

A
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BEARING INIQUITY

W.McKay

Numbers 18:1-3, 8-13; Revelation 1: 17, 18; 22: 16, 17

I have an impression, beloved brethren, that I should speak about bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary and bearing the iniquity of the priesthood. How we will come by it I do not know but I have an impression that that is what should occupy us, as the word to Aaron is, "Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood". I believe that God is looking for persons at the present time who are able to do that, who have capacity to take on and bear before Him what has come into the profession in evil and corruption. Think of all that has come in, even in our time; how humbling it is!

This links on with what we have been engaged with already, Jesus as the Holy One of God. If we think of what He has borne, not only in a general way - the sin and the state of the race - but what He has carried in regard to the rebellion of Christendom and all that has come in, all that is attached to the Lord's name in the profession at the present time: Jesus suffered for all that. He took it upon Himself, He bore it. I think this ought to get into our souls, the failure that we have had so much part in, the breakdown; Jesus has suffered for it, He has carried it; He has actually gone down into death to meet it and to remove it from before God. A very interesting point in Psalm 16 is the reference to the Holy One of God: "Neither wilt thou allow thy Holy One to see corruption" (v 10). That brings out what I believe is in the ministry somewhere, the uniqueness of Christ even as He lay in death. The life of Jesus was unique, absolutely so. The birth of Jesus was unique, the dying of Jesus was unique, but the fact that He lay in death was unique too, and it is said "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol, neither wilt thou allow thy Holy One to see corruption". The fact that Jesus was in death was a unique matter. There was nothing ever like it in the history of the creation of God,

that the Holy One should actually lie in death; but God did not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. God came in in the power of resurrection and took Jesus out of that condition. But as facing suffering and death, dear brethren, He bore the iniquity of the sanctuary.

There are two sides, therefore, to the priesthood. There is the ability - and Christ stands out in His unique glory as the One who is great enough to carry through the service of God for time and for eternity. That is priesthood in its relation towards God; the service of God, all that is for the divine pleasure, is taken on and sustained by that glorious Person, that Man who fills now the presence of God as He will do eternally. But the other side is that the priest and his sons were to bear the iniquity of the sanctuary, and so it is that Jesus bore before God the failure and rebellion, all that has come in in the way of corruption into the profession of what is of God, Jesus has borne it. This is the other side of priesthood. I suppose the most outstanding type of it is in the book of Ezekiel. You remember that Ezekiel was told to lie on his left side three hundred and ninety days and bear the iniquity of the children of Israel; and then to turn to his right side and bear the iniquity of the children of Judah. Now Ezekiel was a priest; as a matter of fact he is called "*the* priest", Ezek 1: 3. What a man he was! His name means 'Strength of God'. He was to carry the iniquity of the children of Israel on his left side three hundred and ninety days and not able to turn from one side to the other. Think of a man being able for that! Of course, the only Man that was really equal to it in an absolute way was Christ. Oh! if we did nothing else today but get a fresh and enhanced impression of the glory of Christ our time together will be well worth. The only One who could sustain the whole matter of the iniquity of the sanctuary was the Lord Jesus Himself; and yet Ezekiel was a man of like passions with you and me, and he was great enough to become a type, he lay on one side for three hundred and ninety days, and for forty days on the other side. What a man he was!

What I want to come to, dear brethren, is that God is looking for maturity amongst us, involving moral and spiritual strength. Do not

let us be satisfied with going on with things in a timid kind of way, in a loose kind of way. I think the time has come when we should realise that God is looking for maturity. He is looking for men, and women too, who can fill out the truth, and perhaps this particular feature of it, not only the carrying through of the service of God but the bearing of the iniquity of the sanctuary. This chapter 18 of Numbers is one in which the priesthood is recovered. There had been the great breakdown, typical of the rebellion of Christendom, in chapter 16, the Levites laying claim to the priesthood. Oh! dear brethren, we should feel, as I am sure we do feel, the awful state of things that has come in. At the end of that chapter we get Aaron making intercession; he made atonement for the people. Thank God for the atonement that has been made! Thank God for His mercy to us, that He has brought us through! Then in chapter 17 we get the establishment, in Aaron's rod that budded, of priesthood in the power of life. How great that is, dear brethren! It is not a question today of being simply right in doctrine but a question of the power of life.

