginning with God Himself, but seen reflected in princes.

A prince is a person who thinks in the level of magnanimity - large heartedness. There were twelve princes who offered, as we have noted, and wonderful enough Judah offered first, but then there were twelve, each one offering the same thing on his day. It is wonderful how God provides a day for each prince - each prince can have his day. Nobody is in anyone else's way; perfectly ordered; perfectly organised; perfectly sustained under the hand of Moses - Christ, typically - and each prince had his day.

So you get the similar thought here in recovery - the princes and their families. Each prince would be thinking of his family, how the family is to be maintained; not just enough to carry through, but this idea of magnanimity is in the prince's mind; things are to be abundant. So, beloved brethren, God has provided us with the wherewithal at the present time in the midst of ruin, outwardly, each prince in his family. The results were that their fathers' houses increased greatly. And then they went to the entrance of Gedor, as far as the east side of the valley to seek pasture for their flocks. That is what we need. How are the saints going to be fed? How are they going to be maintained and led and preserved in order that the service of God may be enhanced and enriched?

We begin with the family idea - each a prince in his family. We want to be that - a prince in the local assembly. It is open to every brother and sister, not merely persons who serve. Service is a means to an end; service has in view that every brother, and every sister be brought on to the divine level. That is the mind of heaven. We need to think about this more .

The pasture, it says, was on the east side of the valley, the side of the sunrising - wonderful thought! We are told that God "makes his

sun rise on evil and good", Matt 5: 45. The shining of the sun has to do with the maintenance of verdure and many kinds of life. It was on the east side of the valley that they found pasture: "And they found fat and good pasture, and a land widely extended and quiet and fertile, for they who had dwelt there formerly were of Ham". That means that the man that did not appreciate what these pastures suggest was removed. But these princes - persons whom God has in mind to maintain - enter upon this environment with its rich supply; they take over.

We need to see that in the midst of ruin there would be no place for the Lord amongst persons who do not care about Him, but in those very conditions He finds a home where princely family conditions exist, where He can come as the sun rising in its strength, and find satisfaction for His heart. Ham had been there on the east side of the valley where perhaps the sun had been shining at its brightest, but he had no appreciation of such conditions, but these princes had the secret, the princes knew where to find pasture for the maintenance of the family.

I thought, beloved brethren, that we should seek to promote amongst us this princeliness, that the people of God may be fed, led and preserved so that what has been secured at such cost in the recovery may be maintained in the dignity of the mind of heaven for us to the end. May it be so.

BOOKLYN NY

13 February 1973

AVAILABILITY

B.W.Ward

Luke 7: 7, 8; Mark 13: 33-35 (to ' therefore').

As thinking of this passage in Luke this evening it struck me as I do not think it had before that the centurion goes into some detail; he does not use a lot of words, he does not simply say that I have soldiers who are obedient to me, but he says, "I say to this one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my bondman, Do this, and :he does it". We have often been reminded how delightful this word was to the Lord Jesus, by His comment that He makes immediately following. How He would Himself think of those who were around Him and those who would come under His regulation and control down the dispensation, what He would say to them to do and that they would do it! There is variety; we are not all alike. These men, two of them are soldiers and the third one is a bondman and the word to him is very simple; "Do this, and he does it". I think this would come down to matters of detail with us. If we think of some of those whose histories we know about, if we think of Philip, having had a very successful period of service, he was directed to go to a desert place, it was just, Go there and he went.

And John was on the isle of Patmos in God's ways and he had that remarkable experience of the revelation given to him there. Others were in other places, sent to other places. We might think of how Barnabas went on one occasion to bring Paul because he knew that he could fit in with what was required perhaps better than he. All this, I think, would illustrate how that the Lord has His servants under His control, He wants them like that, wants every one of us like that.

That is partly why I read in Mark, the scripture is very well known; He gave to "his bondmen the authority, and to each one his work".

"Each one his work". It is the Lord's work, of course, it all is the Lord's work, but I think it means that each one has his or her work to do; the thing is to be available to do it.

I think it may come down to quite small things. Am I ready to be available to the Lord in the service at any time? At any time. I remember being helped a good many years ago now by a brother who said, if you observe that in the service of God there seems to be a deficiency or a lack in any particular feature, be concerned to be available to meet that, to be available at that time. I felt that was good counsel and it seems to me that this little bit of detail that the centurion gives would indicate that while we are varied in our capacities, quite varied in what we are fitted to do, yet the question is, is each of us available to do what we are told to do? We may very well think, and often do, that someone could do it better than I. Before I got up was that not the case. Are there not many who can speak better than I at the moment? But if it was Do this, well then I must do it.

So that we may be encouraged, beloved brethren, whether we are young or old, because how valuable the contributions of the younger are, how encouraging and stimulating they are. We do not, where we now are, have anyone very young to contribute, but there are gatherings where there are younger brothers and what a cheer it is to hear them and how it can set things on. So that let us all be ready for this simple direction, Go, or Come, or Do this, just whatever it is. Some are called upon to go, to go in service somewhere. We hear of our brethren being drawn upon to go somewhere. How good that is, how the Lord is increasing the number; how happy that is that He should have increasingly those who are available to go or to come or to do this.

So let us all be encouraged, beloved brethren. Our numbers, as we said, are not so many, but then that simply means that the responsibility falls upon each of us a little more heavily. So let us be encouraged, and be concerned, exercised, just to be available. Maybe we are often told things like this, but maybe we can bear it again. As we come into the meetings are we just concerned to be available to the Lord to do this, whatever this may be, and whenever it is the time according to His judgment, to do it for His pleasure?

LONDON

13 February 1973

THE CHILDREN'S BLESSINGS

To be blessed means to be made happy by receiving something from God. Even the fields around us partake of His blessing when they drink the rain and grow useful plants. But whereas this old creation is only for a time, the blessings which God gives by the Holy Spirit to the believer on the Lord Jesus are for eternity as well as for time.

Jesus welcomed the little children, and blessed them, taking them in His arms. This is the only time in the New Testament that this part of the Lord's body is mentioned. If the older children think carefully, they will remember at least fifteen distinct members of His body in the Gospels. With the Psalms, Prophets and other scriptures, reference is made altogether to about thirty.

But whilst there is always blessing in thinking about the Lord Jesus, we must remember that we know Him now in glory. Mark's Gospel says that He was taken up into heaven and then that He sat at the right hand of God. The former could be seen by the ordinary eye, but the latter only by the eye of faith. Therefore our blessings are in heavenly places.

One great blessing that even the little ones have is to know God as their Father who cares for them and watches over them.

Also Timothy, from boyhood, had known the sacred letters which, through faith in Christ Jesus, were salvation to him and were enough to make him a man of God when he grew up. Do you, too, learn and know the Scriptures?

J.C.Evershed

London.