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THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE SERVICE OF GOD (ii)

1 Corinthians 11: 23-25; Ephesians 2: 18

E.C.B. I think that last week we had some impression as to the diversity of the Spirit's service in relation to the service of God, as the Spirit of the Father, and the Spirit of God's Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of adoption, and so on. We touched to some extent on the personal glory of the Spirit as claiming worship from us, and these two scriptures might further the enquiry. In the verses read in 1 Corinthians, the Spirit is not actually mentioned but I thought it would be helpful to us to enquire by what power and by what means the 'calling me to mind' takes place in us, that is, as an active thing. The Lord Jesus is not called to the natural mind: the natural mind cannot penetrate beyond death into the sphere of resurrection and ascension and life in which Jesus is now, but He speaks of a 'calling me to mind' and I wondered whether, while the Supper is, as we have been taught, the Lord's supper and is to be maintained as such, distinctively His, the Spirit enters into the calling of Him to mind. It has been said, I think, that the Lord comes in relation to the Spirit in the saints. The verses in Ephesians might help us to touch on what we speak of as the fatter part of the service, as to understanding our access to the Father by one Spirit. Paul more than once speaks of 'one Spirit' as if that thought was very close to his affections, but he links it intimately with 'one body'. Of course, we understand also that we are before the Father in sonship and that the Spirit of God's Son is in us.

A.J.E.W. The fact that we can be said to assemble to break bread itself reflects the Spirit's place in the service, does it not? I could not help looking round on the brethren this morning as we sat down and thinking, What is the binding power? What is the uniting element which sees us here with one thought in mind? That is really the Spirit, is it not?

E.C.B. Yes. Hence we need to learn the ability to assemble. One of the distinguishing characteristics that were looked for in a man at the

beginning of Acts was that he had assembled, "Men who have assembled" (chap 1: 21) and therefore the ability to assemble is needed. The Corinthians ostensibly came together in that way, did they not, but Paul has to point out to them that it was not really so in effect.

J.C.E. It is striking that when Paul went to Philippi he found that the women had assembled for prayer. I know that that was not an assembly and it was hardly a Christian gathering as such, but nevertheless Luke, by the Spirit, recalling the incident says they were *assembled* for prayer (see Acts 16: 13).

E.C.B. Does that not strengthen what was said as to what it is that unites us into one as we come together? Those women were united together at least by the desire for prayer; we assemble to break bread; we do not just congregate.

W.F.F. The apostle says "Lord". The Lord is the great gathering point. It links with Acts 9, "Who art thou Lord? I am Jesus"; is that the gathering point for us?

E.C.B. It is the Lord's supper and we have to learn to distinguish things that belong to divine Persons severally. For instance, the rapture is not entrusted to the Spirit. "The Lord himself, with an assembling shout, ... shall descend from heaven", 1 Thess 4: 16. And we come together for the Lord's supper, and for the Lord's sake, but what is the power in us that gives us the ability to assemble, and then to call Him to mind? I do not think it is the natural mind that calls Him; I think it must be some operation of the Spirit in us as believers assembled.

H.A.H. We commenced this morning with the hymn, 'O Lord we've come together As drawn to Thy blest Name' (hymn 376). Does what we are saying bear on the way the Holy Spirit is here in relation to the name of the Lord Jesus in testimony?

E.C.B. I think that is right. It is He that keeps us in fidelity to the name of the Lord, is it not? We gather to His name, and we value His name, but we are looking for more than His name while we are

together, we are looking for His manifestation. How is it that that comes about?

A.J.E.W. Do you think we need to keep in mind what we could reverently speak of as the self-effacing service of the Spirit, and find in our experiences assembly-wise how the Spirit is among us, even though there may not be specific references to Him in the matters which are proceeding? I was thinking it traces back the whole matter of the house, vast as it is, to the Spirit's service in relation to David. I wondered if that showed us how the Spirit is there all the time in relation to the exercises of devoted lovers of Christ always giving Christ His place, but at the same time having His own personal activity in an extended sense going on.

E.C.B. Does not that enter into what we read in 1 Corinthians 11? The Spirit is not there mentioned but we could not think of ability to 'call me to mind' unless the Spirit was actively in us. Do you think that what He has been to us in that self-effacing way would come before us as well by way of appreciation as we serve the Spirit directly during the service?

B.W.W. Does the very fact that no-one can say Lord Jesus but by the Holy Spirit confirm what you are saying?

E.C.B. Yes. When we come together for the Supper, almost invariably the brother who rises to give thanks for the emblems says 'Lord Jesus', and that seems to me to set the brethren together in the power of one Spirit: yet as Mr Welch says the Spirit Himself is not conspicuously before us.

B.W.W. It would give Him great pleasure, would it not, to come into the service on our side in that way, in order that what the Lord Jesus is looking for should be quickly and fully liberated?

E.C.B. Yes. I was thinking this morning that while much of what is referred to in Genesis 24 relates to what we speak of as the wilderness side of things, yet during the service we have known the Spirit as the servant, and as the camels, and as the well; these things enlarge and amplify our response to the Spirit even if we have

not been thinking of Him in those ways while we have been enjoying them.

E.C. Could you say more about 'calling to mind', which the Spirit has His part in, because there is sometimes difficulty, especially for the young ones perhaps, in knowing that the Lord has come to us. Does not the calling of Him to mind in the power of the Spirit lead to our knowing that He has come to us?

E.C.B. I wondered if that was not a thing we might get some help on, because I think it does sometimes puzzle young people, and sometimes not all who are older appreciate it. How does the Lord come? If He came corporeally there would be no doubt about it: everyone would see Him. He will come and every eye will see Him; but He comes now and there is appreciation that He is there. Now how is that? I think that the mind must be set actively in that direction, but it is the mind that has come through the epistle to the Romans so that it is a transformed mind in which the Spirit is active that calls Him in. Is that right?

A.J.E.W. Yes, I am sure it is. When he says, "That which I also delivered to you", the word 'delivered' is important because it involves an element of responsibility among the saints in Corinth to work out the truth of this matter. Where is the power and direction for that to be known? The word 'delivered' is an allusion to the fact that the Spirit among them was equal to the matter which he had, in fact, committed to them.