Aaron's rod budded; and there again we get the thought of maturity, because the rod did not only bud, but it blossomed and it ripened almonds. God gets through immediately to a state of maturity and why should we not be aiming at that? And there is not only the thought of maturity attaching to the ripening of the almonds but the thought of beauty, the beauty of life. You think of the buds, and you think of the blossom! Resurrection is a wonderful thing! Think of the beauty of everything that God is bringing up from the realm of death! It is life out of death, but God brings it out in a way that is attractive, in a way that carries the thought of beauty with it. It was the same in Joseph's day. The butler had a dream and saw a vine, and the vine budded and it blossomed and it ripened grapes (Gen 40: 10). Are not these wonderful thoughts, the attractiveness of what God brings up in resurrection? It says of the Lord Jesus that He was "raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father", Romans 6: 4.

There could be nothing in the whole universe more attractive than the activities of the glory of the Father, and it was active in relation to Christ as He was brought up out of death.

And so in chapter 17 of Numbers we get Aaron's rod that budded. You think of those twelve princes coming forward, every man claiming his rod and every man finding that his rod was just a dead staff, completely dead, until we come to Aaron's rod and this is a beautiful thing. It has budded, and blossomed, and ripened almonds! How lovely that is - the re-establishment of the priesthood in the power of life! Oh, dear brethren, let us take in these things! We are not together simply because we agree in regard to certain doctrine. The doctrine is important and we need to hold to it; but we are together, if we are together according to God, in the power of life, and that is what God is looking for; and He is looking for maturity which has in mind that we are able to bear the iniquity of the sanctuary. How many of us are able for it? I believe the Lord would encourage us to get into His presence and to speak to Him about the breakdown, carry it in our spirits. What an effect it would have upon us! Ezekiel's name is 'Strength of God', and I believe God would encourage us with strength in view of His service; but strength too in view of the carrying of the iniquity of the sanctuary and the iniquity of the priesthood. I think He is looking for it, scanning the whole area of Christendom at the present time, finding one or two here, and one or two somewhere else, bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary. Is that not something to God? I believe it is, men and women who are in full accord with God about His judgment in regard to what has come into Christendom. That is what we need.

Now in chapter 18 we come to the recovery of the priesthood. Chapter 16 is the breakdown, chapter 17 the priesthood established in the power of life and chapter 18 the functioning of the priesthood in the recovery; and that is where we desire to be. If we are anything at all we are in the recovery by the mercy of God. The mercy of God has brought us into it. The chapter goes on to speak of the Levites uniting with the priest. What a wonderful thing this is! What is challenged first of all is the intimacy of our links with the Lord Jesus. It says, "Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring near with thee, that they may unite with thee, and minister unto thee; but thou and thy sons with thee shall serve before the tent of the testimony. And they shall

keep thy charge, and the charge of the whole tent: only they shall not come near". This matter of uniting with the priest: a most important thing, I suppose, at the present time is the intimacy and the strength of our relations with Christ. If the priesthood is going to function we need to know the One who is *the* Priest and we are to unite with Him. Think of that! We are to unite with Christ. If we are to bear the iniquity of the sanctuary we need to be in touch with Christ in this intimate way. Then the other thing is that we must be personally free from the iniquity. We get free from the iniquity by departing from it. We need to be personally free before we can bear it. Then the other thing is that we need to have part in the positive line of the service of God. He says, "I have given thee the charge of my heave-offerings", given them to you as a gift. Think of what God has given to us as a gift, dear brethren, our part in the service of God. You think of what we have every Lord's day morning, the part that we have! God says, I have given you that as a gift. It is not that we have done anything that deserves it. We might think that we have done something that others have not done but God says, I have given it to you, on the principle of gift. Let us understand that, and let us appreciate our privileges. Then He says, "The hallowed things of the children of Israel; to thee have I given them". The priests had the best of everything. It says in verse 12, "All the best of the oil, and all the best of the new wine, and of the wheat, the first fruits of them which they give to Jehovah, have I given thee. The first ripe of every thing". What food the priesthood has! You see, dear brethren, how God, I was going to say is anxious, but God is particular about building up the priestly constitution of the saints. We are not priests because we say we are; but think of the food that we have to feed upon! As the saints bring their offerings the priests get the very best. I think this is the kind of priesthood that we need to attend to. There is our part in the service of God in the sanctuary, but there is besides the part of the priesthood in facing the evil that has come into the position and being with God about it.

