

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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CONTENTS

RELATIONSHIPS IN LOVE

THE UNIQUE GLORY OF THE SON

THE NEED FOR DIRECTION

A LETTER FROM MR STONEY

THE CONFLICT

THE CHILDREN'S TREASURES

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RELATIONSHIPS IN LOVE

A.J.E.Welch

John 1: 35 39; 20: 17; Revelation 1: 10, 11

I take it that John, the writer of these verses, would have the full, completed course of God's testimony before him; He would know what we spoke of earlier as the origins and he looks on right to the end. John, in that sense, according to what he writes, is unique as having the extended prophetic view of things right through to completion. Yet it is he who reminds us of the most intimate, affectionate relationships, whether seen in Christ or in the saints.

Christianity, in this remarkable order of things in the Spirit, is very rich in what belongs to the realm of intimacy and relationships in true affection: relationships known in the real and substantial working of the affections that belong in them. So that what we have in John's writings and what we have expressed in them as to John himself has a peculiar bearing on the present time. Like John, we are called upon to face the realities of God's ways here in government; that has always been true at any point in the testimony for those who stand in it but it seems peculiarly so at the present time, when manifestly the closing up of everything is upon us. The powers of evil are reaching a point of development, in the sense in which evil develops, not in our time without the restraint the presence of the Spirit brings, but reaching a point of development where we would all acknowledge that it seems that God must come in. Yet shall we, dear brethren, be hardened or be governed in our outlook just by what is in government? As we think of the recent times of conflict, is the realisation of the realities of conflict bringing about any hardness? I believe that the challenge of that is very real. God is taking a certain course, a solemn course, in determining things in His governmental ways but shall we, in the midst of those ways, be out of touch with what the Spirit brings out in John the prophet, a man through whom so much was unfolded regarding the course of matters prophetically, a man to whom so much was committed as to matters which the Lord necessarily had to call attention to in certain assemblies:

matters of a grave character, matters involving the possibility that the Lord might, in one place at least, take a candlestick out of its place?

But in the midst of these disclosures what kind of a man was John? What kind of persons are we? A lot has taken place which, were we not with God, would tend to harden us. God would have us to be with Him so that nothing but His thoughts, His affections, His feelings shall be governing us. Therefore the need is great of constant engagement with the Person of Christ. Let us get back to that: I feel the urgency of saying it, that all that is presented to us in that glorified Man might at no time be lost sight of. All that the Spirit would present to our hearts in Jesus is increasingly and powerfully to affect us. Some may say that this is objective truth; yes, but the objective is a divine objective and what is more formative to the heart and for the workings of the conscience than the beholding of Jesus, as He is, in a realm which is fit to receive Him? Think of what came out in Jesus here in a realm of things publicly that, in a certain sense, was not fit to receive Him and yet He was in it. We think of what came out; we are to think of Jesus where He was taken, received up in glory. Let us get a view of Christ up there, God's beloved Son in a scene that is for the glory which is shining in Him.

So we have in this first chapter this verse this very simple incident. We have often perhaps referred to it in preaching, yet it is a very vital incident; its very simplicity is to affect us. My conviction is that it is usually the simple basic things that relate to Christianity that we need most. Thank God for the unfolding of the truth in its full wealth and extent; thank God for those who, under His hand, are available and able to unfold the extent of the truth, but let us see that we do not miss the simple basis of what God has opened up to us in His glad tidings, the great essentials that stand related to what God Himself has called us to have part in. So there are two disciples, disciples initially of John. The first need is for us to be just that, disciples: not disciples of John the baptist, nor of anyone here, not disciples of any man in that sense, but disciples of Jesus. How simply this is brought about: "And, looking at Jesus as he walked, he says, Behold the Lamb of God"; just as if he would say to those who