E.C.B. It helps us to see that in spite of the general condition at Corinth, and the general condition often amongst us, there is still ability to receive these things as delivered, as if the Spirit is able to break through the state.

W.F.F. Do you think that the very expression, "I received from the Lord" involves that the Spirit was free with the apostle. The Lord corporeally gave it to the twelve, as we read in the gospels, but the setting in which we have it today is an entirely spiritual one, is it not?

E.C.B. Yes, therefore, "I received from the Lord"; when did Paul receive that? And how did he receive it? I think it was a

communication from the Lord as glorified, spiritually to Paul, and Paul fully understood it.

W.T.A. Does it require the assembly for this remembrance?

E.C.B. I think it requires the saints together as assembled. We need to have that experience of assembling, but I think assembly experience, as such, is responsive to Christ as having come in.

W.T.A. He says here, "When ye come together in assembly", 1 Cor 11: 18.

E.C.B. Yes. He says, "When ye come together in assembly", but then he says, "I hear there exist divisions among you, and I partly give credit to it". I think the idea of coming together in assembly touches the sense of "We being assembled to break bread", Acts 20: 7, but I would be glad of some further instruction myself as to just when assembly experience, as such, proceeds because in the service we are not actually speaking to the Lord about assembly response until we have touched other things. We do not, for instance, speak of assembly response in relation to the cup. What do you think on that?

A.J.E.W. I would join you in the enquiry. Mr Rogerson, it is the same Spirit in Alnwick.

T.R. Do you not think, as the Scripture says, "He shall glorify me" (John 16: 14) is the great service of the Spirit, and He is always on that line?

E.C.B. Yes, and therefore as we appreciate Christ having come in amongst us, glorious, it would point to the fact that the Spirit is actively serving us at that time.

G.A.P. Is something required on our side in relation to the Spirit, in regard of the word 'receive', "Receive ... Holy Spirit", John 20: 22, and "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit", Acts 19: 2. Does the idea of reception of the Spirit involve something making way on our side for the Spirit's operations?

E.C.B. I think the idea of receiving the Holy Spirit would point to something substantial being in us. The Spirit, as we have often said,

and it needs to be said sometimes, is not just an influence. He is a Person, and He takes up His abode in us. Therefore, we should know that substantially, and the receiving indicates a disposition on our side to make Him at home, I think. Then if the Spirit is at home I think He takes on what Mr Rogerson says and glorifies Christ.

W.T.A. So would you say He is not only in us individually, but He is in the assembly?

E.C.B. Yes, and as far as anything collective is concerned, it is the assembly which has the capacity to receive the Spirit in His greatness. We individually would be filled with Him; we trust we would have more experience of that; but I think it requires the assembly for Him to have a vessel that He can fill as in Acts 2.

W.T.A. So that when you come to the blessed sense of the Lord being present, you would not be able to lay that down as something to be copied by us would you.

E.C.B. Something to be copied: you mean, it is not something that we can just imitate?

W.T.A. Exactly.

E.C.B. I was thinking on that line this morning, that we were there again for the Supper with the same emblems that have been there for nearly two thousand years, and yet we were looking for something fresh and cannot just repeat what we had last week: it is remarkable that we never do. We may feel limited sometimes but the Spirit brings in something distinctive.

A.J.E.W. As to your earlier point, does the record of the Supper in the gospels give us some help? I was thinking, specially that Matthew touches ground amongst us which is real and practical as to two or three gathered together to the Lord's name. That we would recognise as not specific to the Supper, in fact referring to the general situation, but when Matthew goes on in the later chapter to bring in the Passover as the basis for the Supper and then the Lord's word as to the bread that He "gave it to the disciples", (chap 26: 26) an then the reference to "Having sung a hymn, they went out to the

mount of Olives" (v 30), do you not think the reference to singing the hymn would show the point of assembly experience coming into real expression. That would be a sensitive, united matter, would it not, of the disciples with Christ as they sang that hymn? That surely brings in assembly experience.

E.C.B. You are linking it with Hebrews and Psalm 22, as to "in the midst of the assembly will I" 'hymn thee' (see note, Hebrews 2: 12)? I am glad these matters have come up because they have been in my mind for a little while, as to just when at the Supper we come on to assembly ground. It seems to me that there is a little difference between our assembling and our coming on to assembly ground, and the way the service proceeds, as recovered by the Lord and the Spirit, takes us over such matters as being His brethren, His companions and His friends, His kindred, before we touch assembly ground in union.

A.J.E.W. I meant in the reference to the Passover that the Lord takes us up on the real ground on which we are, that is we are still in a scene and setting that involves moral exercises, and all the exercises of extrication, and He would consolidate that side in the fullest way so that we are free to be with Him as the Spirit proceeds.

C.B. Two more lines of that hymn we sang are 'Here nature's voice is silenced, and nature's claims give way'. Is it an understanding of the import of the death of the Lord? We would understand then what we sang as to the wholly spiritual line of things that John was on.

J.C.E. I was wondering whether it is perhaps a good thing for us in connection with this repeated expression "This do" to realise that it is not only the physical action, but the concentration of all our powers, spiritual and to do with our souls, and what is physical in the Lord's consideration for us, on the matter in hand and that will lead to what is truly of assembly character, will it not?

H.R.T. It says in Hebrews, "Without faith it is impossible to please him. For he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out", chap 11: 6.

E.C.B. I do not think you could be at the Supper as a participant without faith; because the showing forth His death till He come involves that the soul has already appropriated in faith that He is going to come and that the rights are His. Then faith in Him and in the Spirit's operations would help us in relation to the calling of Him to mind, and the answer to it, do you think?

A.B. Referring to the question as to how we apprehend the Lord's coming in, while there is the question of the faculty, or the means by which we apprehend Him, I wondered if something more could be said as to what I might speak of as the evidence that He might give of His presence, that we might appropriate. Something was said as to how it would be if He came bodily, but how is it that He comes spiritually?

W.T.A. In Psalm 22, when He comes into the midst of His brethren, it is to praise God. I should think everyone would be conscious of that, if He was doing it. I was wondering what you had in mind as to that. Is it from "I will declare thy name unto my brethren" that the Lord takes up the matter in relation to the assembly, and Himself in relation to it?