Now I just want to refer to Revelation where we get John. We could have referred to others. I believe in Abigail (1 Sam 25) we get

a touch as to bearing the iniquity. She says, "Upon me let the iniquity be" (v 24). Let it be upon *me*. She was clean; she was free from it personally and yet she says, "Upon me let the iniquity be". And David says something similar at a later date and Paul took on the sorrow of the church; how he carried it! When we come to Revelation, how John carries it! He saw the Lord in His judicial garments and was thoroughly with Christ in His judgment of all that had come into the professing church. It is a very great thing that we be thoroughly with the Lord in His judgment of all that has come in that is dishonouring to God. Think of how the Lord in manhood was in absolute accord with God's judgment as to sin. I remember Mr Parker telling us that even on the cross, when Christ was suffering for sin, there was not a hair's breadth of divergence between God's judgment of the evil and Christ's judgment of it. He was in absolute accord with God in His judgment of evil, even when He was suffering for it. And here John is in accord with the Lord's judgment of the sin that had come in and he fell at His feet as dead. We are to be affected by these things, the Lord would help us to be affected by them; it is a function of priesthood. Then the Lord lays His right hand upon him to strengthen him. I believe that John was in absolute accord with the Lord in regard to His judgment of what had come into the church and in regard of everything else in the whole scene, Babylon and all that that stands for; and we need to be that. We are living in an evil day and we need to be with God in regard to the evil with which we are surrounded, but particularly the iniquity of the sanctuary. John was in accord with the Lord in regard to the whole matter.

Then, when we come to the end of the book, he is also fully in accord with the Lord in regard to the Spirit and the bride, what was for Christ in the bride. I think, if we are with God in His judgment of evil, He will give us to see what the assembly is to the heart of Christ. This is what we get through to in the book of Revelation and is what I leave with us today, that the Lord has something infinitely precious to His

own heart. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come". They say, Come, to Jesus, and we are nearing the time when the Lord will come. Oh! what it is to be with the Lord, to be united with Him, not only in His judgment of the evil but in the expression of His appreciation of what is specially for His own heart, that is the bride. The features of the bride, dear brethren, coming to light are what He is delighting in at the present time. May the Lord bless the word.

London

19th May 1973

THE CITIES OF REFUGE

J.Renton

Numbers 35: 9-15; Deuteronomy 19: 1-3; Joshua 20: 1-6

It is interesting to see how Jehovah made provision for the manslayer. It is provision made for a certain kind of sin that could result in the execution of judgment, yet Jehovah makes provision.

There was no such provision in the wilderness. This provision relates to the land of Canaan. The land of Canaan as applied to us is not heaven literally. There will be no need for provision for any untoward circumstance because no such thing will arise when we are in heaven literally. But Canaan, the land of promise, suggests what is to be enjoyed down here. It is heaven known while we are down here. We need to understand that as believers we belong to heaven. We do not belong to earth and visit heaven; we belong to heaven and visit down here. That is the believer's true status. That is what dwelling in the land of Canaan means. The instruction therefore begins in Numbers, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then ye shall appoint for yourselves cities: cities of refuge shall they be for you". This provision relates to the land of Canaan. It relates to what is unfolded in the epistle to the Ephesians, for we have to go to that epistle to understand the fulness of Christianity.

Jehovah foresaw that provision for the manslayer would be needed in the land of Canaan and he makes provision for persons who are involved in this kind of sin. Jehovah does not suggest that they lower the level of things to suit the manslayer or that they should accommodate the manslayer on his own terms. Jehovah directs that there should be cities of refuge and we find in the book of Joshua that these were Levitical cities. As we know, the tribe of Levi did not inherit with the other tribes, they did not have their own territory in the land. Joseph had two tribes which makes up the number twelve; the twelve tribes inherited territory in Canaan, but the tribe of Levi did not inherit territory. They were given cities with