heard and to us this afternoon, Everything depends upon Him. It does not say any more. The time comes as to these things when it is not a time to say any more but just to get into the vital experience of what has been said. Our minds are apt to run on, we are apt to speak at length, to move quickly from one thing to another (and there are times when that is appropriate and needed) but this is a time when John just says "Behold the Lamb of God" and he stops. When you come to ponder it, how much John had said in five words. The truth of God is like that. I trust every brother will be encouraged here to fill his part in what we speak of as the prophetic meeting: there may be just five words like these five words of John's and yet the five words may bring about a revolution in someone which is to yield richly for God Himself. Let us go on with the truth, present the truth, speak as God gives opportunity and grace to speak. Let us be engaged with what is properly our portion, beloved brethren, and may our engagement with it come out in us as we speak together and as we speak to men and above all as we speak to God. "Behold the Lamb of God": John would doubtless be a man who could say a great deal more if he felt it was indicated to do so, but he stops. I find this happening, if I may speak of any little measure of experience, pretty often. Just grasp these great, these profound elements of the truth, start to contemplate, seek the Spirit's help that something may come into experience that belongs to what is being presented.

So it says "the two disciples heard him speaking, and followed Jesus". How beautifully simple it is! They heard John the baptist speaking and they followed Jesus; nothing, so to say, demonstrative as men speak; but what had happened in the souls of those two persons? They followed Jesus. The word had borne fruit, there is no sign now of their retaining attachment in discipleship to John; they are bringing out the features of discipleship to Jesus. The account does not say that they became disciples of Jesus but they brought out the features of discipleship and that, dear brethren, is vital. I may claim to be a disciple but not be walking in the features that belong to discipleship. I may make claims - any one of us may make

claims - and although they may not be spoken claims there may be inward assumptions with some of us to touch of service has come in! He addresses Himself to these two: "But Jesus having turned, and seeing them following, says to them, What seek ye?" In one way the Lord is searching them out, in another way He is pursuing His links with them that they may be fully attached to Him; and see the remarkable significance of the way the Lord does it. As He seeks a link with you or me, He will search us as to what we really want - "What seek ye?" The Lord's grace is never far from what I would call the moral realities of the situation on our side, and He is testing out these two - "What seek ye?" We may ask ourselves, each one - I ask myself - what did I come here for today, what, did I go to the reading for last night, why should I be at the Supper in the morning? You can put scripture and fine statements to these things, but what is really governing me in these matters? The Lord is searching us out - "What seek ye?" It is just bringing out that it is the simple basic matters for which there is such need - "What seek ye?". Am I in fellowship, as we speak, with mixed motives; am I serving with mixed motives; am I moving among the brethren with mixed motives?

"And *they* said to Him, Rabbi (which being interpreted, signifies Teacher), where abidest thou?" - a very spontaneous answer, an answer which (if I could use the expression) rings true at once; and the Lord delights in that, things we say and things that are held in our minds which ring true because they are the fruit of a real, longing heart. The Lord will test us out; we should remain very shallow if He did not do so. The necessary moral strength for such a time as this would never be found with us if the Lord in His love did not test us out. "What seek ye?" He brings these two to this fine result. The question is "Where abidest thou? He says to them Come and see".

All the expressions used are so plain, so simple, so direct. "Come and see". Would you like to come and see? Two disciples moving together, just two! The Lord is not addressing Himself here to a crowd - you do not find that in John's writings: John is not thinking in terms of crowds in a positive sense. A time in the history does come when thousands were involved in the touches of blessing that God

brought in, showing what God is able to do, but in general the choicest elements of the truth are not worked out in relation to crowds, they stand very closely related in Scripture to what is obscure according to man, and small in its proportions, but intrinsically of quality which is very precious in the sight of heaven.

Think of two dwelling with Jesus that day! You wonder what they experienced; we are not going to speculate upon that; the point is that they were with Jesus. They were where He abode. That is the great point of my remarks. There is the extended scope which is true even here: think of what the Lord was able to carry into effect, the whole extent of His work in redemption, the whole extent of His teaching, the whole extent of His activity of which John says so feelingly that if the things that Jesus did "were written one by one, I suppose that not even the world itself could contain the books written," chap 21: 25; John is saying, See how vast the whole matter is and yet you can just dwell in intimacy with the One who is the very central point of it all, even Jesus. Did you ever find Him reluctant to have to say to you as you went in? If you did, did you search out the course of things that may, in your mind, have given occasion to that sense of His reluctancy? What a matter it is to be consciously in the presence of Jesus, not because you need something, not because there is a moral necessity to get to Him on account of some deflection; just to get into the presence of Jesus! We are so apt to bring Him in when need arises, to cry to Him when some failure arises - and rightly so of course - but are our dealings with Christ limited to failure and need? Think of those disciples in what you could speak of as the central core of this precious gospel, chapters 13 onwards, the way they were with Jesus! There was need, there was failure even, with some that were there. But what was prominent as they were with Jesus was the unfolding of the divine glories and the Lord was able to keep it that way. Get into the Lord's presence not because there is a specific need to go to Him but just because you love Him and long for Him and long to have something unfolded which His love for you would cause Him delight to unfold. Maybe for many of us this is a new way to seek the presence of Jesus, just to seek an unfolding from Him not because there has