E.C.B. "I will declare thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I" 'hymn thee' (Heb 2: 12) puts it in a certain order, as if the Lord has some thought of His brethren and then some thought as to the assembly and it serving as the circle in which He praises the Father. We are taught by the way the Scripture itself has expressed things. Then as to the question as to our knowing the evidence that the Lord has come, I think the evidence of that is in ourselves. I think the Spirit active in us is immediately responsive to the manifestation of Christ. It is possible sometimes even for the Spirit to break through distractions of our mind to make it clear to us that the Lord has come in. In John 21, while that was physical, no-one had to ask anyone else; in fact, no-one *dared* ask, 'Who is it?', "Knowing that it was the Lord", (v 12). That is inward knowledge and I think it is an inward thing, and you can tell it because the meeting has quickened by H is coming in.

C.E.H. Somebody said, 'Who serve Thee with a quiet mind, find in Thy service rest'. Do you think there have to be conditions with us to qualify us to know when the Lord comes in?

E.C.B. Yes, I think so, but when Jesus comes in He Himself will say "Peace", He will bring about the quiet mind. The Spirit also will serve us by way of peace, so that we are ready to appropriate Him as having come in. I am sure that there is an inward realisation in the saints as gathered that the Lord has come in.

A.B. The Scripture speaks of the disciples having rejoiced; that is an inward thing, is it not? Would you think that He would give us an impression of Himself as He comes? I was thinking, for instance, of the Scripture that the disciples say, "The Lord is indeed risen", Luke 24: 34. That was another inward impression that they had as to it.

E.C.B. Yes. Then it says in John 21, "This is already the third time the Jesus had been manifested to the disciples" (v 14), "And he manifested himself thus" (v. 1), so I think that we would be able to say how He manifested Himself, although sometimes the impression is, as it were, cumulative during the meeting rather than something that strikes you all of a sudden, if I may use such a word.

A.J.E.W. It is interesting how Mr Taylor referred to the way the Spirit goes over certain matters early in Acts, the scope of which had already been treated in Luke's gospel. There you get very much emphasised the fact of the Lord coming in and going out among His beloved disciples. It is as if the idea of the Lord's movements in that character is brought before us again as something that would enter distinctively into the Spirit's day, really emphasising what is in the saints in their capacity to recognise the Lord when He comes.

E.C.B. Yes, so that the footnote in Acts 1 says 'every time that' "the Lord Jesus came in and went out" (v 21), as if His movements are, as you say, to be realised. I think sometimes that we have suffered in the past from trying too quickly to crystalise the impression that the Lord left as He came in, whereas sometimes - to use the word we had yesterday - it matures while we are together.

E.C. I have felt that the enemy gained a lot of advantage in creating an anxiety state among us as to the Lord's coming in, and especially for young ones who did not actually experience it and tended to give up, but we are exhorted to persevere in the breaking of bread and prayers. Do you think that that comes into it, that you may not realise the Lord is coming in all at once but it is evident that there are brethren who have been breaking bread for years and you can see that they enjoy and appreciate the Lord's presence. He does not bring anxiety, He brings peace, and if we persevere and we do prepare ourselves - we know what it is, I do, not to know the Lord coming in - and call Him to mind we shall experience that peace, shall we not?

E.C.B. I think all that is very important and especially that we should be there with our minds prepared and ready and expectant and as we were saying just now, He will say 'Peace' and the Spirit brings about peace in us, so that we are in a settled condition and expectant. If you ask the young people to whom you refer, What impression did you have of the Lord this morning, they would probably be baffled. If you said to them, Did you enjoy the meeting? And they would probably say, Yes, and you say, Why, and they say, Why I have just seen that the Lord was there; and there you are.

J.H. It may be difficult to define, and yet the believer consciously understands it in his own spirit, does he not: he knows. Is it not this experience of the Lord's presence with us that motivates us to take part?

E.C.B. I think that these things should help us and release us from what Mr Croot speaks of as an anxiety state so that we are free in the liberation that the Spirit gives to enjoy the service. I think that if the Lord is to enjoy it, it requires that we are enjoying it.

Rem. A further line of that hymn that has been referred to already is 'the Spirit's realm'; might that mean anything to us?

E.C.B. 'The Spirit's realm commands us on this most favoured day'. That is not the day starting at nine o'clock, it has begun earlier than

that. So that, as was said, you are *prepared* for a manifestation of the Lord as you come together.

W.F.F. It is important that we get the experience with the Spirit, is it not? The Lord says, "Ye know him", John 14: 17. Is it not vital that we should get to know the Spirit, so that we know God, in relation to His activities?

A.T. I was just going to remark, as we have been told, that John 20 is not the assembly; it required the Spirit's coming to form the assembly. "In the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body", 1 Cor 12: 13. The members are all there but it is the Spirit that is the power, is it not, to enter into what the assembly is and what the breaking of bread is, the outward manifestation of the body; the breaking of bread is that, is it not?

S.J.K. So that in John 14, where the Lord speaks of coming to us, it is after speaking of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth being with us for ever (see v 16). Would you say that the Lord's coming is against that background?

E.C.B. I think it is. I did not allude to that scripture because of its generality; that is it applies, you might say, at any time, and it is very blessed that it does. But I was wondering as to 1 Corinthians, whether we would not get some impression of the way the Spirit helps us in regard to what is one purpose of the service, that is that the Lord should be called to mind. It is, as you say, against the background of our having the Spirit and everything He will do.

A.J.E.W. Without exactly hastening on, what we are saying gives great point to the expression, "Through him" in Eph. 2: 18. I thought it was a kind of condensing of much that we have spoken of, to call attention to Christ and our engagement with Christ, and our experiences with Christ as the essential basis for going forward in this great realm of access. It is really preparatory in the most glorious sense, is it not, to our access into the presence of God?

E.C.B. "By one Spirit" would help us in relation to all the way the Spirit has served us as coming together, as Mr Thompson says. The Spirit serves us, and in a sense those gathered at the Supper are an

outward manifestation of the body. They are gathered and there is one loaf, but it is "by one Spirit" that we assemble and it is by one Spirit that we together get an impression of the Lord coming in; it is by one Spirit we are baptized into one body, and by one Spirit we have access to the Father.

A.T. I would like a little more help as to what has been alluded to as the Spirit not only in us but with us. It would have a bearing on our singing, as was mentioned. The evidence of the Spirit with us, sisters and brothers, all singing; as Mr Darby points out, there are not two spirits, there is one Spirit. Would that be the way in which He would be manifested with us?