suburbs and six of these were appointed to be cities of refuge. These Levitical cities were distributed, forty-eight of them, throughout the land 'On both sides of Jordan and they were meant to exercise a heavenly influence over the tribes. I have no doubt the idea of locality would enter into the twelve tribes having an inheritance. But the tribe of Levi had no inheritance; therefore it is more than simply a local matter although it would be worked out in localities. The Levitical outlook would be a universal outlook and we need to have this outlook today. There were forty-eight cities and they were meant to maintain what is typical of the heavenly level and to exercise heavenly influence over the tribes because there were Levitical cities in every tribe in Israel. Therefore God did not lower the level to accommodate the manslayer. The manslayer would suggest in our day dishonour done to the Lord Jesus. We find that in the second chapter of the Acts. Peter, in his preaching, opens the gates of the city of refuge for the guilty Jews. They had crucified the Messiah yet Peter opens the gates of the city of refuge for every repentant person to flee into. God in His mercy and grace provided refuge for persons who were guilty of the crucifixion of Christ. In our day any dishonour to the name of Christ would involve guilt; but God's provision is the city of refuge. The heavenly level is to be maintained, not common ground made with persons who dishonour the Lord. We have to be jealous, dear brethren, for the Lord's rights and God's rights and maintain these rights, and at the same time have an outlook towards persons who dishonour the Lord's name; not by making common ground with them, nor by accommodating ourselves to them in their present state, but by maintaining what is right according to the heavenly level. That is the idea of the city of refuge. In Ephesians the evangelist is mentioned among the gifts but he is not mentioned among the gifts in 1 Corinthians. Also in chapter 6 of that epistle part of the armour mentioned is having "shod your feet with the preparation of the glad tidings of peace".

These two ideas suggest the city of refuge. The level is to be maintained in its height and fulness and there is to be a readiness to be available to repentant persons. Paul himself no doubt found the city of refuge in Damascus. He tells us in 1 Timothy 1: 13 what kind

of man he was: "Who before was a blasphemer and persecutor, and an insolent overbearing man: but mercy was shown me because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief". That is, he found a city of refuge available as he was repentant. These cities maintained the level, therefore, of the rights of Christ and the rights of God and were in the enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance. The tribe of Levi, as I said, did not have territorial inheritance. Their inheritance was the "offerings by fire of Jehovah the God of Israel" and "Jehovah the God of Israel" Himself (Josh 13: 14, 33). They were taken instead of the firstborn in Israel; therefore they represented the best that God had in mind for His people down here, and these cities were to exercise this influence over every locality. We need therefore to come in our own locality under the influence of this Levitical outlook in the land of Canaan.

In the book of Deuteronomy you again find it linked with the inheritance: "When Jehovah thy God hath cut off the nations whose land Jehovah thy God giveth thee, and thou hast dispossessed them, and dwellest in their cities and in their houses". Not only did they come into the land of Canaan but they were to dispossess and they dwell. It is a question of dwelling in the land of Canaan; for us, dwelling in the wonderful privileges of our heavenly inheritance. We have only perhaps touched the fringe of the greatness of the privileges of the inheritance we have. Then it says: "Thou shalt prepare thee the way". Not only were cities to be appointed throughout the land but they were to prepare the way. They were to be evangelical. They were to clear away every obstacle so that the way was clear for the manslayer to flee thither: "that every slayer may flee thither". This would be a practical matter as to removing every obstacle. We have put some obstacles in the way of persons. There would be a need now to remove every obstacle so that the way is prepared and marked. There was to be no doubt in persons' minds as to where the city of refuge was. The obligation to prepare the way had to be accepted to make it as easy as possible for persons to find the city of refuge. We know, only too well, how things are confused in our day and we are part of that confusion; we have

contributed to it. Damage has been done to persons and we have added to the confusion. There is need, dear brethren, to prepare the way so that as far as possible we should not add further to the confusion but in some way make the city of refuge plain. No doubt we need to be Deuteronomic persons to do this. Moses in the last two months of the last year of his life is speaking in wisdom to God's people in the book of Deuteronomy that they were to prepare the way.