been a failure, not because there is some special need arising; just for Himself, for His own sake, that we may take on what is uppermost in His heart which John so distinctly did take on as he went forward. So it says that these two abode with Him that day. It does not say more. It does not go over what they experienced, no detail is given; the point is not that the detail need be given but rather that the essential point with these two is that they abode with Him that day. Is that our experience, dear brethren? I speak in this just of our experience personally: do we know what it is to spend time where the abiding place of Jesus is?

Well, a lot transpired before this precious message was given to Mary. The Lord says to her, Mary, just the simple personal reference to her by her name, Mary. The name itself as we know involves, in its meaning, experience of bitterness. It is like Mara in the book of Ruth, bitterness in experience. We are not without that.

I spoke earlier of the possibility of our being hardened, but the bitterness of experience is not to harden us but to make Christ more precious to us as it was with Mary. So she gets a sense of who He is. What a breaking in upon the soul of that woman when Jesus spoke to her! She discerned who it was that spoke she was longing after Him, her tears were shed because of her longing - what for - we might say better who for? How many tears have we shed because of our longing after Jesus? We have shed tears about many things, many times, but how often into those tears something of self has crept, a disappointment of something to which we have aspired, a realisation of some ideal that we cherished has had to be removed.

These are tears of longing for Jesus and the Lord answers those tears and says to her, Mary. That is that at that moment, as He said it, this one person was specifically in His mind: He says, Mary. Not that you could limit His mind - being who He is you can never limit the mind of Jesus - but as here in manhood beyond death He is addressing one woman and saying to her, Mary. That is, she is the point to Him at that moment. There is a wealth of meaning in that as we link it with what came out as to the mystery through Paul later, what Mary signifies as presenting the attractiveness of the feminine

side in relation to Christ; but I speak of her this evening just as a person to whom the Lord addressed Himself - Mary. That is, a link is established which the Lord Jesus has confirmed from His side in addressing Himself to her, as if He would break into that woman's soul and enshrine Himself in her heart that He may never be displaced. So He can trust her; what a message was her trust! I suppose words have rarely meant so much as these words meant, that the Lord entrusted to Mary. "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God". What concentration is here in respect of the relationships which are the great theme and point of this message! "My Father and your Father". What it involved for the heart of Christ to speak of His Father, to speak to His brethren and say to them "Your Father".

What it involves for the hearts of the saints, to the hearts of His brethren, to receive a message like this and realise what it is to be brought into sonship - not that that is expanded here as to us, but the point is in view here. "Go to my brethren" is in the plural; do we value the brethren as the Lord speaks of them? Not the way He speaks involving the moral side, which is another presentation of matters where there is the moral qualification for it, but the side that relates to divine purpose. "Go to my brethren". Actual existing persons at that time are brought into this relationship in its vital power, not just through light but in its vital power in that Christ was out of death, His work complete and the relationship in its substance was in view now. What this meant for the Lord; what does it mean to us? To be right in relation with Christ - His brethren. We sometimes sing 'Out of Thy death has sprung a wondrous living throng' (Hymn 152). Does it thrill us to realise that in the infiniteness of grace we can number ourselves as God numbers us of that throng, a wondrous living throng. Not just the light of the matter is the point, but the realisation of it. I suppose every one of us here can quote this message. How often we come back to this scripture, and rightly so, and always get something fresh from it, the realisation of a substantial subsisting relationship with Christ. What does it mean to us, dear brethren? Are we going lightly to lay aside any element of the truth that stands related to this glorious situation that is

presented here? Is the enemy going to catch any one of us away?