E.C.B. That is certainly one way. It was remarked here last week that Mr Taylor had said that the service of God proceeds mainly in song, and "In the midst of the assembly will I" 'hymn thee' involves Christ Himself taking on that line of service. Brothers and sisters together in singing, that is a manifestation of one Spirit: the experience is often the most enjoyed in the singing of the hymns.

W.T.A. I was wondering whether that is what you had in mind. It says, "When the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one voice", 2 Chron 5: 13, so that the assembly as filled with the Spirit is engaged in the power of the Spirit with that glorious Person.

A.T. It has been said that we come together to remember the Lord and the hymn that is given out gives us to be of one mind, all thinking the same thing as we sing. Our hearts are in the matter but our minds become united in the singing.

E.C.B. So that there is no scriptural prescription for our singing a hymn as we come together, yet it is something that the Lord has established amongst us and that serves a purpose that is of the Spirit.

W.J.W. We break bread every Lord's day because that is the way the Lord has chosen to make Himself known to us. It is the same thing we do, but He has given us commandment that we should do it, and that is the way in which we know Him. He manifested Himself to two in the breaking of bread and that is the way He will manifest

Himself to us, is it not, as we are obedient and keep His commandments.

E.C.B. That is the way He has prescribed for the calling of Him to mind. He comes responsively to that and manifests Himself, and I think experience in the service of God generally confirms to us everything that we have believed. The reality of the Lord being there makes everything that you are committed to true to you again.

W.J.W. Was not that their experience, because they immediately returned to Jerusalem, and found themselves where the Lord manifested Himself. Would it be right to say that we may take the Supper as individuals in remembrance of the Lord, but as we do so and the Lord manifests Himself to us we cannot be anything else but set together?

E.C.B. I am sure that is right, that we come together as individuals and as individuals we break bread. We are individuals who have assembled, and we have immediately before us a loaf which speaks of a corporate entity, one body, so we have been pointed the way from what is individual to what is collective as soon as we come together, and the fulness of experience and enjoyment of the Lord's presence lies in our grasping that collective experience.

A.J.E.W. And when you speak of the way, is it of profit to reflect that a certain order has come into the whole occasion; not that you want to formalise it in any way, and yet in the course of the revival temple enquiry has furnished help as to a certain order of things at and after the Supper. That has been established, not exactly by prescription of things verse by verse from Scripture, but by the Spirit's service in the temple, and right over an extended period of time, so that the service of God is really a very wealthy matter in the light of that, and we should cling to the help that has come in, do you not think, in respect of it.

E.C.B. Yes, I think we should continually be affirming that; not necessarily saying it, but affirming it in ourselves and in our experience. Do you not think that the Spirit in the temple has not only brought about an order of the service of God for us, but what He

continues to give in the temple further enriches what He will have in the service of God.

A.J.E.W. I only bring that in because it is really epitomised in Ephesians 2: 18.

W.F.F. The presence of the blessed Spirit is the basis of what you have referred to, that is He takes the initiative, so that it is a fresh matter, it is not stale. It is something for us to experience afresh as He takes the initiative.

A.J.E.W. So the emphasis in the ministries of the revival is the fact that the Lord's supper is the way into the service of God. The Lord's supper stands by itself in a certain sense, and yet where does the Lord lead us as He is responded to in the breaking of bread?

Ques. Do the sisters contribute in the one Spirit?

E.C.B. Yes, I think that is right. Sisters do not take part audibly, save that they may say Amen, but I think if they say Amen it is an indication that the one Spirit is working there, and they are going fully with what the Spirit is taking us into.

W.J.W. What you say, Mr Welch, would confirm that, in that the Lord's supper was given through Paul. It has come to us that way. It seems to me that it is established afresh for us in an assembly setting, having been set on by the Lord when He was here. It is established afresh for us and it is to continue right through the dispensation in this setting, and that is how it has come to us, is it not?

A.J.E.W. And Paul giving it to us has really set the Supper in the assembly, and has set it in its place as the outward expression of the fellowship, has he not. Is it not supported for us in Luke's references in the gospel, carefully detaching the Supper from the Passover, which supports what you are saying.

J.S.P. I am very thankful for the way this matter is developing. We, too, this morning began with the hymn that they had at Plumstead, and this impression developed as the meeting went on.

E.C.B. I think it is a good thing that we can speak about these things in the temple, and find liberty and increase in them. We do not have to speak about them defensively. We can speak about them as what we are presently enjoying.

H.A.H. I wondered, just to revert for a moment as to our experience as to how the Lord Jesus is known amongst us, whether 2 Corinthians 3 bears on it as to the change: we discern a change in the brethren and in ourselves, not to be occupied with that exactly, but whether it all helps us.

E.C.B. I wonder whether there is not some link between that scripture and what Mr Rogerson referred to, "He shall glorify me". If we are to look on the glory of the Lord it is the Spirit who has been serving us to present that glory to us; I think that helps us to see how we are changed into the same image, "from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit", because it is the Spirit in us that engages us with the glories from one to another of which we are transformed.

H.A.H. It is certainly something that often finds expression in our address to the blessed Spirit in appreciation of His service does it not?

A.J.E.W. The word there, "we all", the emphatic 'we' is very suggestive, is it not. What kind of persons are the 'we'? Persons surely who have histories with the Spirit, in the light of the scripture in which that comes up, so that it is a very significant verse in regard of what we are saying.

W.F.F. And also the reference to the Lord Spirit. What would you say about that? Would it link with the one Spirit in Ephesians?

H.A.H. Were you thinking, Mr Welch, that the "we all" makes way for the merging in assembly experience in what is addressed to the Lord Jesus in the experience of union with Him?

A.J.E.W. Particularly that element of experience which I find very real, which frees your mind from any sense of local limitation. There comes a point in the service when it does not occur to you that the numbers there are few, it does not occur to you where you are or

what the limited circumstances are; it is a question of the assembly, it is a question of Christ and what He has, and the limitations just pass out of mind and give place to the exceeding glory of what the service is. It is a remarkable experience but it is one which we do experience I am sure.

W.F.F. You would connect that with the experience of union?