In the book of Joshua we find these cities appointed and it is in this book that we find that there are fortyeight Levitical cities, six of which are cities of refuge. We find here what the manslayer is to do. It contemplates that the way has been made as easy as possible for the manslayer to find the city of refuge. The territory is divided so that he knows where in his territory the city of refuge is, and he comes to it. "And he shall flee unto one of those cities and stand at the entrance of the city-gate, and shall declare his matter in the ears of the elders of that city". His matter is acceptable as he is repentant and he is invited into that city. It says, "they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them". We have all fled to the city of refuge, we have all been taken into the city unto them. There is a touch of affection in this, there is a touch of brotherly love in it: "and they shall take him into the city unto them". It reminds us of the book of Genesis when the dove returned to Noah. It says that Noah "put forth his hand, and took her and brought her to him into the ark" (Gen 7: 9). Indeed, all the animals came *unto* Noah into the ark. It was not the ark exactly that was the attraction, Noah was the attraction. So persons become attractive here. This manslayer would be better off being in a Levitical city, having a place amongst the Levites in this heavenly level of things; he would have a part in exercising this heavenly influence. We have all been manslaughterers, we have all dishonoured the Lord Jesus, we have all failed as to maintaining His rights and the rights of God. Have we all come this way of declaring our matter? Have we found that we have been taken into the city unto them and are given a

place and dwell among them? There is a family idea in this; all the wealth of the family is enjoyed in this city.

Well, it is our privilege in this locality to maintain a city of refuge which depends on dwelling in heaven and being visitors down here, maintaining the rights of God and the rights of Christ and being evangelical in our outlook, preparing the way and ready to take "unto us" into the city and provide dwelling conditions. May the Lord help us in it!

Edinburgh

10th July 1973

HEAVENLY INFLUENCE

R.Swan

Luke 10: 17-24; Acts 2: 17-18, 21; Ephesians 3: 8-12

I would like, dear brethren, to maintain, if I can, the height of what our brother has been bringing before us as to the fulness in Christianity which is available to everyone who has come into the city of refuge. Luke seems to open it up in its wealth and its extensiveness because it is only Luke who refers to the seventy.

What an excess of grace that the Lord should send these seventy into every city and place where He Himself was about to come! He would have them to represent Him rightly, as surely He would have every one of us in our day, as sent out as lambs in the midst of wolves, to represent Him in heavenly character. In chapter 9 of this gospel, on the mount, the Lord is making things very attractive; He went up to pray. Luke is the only writer who tells us that He went up to pray, and as He prayed the fashion of His countenance became different. How unsuited we are naturally to such a position but there is a fulness in Christianity beyond anything that has gone before.

There were inklings no doubt - many kings and prophets had some inkling as to what was going to come in and in some sense they were desirous of understanding it - but we are in the dispensation that every other dispensation converges on. Are we giving a right representation, dear brethren, in our movements amongst men in order that persons might see something in each one of us that has a heavenly character?

There were three of these cities on each side of the Jordan. I remember Mr Lyon saying we might wonder why two-and-a-half tribes on the wilderness side should have three cities and nine-and-a-half tribes over Jordan should have three cities. He said that the more we are living in the land and in the centre of things the less likelihood will there be of injuring a brother with our tongues or in any way misrepresenting the greatness and glory of the inheritance.

This chapter (Luke 10) would show something of the tremendous

wealth at the centre of things. No one knows who the Son is. Luke uses that little word "who" - "who the Son is" - as if the Spirit of God in this wonderful gospel is giving us to see the lowliness of the descent in grace, His coming within the range of everyone - the Lord Jesus as a Babe, as a Child, as a Boy, as a Man beginning to be about thirty, coming near to men so that there might be something made available to men of what He would accomplish in His precious death and in the opening up of the city of refuge; and what a wealth there is to be had in it, dear brethren. What a revelation there is for us if we are maintained with this heavenly outlook, as those who appreciate what it is to have our names written in heaven - not merely written, as it were, just like in a register, but it speaks about the book of life. We would therefore be persons who would be expressive of life; and there would be something under the eye of heaven, some of these heavenly features that rightly represent the dispensation, and the door might be fully opened to persons who are seeking refuge.

So Peter would love to open up the door, open up the way to the city of refuge. He himself must have appreciated it. At the end of Luke it says, "The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon". What an opportunity there was for all those at Pentecost, every nation under heaven: what a contrast to Babel when God came down and confounded the language. The city of refuge was made available. Peter says, "This which ye behold and hear". It suggests, dear brethren, what is really resident in the saints, what can be seen and what can be heard. There would be some extension in that of all the things that Jesus did and taught. There must have been a right representation at Pentecost for these persons to be just delighted to avail themselves of the city of refuge. We are all refugees, dear brethren, we have all run to the city of refuge. How eager God is that there should be no stumbling block in the way! So Peter would open the door and say, This is what has taken place. He quotes from Joel but he does not quote it exactly.

Joel says, "I will pour out my Spirit" , but when Peter quotes it he says, "I will pour out of my Spirit". There is a fulness, dear brethren,

and behind what we know as to the Spirit lies His Deity, and how great that is! How worshipful we should be in the contemplation of what God has done - I will pour out of my Spirit. So Peter opens the door. What a wealth! - every nation under heaven. What a wonderful evidence of God coming near to men! They even heard the preaching in their very own dialect. What a wonderful touch, God coming so near to men that He gave them the preaching in their own dialect so that there should be no hindrance in the way to the city of refuge.

I thought in the passage in Ephesians there is one who has really come into the city of refuge and, the more you have a sense of that, the more it keeps you humble. He says, "To me, less than the least". These are wonderful expressions in Ephesians - superlative language - "the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge".

There is always something which is beyond us but there is also something which we can know. This perhaps is the greatest expression of the glad tidings - "the unsearchable riches of the Christ". How great they are! You remember how they burned their books at Ephesus and counted the price. But what is it, dear brethren, anything we may surrender, compared to the cost of these glorious glad tidings, "the unsearchable riches of the Christ"? What a wealth there is, "the riches of the glory of his inheritance" to be known and enjoyed in the city of refuge.

May we all appreciate it more for His Name's sake.

Edinburgh

10th July 1973

BE STRONG

J.G.Chalmers

2 Chronicles 27: 6; Exodus 1: 18, 19; Joshua 14: 10-13

My desire is that each one present may be strong. This is possible because David, when speaking to God in 1 Chron 29, says, "and in Thy hand it is to make all great and strong". There was a time when we were without strength. We cannot forget that, it keeps us humble; but the Lord in His mercy intervened. Romans is God's intervention in Christ: "We being still without strength, in the due time Christ has died for the ungodly" (chap 5: 6) and His desire is that we should be strong. Indeed we read in Ephesians that "the surpassing greatness of his power ... the might of his strength in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead" is "towards us who believe", (chap 1: 19, 20). That would encourage us from the divine side to be strong.

The thought that is in mind is that our local assemblies should be strong positions. In Isaiah it says, "We have a strong city" (chap 26: 1). We have learned through recent experiences that strength does not lie in numbers but in the moral and spiritual fibre of the personnel in local assemblies. I think that Corinth had numbers because it seems that there were many breaking bread there; but it was to them that Paul had to say, "Quit yourselves like men; be strong", 1 Cor 16: 13. There is a need in every local assembly of effective manhood. You will find from Mr Darby's notes those different words for man - man as a race; man as weak and mortal; and man as suggesting effective manhood and that is what Paul wanted at Corinth when he says, "Quit yourselves like men; be strong". We may say that from the divine side everything is in our favour. From our side we need faith and the Spirit and the exercise of faith. Abraham was strengthened by faith, he found strength in faith and we can be strengthened with power by the Father's Spirit in the inner man. It is a question of our personal links with Christ and

with the Spirit in view of being strong because God's mind is that every one of us should be strong both morally and spiritually.

I read in Chronicles of this young man (I think I can speak of him as young because he started to reign at 25 and died when he was 41). The account of him in both Kings and Chronicles is very brief but positive, but Chronicles has this added touch by the Spirit that he "became strong, for he prepared his ways before Jehovah his God". Now I would like just to commend that matter to all you young people, to prepare your ways day by day before your God.

This young man became strong because he did that, God helped him to do it. We are speaking to the young brethren but what about the older ones? Do we know what it is to prepare our ways before our God? It is clear that he was a man who knew his God, "Jehovah his God". Daniel says, "The people that know their God shall be strong" (chap 11: 32). You want then to develop in your knowledge of God, your personal links with God, your personal links with Christ and your personal links with the Spirit. Here is this man Jotham and it says "he became strong, for he prepared his ways before Jehovah his God". That is a very practical matter. You can see that young man every morning before he went out going over the day with God - I am thinking about this, I have in mind to do that, I have in mind to go there' - and it would stand the scrutiny of God Himself. Can you young persons here today cultivate that exercise? Just face up to it.