M.J.W. Do you not think it is good to have a word, too; (not that you could lay it down, because the Lord would not lead in it if it is not right) but to get the sense of the sound of the breathings of divine Persons, a spontaneous sense of it, is very stimulating.

C.B. I would agree with that. That was our experience this morning. Just a few persons together but a brother spoke of the first verse of John 17, how Jesus did it - and we are in the same power - and the last verse. It was a very appropriate and helpful word.

W.J.W. Do you mean that we need to leave room for the Lord to speak to us? It is the service of praise that we have our part gladly in. The Lord may say something to us as He did in Luke 24 for instance.

E.C.B. How widely is there a word in that city at the Supper? We do not have a word every week.

M.J.W. When you do get a word you often find something that is spontaneous and the Spirit has led in it, and it is valuable then. After all, if divine Persons speak They speak sovereignly; They do not speak because we have an impression; They speak. Do you think that?

E.C.B. Yes I think what you say is right, that there should be a word if the Lord gives it through anyone that is there. We should not forget that.

A.J.E.W. I was going to say, if there is a word there needs to be a brother to give one. I believe the concern to be ready for that should be with all of us. Am I right in thinking that if a word comes at the Supper it is not so much an element of gift as in an occasion of

ministry; a word would come in the spontaneity and sovereign touch that has been spoken of, do you not think?

E.C.B. Yes, the service of God and the Supper is an occasion when gift is not prominent. We are all sons of God, and the brethren of Christ are not distinguished from each other, and if a brother has a word he should be the brother that gives the word; we do not want to wait on one another for it. What has been said is important; it should be if there is a word that a word is given.

C.E.H. That is helpful because it brings the sisters in. They cannot say something, but they can have an impression, and carry that impression, if they are subject to the service of the Spirit.

E.C.B. Yes, that is right, and brothers therefore need to be sensitive in order that whatever impressions there are in the meeting may come into expression. If brothers fall into habits of thought and set patterns of taking part they are probably excluding impressions that would come in from the sisters.

C.E.H. Most of the hymns referred to are written by sisters. That shows that though they cannot voice anything, a brother may express the things that are in their minds.

E.C.B. Yes; I think actually most of the hymns are by brothers, and that that is what we would expect, but the hymns that are written by sisters have been very valuable to us indeed. The one that has been quoted a good deal this morning is by a sister.

W.T.A. In relation to giving a word, supposing brothers have not got a very deep power of penetration. Powers of penetration must be acquired.

E.C.B. Well, the Spirit is there at Clapton. I do not know which meeting you are going to go to to find deep penetration. The Spirit is there. It is the Spirit that searches the depths of God.

LONDON

11 March 1973

COMMITTAL

L.A.Barlow

John 3: 35, 36; Genesis 24: 2-4; John 19: 25-27.

I wish to say a few words as to what is committed. The basis for committal is love, so I read this first scripture to encourage and strengthen our hearts that "the Father loves the Son, and has given all things (to be) in his hand". That is the divine assurance and certainty that everything will eventually be secured for the glory and pleasure of God. Our hearts need to be encouraged that, whatever may appear to be the position, the Father loves the Son and that is His settled disposition in relation to the Son and He has therefore committed all things to be in His hand. There are no safer hands, beloved! There is not the possibility of any diversion or of God having to adjust His ways, for the very fact that things have been placed in the hands of the Son is the guarantee that everything will be brought through to glorious fruition. How stabilising it is in the day in which we live to know that divine things are certain and sure because they are committed into the hands of the Man who has never failed. Oh, that we might be increasingly strengthened to go on as engaged with this glorious Person! Not only to be engaged with what He has done, but with who He is, which is the glory of this section of scripture. The obedience called for, as the note says, is not simply by way of subjection to His commands, but to the Person himself. There is no one like Him who is loved of the Father and who is going to bring all through in all its detail to perfection. How wonderful it is that everything done by Him will be absolutely fair and just. Even judgment has been committed into His hands as Son of man - a real man - and that is the wonder of it. Such matters could not be in better hands; they are those of One who has been down here in the scene of testimony amidst trials and difficulties, having been "tempted in all things :in like manner, sin apart". (Hebrews 4: 15). All is a matter of love and may our hearts revolve more in relation to God's centre - a Man in whom He has established every thing for His own glory and praise.

What immediately follows this section of scripture is the way in which Jesus made known to a woman - a woman with a history - the thoughts of divine love and the answer that God was seeking. Now I think that the activities of this blessed Person at the present moment are peculiarly set in that direction, that is, for the securing of persons who can worship God in spirit and truth. In the day to come He will adjust everything, put everything in its place, maintain everything and establish everything. What He is doing now is seeking something for the heart of the Father in persons who can worship in spirit and truth. May we come increasingly under His regulation and control and be influenced by Him in the way He would lead us. One great need constantly is that, in the power of the Spirit, we should reach in our minds and thoughts over to the divine side. I think the tendency so often is to be unduly occupied and engaged with our side which, alas, may bring in depression. Not that we are to be unmindful of failure, but we need help to feel things rightly. One of the things we are made to feel in the presence of this glorious Person is in any little service you may render how clumsily you do it. How consoling it is to think of the perfection of His service, the gentleness, the attractiveness and the wisdom that marks Him in His approach to this woman. What He has in His mind and heart is to secure such a person as she, as one who can worship God, in spirit and truth.

I have often thought, beloved, that if we had written John's gospel we might have written it quite differently. Some would have written a book on this woman's history. The tendency so often is to dwell on the history of our failure or, maybe, that of others and, perhaps to talk about it. But divine love would, as it were, show to our hearts that in the wonder of the work of Christ, the cross of Calvary, God has closed up histories in order to make way in our affections for the glorious Man into whose hands He has committed all things. This is the line on which He is working. I have not a shadow of doubt that what divine love is doing at the present moment is working in spite of the history and even because of the history. If we reflect on our histories it should cause and teach us to

love the Lord Jesus better. It is the result of reviewing history in the presence of God that you do not tell persons how much better you would do if you had your time over again: but you come to this, that God turns it all to increase our knowledge of the glory of the Man into whose hands He has placed all things. May we be encouraged that all our matters are in His hands! Wisdom on our side is in simply being subject to Him.