I know what young people are because I am still young myself and in the morning it is as long a lie as possible and off to work with as little breakfast as possible. Get up five minutes earlier and go over the day that is before you with God and ask His help in it. The psalmist says that: "Do *thou* for me" (Ps 109: 21) and "The steps of a man are established by Jehovah, and he delighteth in his way", Ps 37: 23.

So now, young people, God wants the pleasure of your company. He took pleasure in Enoch's company. What a day Enoch lived in, a day of ungodliness. In the epistle of Jude four times in a verse the matter of ungodliness is mentioned and yet there is a man that walked with God and pleased Him. I think every morning Enoch would come into God's presence and say 'this is what is before me

today' and God would give him a sense that He approved of it. If it cannot stand God's scrutiny, do not go on with it, do not do it because it will war against your soul, it will hinder your spiritual progress, it will be your downfall. Just cultivate this exercise of getting into God's presence every morning and preparing your ways before Him, because God always delights in your company. God has a heart, God has affections and He wants man's company, not the company of beasts but man's company. He will have it up there but He wants it here, though how few are giving God that pleasure today. I say that soberly. God wants the pleasure of your company in a sustained way day by day. That is why He has reconciled you. Reconciliation means God wants to have you for His own pleasure and satisfaction. So this is a healthy exercise to face, morning by morning, to go over the whole day with God, and whatever can stand God's scrutiny, go on with it, but if it cannot stand God's scrutiny, do not touch it. What are you going to do after this meeting you young people? Just be practical and face it. What is your programme for tonight? Will it stand God's scrutiny? If it will stand it then it is all right, but if it does not stand God's scrutiny, do not do it because it will mean your downfall spiritually. The best thing you can do tonight is to get amongst the brethren, into the houses of the saints, for I am sure there is a house for every one of you. Find a home amongst the brethren and you will be safe there, you will be protected there. That is the reason for this young man becoming strong. It says "Jotham became strong, for he prepared his ways before Jehovah his God".

We come to Exodus where the king of Egypt is challenging the midwives. He says, "Why have ye done this, and saved the male children alive? " It says, "the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian; for they are strong". What a word for the sisters! We want the sisters to be strong. Thank God many of them have shown that they were strong. Many sisters stood when we failed. They saw things I did not see because of their personal links with Christ and the Spirit and they were going on with the truth, going on with the ministry and in their secret links; they proved they were strong.

They proved themselves like the Hebrew women. The midwives say here that the Hebrew women are strong and not as the Egyptians. Sometimes we get concerned about the Egyptians, their fashions and ways. We do not need to be concerned about that. The Egyptians like to look lovely - that is the Egyptian side of things . Be concerned to be amongst the Hebrew women that are strong, strong morally as having turned their backs on Egypt and its pleasures, and strong spiritually as cultivating your own links with the Spirit. But then the attack by the king of Egypt is on the male side. In Genesis 3 it was the female; the serpent studied the man and the woman and he attacked the woman, and wrought havoc. Here he is attacking the male side, but God defeats him. Think of the Lord Jesus, think of the blessedness that flows from the contemplation of the manhood of Jesus in the gospels, from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John's standpoint; and He says "the ruler of the world comes, and in me he has nothing", John 14: 30. As Mr Taylor said, there was no weak side in Jesus. All the weak sides are in us and the enemy would exploit it, the side of things that is susceptible to prejudice, susceptible to false witness, personal feeling, and all that kind of thing. Once the enemy gets in there he says, I will attack the male side, because his objective is to disrupt the service of God and administration in the assembly. We need the male side for the service of God - "Three times in the year shall all thy males appear before Jehovah thy God ... and they shall not appear before Jehovah empty", Deut 16: 16. We need the male side for administration according to God in the assembly, free of the weak side. Let us be men; it involves standing up to the moral side in our own histories, like these Hebrew women, in the side of being strong subjectively. What light there has been amongst us! The answer to it in subjective conditions is the great need amongst us. The Hebrew women were strong - strong subjective conditions in the local assemblies. So how do you start being a man? At the end of Romans 7 you discover your true self - "I myself" (v.25). You learn the weak element in yourself and then say, 'I will be a man, will stand by the truth, by divine principles; whatever anyone says, I with the mind will serve God's law and with the flesh sin's law'. That is where