God would bring us to His own side of things as we are subject to Him in the blessedness of His person. What glory shines there for, whatever God needs, whatever He looks for, is found in Him. He is surely God's salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth and our present salvation is in occupation and engagement with Him and what He is doing. It is in His mind to secure persons like you and me as those who can worship God in spirit and truth. Who else could accomplish that? Only He could make it possible that even now in the very scene where we have dishonoured God and His testimony, we should be secured in relation to God's own thoughts that He should have - not just worship - but persons who are worshippers.

How does He bring it about? It is by engaging our hearts in the power of the Spirit with the greatness, glory and blessedness of Himself where He now is. There is nothing that has been left out of His hands. I think that the touch we had recently in London has remained - that in all circumstances that have arisen all things have been in the hands of the Lord. That would maintain our hearts in stability and I repeat that our wisdom is to come increasingly under His control and regulation, because it says that, "He that is not subject to the Son shall not see life". John 3: 36. All this has a very real and practical bearing on our lives here but it is essential if we are to enjoy life fully.

As to the scriptures read from Genesis, beloved, I turned to this to speak of the committal of the Spirit. That too is a most encouraging thing to think of because He has been here all the time since Pentecost. He has never been diverted from what is in His mind; He has never been turned aside from His intention to secure a glorious answer to that living Man, and assuredly He will secure it.

The Revelation confirms to us that the Spirit and the bride say 'Come'. There will be at the close of this dispensation that which answers in a vital and living way to what the assembly really is. Why so - because of you and me? No - because of the presence and power of the Spirit of God down here in this scene and His committal to Christ. It is a love matter and the servant as he finishes his journey in this chapter says, "That is my master!" Surely this is typical of the affection of the Spirit for Christ. Oh, that our hearts might be lifted up into the realm where divine Persons work for the satisfaction of Their own affections - the One for the Other! I believe that what the Spirit is set on, is that there might be even now a living answer in formation to the affections of Christ. What this chapter shows is that Isaac is comforted after his mother's death. That means that, whilst the Lord waits for His full portion, there is that provided which gives comfort to Him at the present time.

The first thing the servant asks for is a sip. How essential it is to realise and be sustained in the recognition of the glorious personality, if one may so speak reverently, of the Spirit of God! Worthy of our homage, worthy of our worship, He is God in the glory and majesty of His person and His very presence calls forth from those who know Him the adoring response of their hearts. We are told that the servant was seeking room: the Spirit requires room in order to operate - may we know what it is to provide Him with it in our hearts. What He looks for, too, is committal so that we should not be delayed by natural things. I say that simply, because I believe that one of the tests of the present moment is whether we are concerned about going in for what is spiritual, or whether we are going to be detained by what is natural. We should not put off what is spiritual for a day to come, but should be assured through grace now of the blessedness of what is going to be our eternal portion in association with that glorious Man. We did nothing in relation to it; the precious blood secured it for us, our title to it being in the purposes of God which existed before we ever did. How wonderfully stabilising that is! But the question is, are we prepared to find an entrance into them at the present time? I think that the Spirit of God

is looking for persons who are committed in relation to Himself in view of what He would lead them into - a present living answer to the Lord Jesus. How worthy He is of it! Surely every true heart would admit that, and the Spirit is here at the present time in view of that comfort for the heart of Christ.

Finally, I read from John's gospel because I think this gives the secret from our side, as to whether we are ready to stand by the cross of Jesus. That can mean a lot of things but what is in mind is whether we are prepared to identify ourselves fully with a Man who has been rejected here. John shows persons in nearness to the cross. The other gospels show the need that there is on our side to stand afar off. The immensity and intensity of what was transacted at the cross must ever cause us to stand afar off. It is something that our hearts can never penetrate into and could never fully understand, yet, as engaged with it, every true heart knows that it had a personal part in it. If there is one thing that is needed more than anything else it is that the glory of the gospel should sink right down into our hearts - the glory of a love that was expressed for each and every one of us personally. I believe that the result of appreciating this is that there would be a preparedness to stand at the present time near to the cross of Jesus. Those whom John brings before our gaze are mainly women, although he brings himself there as he loves to do, because it leaves room for any one of us to occupy the position where he is. He would have each one of us to know what it is to be the disciple whom Jesus loved - not just the person whom Jesus loved for, if one may so say, there is a qualification about it. It is the *disciple* whom Jesus loved and that is a person, as is seen later on in the gospel, who is following Jesus as committed to Him. I do not think we really come to appreciate and know the love of Jesus until we are in some measure committed to following Him and it is then that we find that His love is much greater than we ever thought it was. So John is there by the cross. What divine love is looking for as the fruit and result of its own activity in substantial reality.

It is in this very region, standing by the cross of Jesus, that the Lord commits to someone whom He loves, that which He loves. I believe that is the present position, that the Lord is committing what He loves to persons who know His love. What the local assembly is in this respect ought to have an increasing place in our hearts. The truth is not to be just something in the air or something that I just conform to by way of doctrine, but there is to be a concrete expression of what it is in the place where I am set. What the Lord Jesus commits to John in that sense is, I believe, the local assembly as it appears in a character which, you might say, is defenceless. I am just applying it, I trust not wrongly, in relation to the mother of Jesus - she was someone who was going to be left in this scene bereft of any support outwardly. Surely that is the true position of the local assembly in any place. Now, beloved, are you and I prepared to give that a real place in our hearts - that is the current test. Is it to find a place in our affections; are we prepared to care for the interests of Christ in the places where we are set? Maybe you would do much better in some other place; possibly it would be much easier; but I think the test is whether you value the thought of the assembly in the place where you are so that you give it a place in your own home. You may say that you love Christ: the proof of it is in your love for the local assembly. I have no doubt about it. That is, you are prepared to take on responsibility in relation to it, as the Lord says, "Behold thy son ... Behold thy mother". What the local assembly is to Christ as down here in the sphere of responsibility becomes our own responsibility. I think that Mr Raven said that John did not have a commission, so that helps us all, does it not? Maybe there is someone here who has a commission, but it is open to us all to care for the local assembly in the place where we find ourselves. That is a committal to which each and every one of us can be devoted, what is precious to the heart of Christ down here.

It is at the same place that another woman comes to light - Mary of Magdala. Possibly we might have written a book on her history as well but John does not! What John has in mind is not recording history for history's sake, but for what is secured in

affection for the one blessed and glorious Man. The only value of any history must be in result that Christ becomes greater in our affections, as with this woman. Hence, as she moves into the next chapter, she has entrusted to her the greatest and most blessed message ever granted to a creature to convey. Beloved, the enjoyment of divine things in all their blessedness at the present time stands related to the sphere of responsibility the focal point of which is the cross of Christ. Whilst we are left down here I think it is right to say that we must never dissociate the sphere of responsibility from our enjoyment of the scene of privilege above. In the grace of God we are taken far above whatever is connected with our responsibility, which we all would readily admit could not be otherwise. However, I believe that the measure in which in power we enter into the enjoyment of what the assembly really is to Christ stands related to the measure in which we are committed to Him in that character down here. May He help us, beloved, for the day calls for our wholehearted committal to these things. It is a simple question of where our life is. Is it in our business, our homes, or have we some sense that our true life is hid with the Christ in God. It is in relation to an order of things which belongs to another scene, but nevertheless is to find expression in the places where we are. May God just help us to be committed increasingly so that we might now know the gain and joy of what the assembly's part is with Christ in the realm which He fills!

MAIDSTONE

13 January 1973

THE GLORY OF JESUS

E.E.Hoyte

John 3: 11-13; Ephesians 4: 8-13.

I seek help to call attention to the glory of Christ as presented in the scriptures read. I think John's ministry bears especially on the present time: it was written for a day of departure and brokenness. It is he who tells us that there were many antichrists in the world even at the time he was writing, but one designated as the antichrist was yet to come. Perhaps we are on the verge of his appearance, of "the man of sin" as Paul calls him. 'Anti' means against Christ: this spirit marks the world. It says of "the man of sin" that he "opposes and exalts himself on high against all called God, or object of veneration; so that he himself sits down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God". We must see that we do not seek to displace divine Persons, that we do not seek to displace Christ from the souls of His saints. Christ is going to have His place finally and publicly. All the gospels are lit up with the glory of Jesus. But John, I think gives a special touch in his presentation of the varied glories of His person in view of the end of the dispensation, as if to indicate that there is no diminution of His greatness and glory, at least in his appreciation, in spite of the changes that have taken place in the public testimony.

He begins his presentation of Him as God - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He could not be greater, He was God. God is greater than all else.

Professedly people make much of the birth of Jesus. Oh, that they understood more of His glorious Person! They would give a great place to His death also. Moses desired to see God's glory.

The answer God gave him was, "Man shall not see me, and live," God dwells in light unapproachable. He said to Moses, "I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand, until I have passed by. And I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see me from behind; but my face shall not be seen." Moses saw something of God, reverently speaking, for it says, "he made haste

and bowed his head to the earth and worshipped." The burning bush which he saw earlier in his life refers to the Israelites, his brethren, among whom God walked for forty years in the wilderness guiding them in the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. But the great mystery of Christianity is that God has been manifested in flesh on this earth in the person of Jesus. It involves the life of Jesus. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men". In the life of Jesus here in manhood men saw God expressed before their very eyes. It was that life that went through death and annulled its power, coming out of death in resurrection glory. The law was given by Moses but grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ. The law condemned man. Thank God, "now we are clear from the law." (Romans 7: 6). It brought death, but the ministry of the Spirit brought in glory - the new covenant. "Now the Lord is the Spirit" says Paul. How great is the glory of the Lord! We have everything we need in Him and through Him. I wish we would arrive at that point, that Christ is everything.

Can you take that in? I do not know that I have reached that yet. It must be arrived at experimentally. Experience is to give us increased apprehension of God. Nicodemus said to Jesus, "None can do these things that thou doest unless God be with him." I take it he was born again because he could discern in Christ that He came out from God. In chapter 7, when the Pharisees spoke derisively of Jesus, Nicodemus said to them, "Does our law judge a man before it have first heard from himself, and know what he does?" In chapter 19 he brought a mixture of a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes to anoint the body of Jesus for burial, publicly identifying himself with Jesus in His death. I would say Nicodemus finished gloriously. We should examine our histories with God to see the kind of beginnings we had. God will complete His work in us.

In verse 13 of our chapter what majesty and glory we see in Jesus as He said, "No one has gone up into heaven save he who came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven." We know Enoch was translated, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into the heavens, but Jesus is unique. As on earth, said, "the Son of man who is in heaven." This expression conveys to our minds the

glory, majesty and inscrutability of our Lord Jesus. He came down out of heaven into manhood and adorned it. The race has been adorned by the incoming of Jesus on earth in manhood. This changed man's outlook completely. What an experience it must have been to the three disciples who stood with Him on the mount of transfiguration and beheld His glory! Luke says, "as he prayed the fashion of his countenance became different and his raiment white and effulgent." The glory of a person is the outshining of the person. Peter referring to the scene later says they were "eye witnesses of his majesty ... for he received from God the Father honour and glory." He could have gone straight into heaven from the mount of transfiguration but His work was not finished. In chapter 6 He said to some, "If then ye shall see the Son of man ascending up where he was before?" How great was His ascension after His resurrection! His disciples stood gazing into heaven as He ascended. Think of the tremendous explosive force it required to place the astronauts in orbit to the moon! Our Lord ascended into heaven by virtue of His own inherent power. It was just my thought to call attention to John's delineation in his gospel of the varied glories of our blessed Lord. To begin with, in chapter 1 we have the glory of the Word having become flesh, the Lamb of God, the Son of man, the Messiah; chapter 11 His glory as the resurrection and the life; chapter 17, "the glory which I had with thee before the world was" - referring to His Deity, and others could be spoken of. Paul connects glory with the saints too, "whom He has justified these also He has glorified" in Romans 8. Do you know anything about the glory that has been given to us? It lies in the Holy Spirit which God has given to us; then the glory of sonship - the Spirit of God's Son in our hearts. What glory!

Ephesians 4, in which Paul refers to gifts to men from the ascended Man says, "according to the measure of the gift of the Christ", (v 7). Psalm 68 says of Christ that He received gifts as having ascended into heavens - "thou hast received gifts in Man", it says, the idea being that He received gifts as in Manhood. Our chapter says, "Having ascended up on high, he has led captivity

captive, and has given gifts to men." He went into death: He has ascended up above all the heavens. Paul went to the third heaven.