true effective manhood starts. Then pray to the Spirit to support you and work that out in a practical sense. So what comes into view is Christ, that is very precious - the male child, a woman bringing in a male child - not the Egyptians (you will not find any traits of Christ among the Egyptians, not one), but these Hebrew women can bring in a male child - the power of motherhood to bring in Christ in a subjective way in a local assembly. May it be so in view of the pleasure of God and in view of effective administration. These midwives too, of course, have a part to fill. You think of localities where there are young people in need of the service of the midwives, this skilful service that would help some young people in their critical exercises. The midwife just serves at a critical point and there are many of these young people going through a critical stage. It might be this way, it might be that way. It might be the testimony, it might be the world. It is just at that point that the service of the midwife is needed. May we take on this service and be alongside these young people in the critical exercises of their souls and help them through to find their own feet and be men in that sense. Hebrew women are strong. It sounds unusual to say, Women and men, but it is what is subjective in view of bringing in Christ so that He will be in expression in our local assemblies.

Then in Joshua. I hardly feel equal to speaking about Caleb because he is a man who has come right through, right through from Egypt, right through the wilderness and he has wholly followed Jehovah his God. What a man he is! He is a man who has set his sights on the purpose of God, he laid hold of God's purposes. What we want to understand and go in for are God's purposes: His purposes are unchangeable. There is the inheritance, there is what is ours by right of the birthright because we are Christ's brethren; but behind it all lies God's purpose, what He purposed in Himself before the foundation of the world and which He has never revised and will never change; and when time is over God will have a full answer to all His purposes. So here is a man who wants Hebron. He says that he is able to take it. He is not being presumptuous. He says, "I am this day eighty-five years old. I am still this day strong ... as my

strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in". For war, yes, it involves conflict. Mr Taylor said that the toughest battles are from Colossians to Ephesians, from Hebron to Jerusalem. To get into the gain of God's purposes involves conflict because the enemy will dog your steps steadily the whole way. But here is a man who says he is strong. He had wholly followed God, he had maintained his own links with Christ and the Spirit and, in the power and grace of the Spirit, he feels equal to taking the inheritance, to taking Hebron. It is a remarkable thing that there is no discouragement. He never thinks he is going to be defeated. He never thinks the Anakim are going to kill him. When he goes out he will deal with all the opposing elements that would hinder his enjoyment of the inheritance, of Hebron, of God's thoughts and purpose, and he will come back again. You cannot kill a man that is over Jordan, can you? He is in the power of resurrection and he knows that greater is He that is in us than he that is against us.

There is strong encouragement and he gets what he goes in for.

You only get what you go in for. You young people, you get what you go in for and God has the best in His heart for us. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. The assembly's place is the best. We are the first of all the families. We have the choicest place in divine purpose. Go in for it, enjoy it and you will get it.

May it be so, for His Name's sake.

Grangemouth

6th October 1972

THE CHILDREN'S OBJECT LESSONS

The Scriptures show that God takes a tender interest in the youngest of His creatures. Even a bird's nest with eggs or fledglings was cared for in the law given through Moses. It is also remarkable that this followed immediately the command that a woman must not dress as a man, nor a man as a woman. Thus we must learn in detail what is displeasing and what is pleasing to God.

Psalm 84 reminds us that a house is made for the sparrow, the commonest and least valuable of birds, and the Lord Jesus said that not even one of these is forgotten before God. The swallow, perhaps the most restless bird, finds a nest where she may lay her young. It is said that such birds sometimes fly all day and all night in search of food.

You will remember that Jesus spoke of the hen gathering her chickens under her wings. He even wept because His people would not come to Him for salvation. Think of being put to shame by a brood of little chicks!

Once, just after a forest fire, some travellers were surprised to see some chickens run out from under a hen which had suffered the heat to protect them. This shows better, perhaps, than words how the love of Jesus led Him to die so as to save us from judgment.

A young animal which became of use to the Lord was the colt of an ass. Although cared for it had been kept tied up to protect it. More important still, by this means the colt was just where the Lord could call for it to ride upon. Do you not think that it is a great honour to be ready for His use?

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