Jesus is above all the heavens, which would be, I suppose, the uncreated sphere. He fills all things. The majesty and glory of Jesus! The assembly "is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all". What a place the assembly has as associated with Him! May the Lord help us to think more about these things, as Paul says to Timothy, "Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things."

VICTORIA BC

25 December 1970

WISDOM

W.Dickson

Proverbs 30: 24-28.

These verses were on my mind, and I trust we will get some help as to wisdom. I am glad to see our younger brethren at the meetings - particularly this meeting - so consistently because the ministry meeting is a very important and valuable occasion. A great deal enters into the meeting for ministry; edification and education and some impression of the variety of the food supply in God's house. It is quite remarkable the number of young men in Scripture whom the Spirit of God takes account of as wise. Joseph was a wise young man, Solomon was a wise young man, Daniel too, he was a wise young man, and Timothy. What marked these young men in God's testimony was their wisdom and it is a quality which receives approbation from God, so I would seek to say a little to encourage our younger brethren.

It says "there are four things little upon the earth and they are exceeding wise". It does not just say that they are wise, it says that they are *exceeding* wise, and what is called attention to is their littleness and their obscurity. Beloved brethren, and particularly younger brethren, I would like you to get some impression of the moral value of the present position of the testimony. Small as it may be, in reproach publicly, there is a moral value attached to God's testimony as cherished by a few simple believers, a moral value that is appreciated in heaven. Our brother has referred to the seats of learning of this world, and you could put all of them together and their accumulated tabulated knowledge, but they are not of moral value; yet the smallest company of God's people set in relation to His testimony in a place or a city has great moral value in God's eyes. It says they are "little upon the earth and they are exceeding wise: the ants, a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer". I trust dear brethren, that you are exercised to provide your food supply in the summertime when your natural powers are at

their zenith. Some in this room are in the wintertime of their lives, some are in the autumn time, and some very young ones we could say are in the springtime, but you young people are in the summer-time of your lives. What are you using your mind for? What are you using your faculties for? Is it to provide a food supply in the summer-time that is going to furnish and help you in the things of God? Think of the glory of summer-time in the revival, and of what is shining upon us now in all the richness of the ministry that the Lord Jesus has granted us to provide our food in the summer-time. We do not know how things will shape publicly, the way things are going. We can come to these meetings freely, but who can tell what restrictions may be placed upon the gatherings of the saints; have you gathered your food in the summertime? It says "a people not strong", yet they are diligent. It is a mark of wisdom to gather our food in the summer-time when things are propitious, rich and full under God's goodness, and we want to take advantage of it. It says "the rock-badgers are but a feeble folk, yet they make their house in the cliff". Why do they make their house in the cliff, these rock-badgers? They are feeble - they keep themselves out of the range of wrong influences, that is what they do. I think there is a word for us, it is a mark of wisdom that young people do not put themselves within the range of what can damage them. It says "they make their house in the cliff", they keep themselves away from the power that would attack them. I think, beloved, it is an allusion to what we have been taught as to the assembly, that it is a sphere of salvation, the cliff speaks of that. The rock-badgers are feeble, they have a sense that they have no power, no strength of their own and yet in their wisdom, they make their house in the cliff. They recognise the great value of the assembly as a sphere of salvation, and, are thus preserved from the power of the world. Wise young persons would not deliberately place themselves within reach of the enemy.

"The locusts have no king, yet they go forth all of them by bands" - no king - they have not a Pope, they have not a Moderator, they have not 'one-man' - but they go forth by bands! In other words, it is a mark of wisdom to appreciate the value of the Christian

fellowship, that is what the locusts did, they went forth in bands. The world speaks of "loners" - the assembly is no place for loners. Young people, I would encourage you to keep the company of the saints, it is a mark of wisdom. It was one of the things that marked Joseph and Solomon and Daniel and Timothy that they cherished the great principle of being together with God's people. It says the locusts have no king, in other words they have no leader. Of course, Christ is our Leader, we know that, but they recognise the gain that lies in the fellowship and going forth in bands.

Then it says "thou takest hold of the lizard with the hands, yet is she in kings' palaces". That is very precious; you could crush a lizard, you could take it in your hand and crush it, it is so feeble and so defenceless, and yet it is in kings' palaces. You think of what you enter into on a Lord's day morning. We had a Scripture read to us in 1 Kings on Lord's day morning about the adornment of the temple of God, and the impression I had was of the magnificence of the divine structure and the privilege of having part in it. The lizards, outwardly defenceless, under public reproach, could be easily crushed and yet they are in kings' palaces. It is a suggestion of how a sense of the dignity of your position should affect you young brethren. It is a mark of wisdom not to be occupied just with the smallness and the weakness of the position but to think of the privilege that you have that you go into the king's palace. These are great things to know when the world places so much premium on what has no moral value, to see what God calls exceeding wise, the great moral features connected with His testimony at the present time. I would encourage the young brethren to be amongst the exceeding wise persons who know the value of the fellowship and what is available for everyone of us in these days, for His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

13 March 1973

THE CHILDREN'S FEELINGS

There are times when young believers feel that they must let out their joys and longings in what we call exclamations. This is a happy thing if the Holy Spirit is the source of those feelings, but there are others, evil ones, which by the same power the youngest believing child can learn to keep away.

According to Matthew, God the Father made known even to little ones the things pleasing to Him. Later in the same Gospel these children answered by crying 'Hosanna' which showed their joy in seeing already in Jesus the promised Saviour through whom all would prosper. He had come into the city meek and mounted upon an ass.

It is interesting that the Creator should thus dignify in the Scripture an animal which people usually ridicule. You may remember, too, that it was a she-ass which actually spoke with man's voice. Again, the only animal to be ransomed was the firstling of an ass. That was the first mention of ransom in the Bible, but how different from the last reference! This tells us of "The man Christ Jesus who gave himself a ransom for all". Every believer gets the benefit of this.

The captive maid who waited on Naaman's wife exclaimed with the little word 'Oh!' her longing that her master might be cured of his leprosy. God alone could do this and by obedience to the word of the prophet Naaman was cleansed of a disease which is a sign of the misery and mastery of sin. Have you got your freedom from sin as well, as the forgiveness of your sins?

J.C.Evershed

London