That is a real challenge. The Lord would have us, as the very challenge itself comes, to get into the strength of fresh links with Himself and the realisation of what these relationships are. In the infiniteness of God's wisdom it is left for Paul to develop the side of sonship by adoption, that is our place in sonship. The Lord, so to say, introduces this great subject here: "My Father and your Father", and having introduced it, it would seem that He left it for Paul to develop. That is how things were at the beginning, that is to say that things were to be come into in experience and reality, even before the light of them was clarified and extended. So that as we have often remarked the assembly was here. The assembly was formed immediately at Pentecost, and yet those who were involved in that precious vessel would scarcely realise at first, may be, what was happening, but as Paul was brought in the whole matter was set out and maintained. It is to show us the urgency of what is vital, to get into the experience; they would have had it, I suppose, in those forty days, the Lord coming in and going out amongst them. How vital the experience is. The Lord in these days, in grace which is ever so simple for the benefit of all of us, is showing us the way in to this wonderful basis of experience - "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God".

Well, this passage would repay yet more study by every one of us. It is not for us to dwell upon in any length now but I am just emphasising the Lord's urgent concern to bring His own into the intimacy of real experience with Himself, and here with the Father, yes, with God. What a blessed thing to speak to the Father about Christ and about Himself, to get into the presence of God and to be in the consciousness that it is God in whose presence you are, the blessed God known to our hearts in the Father and in the Son and in the Spirit, the glory of God in some sense opened out to us! I suppose in a sense that is elementary experience, it belongs to Christianity in its very beginnings, but it belongs to Christianity in relation to Christ and the assembly right through into eternity, just to

be in the presence of God, free there, having access, as the word is, "through him ... by one Spirit to the Father", Eph 2: 18; This is all for our heart to come into, not just as directed by active minds but as knowing the promptings of that precious, endless, immeasurable love in the heart of Christ and in the Father's heart towards His own. We are to come into it, bathe our souls in it and get into what is the true spirit and character of things in what we speak of as Christianity.

Well, at the end, John in Patmos addresses the saints: "John, your brother". He speaks of being in the Spirit on the Lord's day. How often that scripture has been quoted! How often do we know the power of it? I leave that concern with all our hearts. John hears a great voice; the voice says "What thou seest write in a book, and send to the seven assemblies". Are those assemblies, in what they mean, precious to us? Can we view the whole scope of the testimony in the character in which God has asserted it and is maintaining it in the local assemblies? Just see the Lord in relation to each and all to bring in something which relates to what is the intimate concern to the heart of Christ at the present time - "send to the seven assemblies". As remarked at the beginning, some of the things the Lord says are very solemn; but behind even the most solemn there is the Lord's love for the assembly. His concern is to get every local assembly right, to meet every condition that tended to shut Him out by the positive assertion of His own mind and of His own love. The Lord is equal to that. We might have said that these seven assemblies involved mixed conditions, but the Lord is addressing Himself to them in the faithfulness of His Love; He would have John with Him in addressing Himself to them.

So, dear brethren, there is work to be done, there are conditions to be met, there are matters that must rightly come under notice as the Lord draws attention to them; but He would strengthen us and vitalise us by the sense of the power that is in His own hand and the love with which He is working to reach a full end for God in this wonderful time in which we are. The time of the Spirit might rightly be spoken of as the time of the working out of things in local assemblies, and the Lord would sustain us in working things through

to what delights His heart and what is pleasurable to the heart of God in us at the end. May we be committed to it, understanding that these choice, heavenly relationships of love are to be at the heart of everything, that God may be fitly represented in the testimony and fitly served in what delights His own heart. May it be so.

BARNSTAPLE

11 March 1972

THE UNIQUE GLORY OF THE SON

C.Hammond

John 17: 24; Ephesians 1: 5, 6

The hymn and the prayer seemed to indicate the line that the Spirit would stress at the present time. Reference has been made to the need of conformity to Christ. Paul touches on that in Romans, so that it is evidently in mind in the gospel, "to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8: 29), and the scripture referred to in 2 Corinthians 3 involves, we might say, a radical change; not just an objective view but a subjective result which involves a metamorphosis, a change of form, which should proceed in a meeting like this and other gatherings, for the Spirit of God is active in a formative way.

But I wish to refer to the external results of all this divine working. We have been taught that the assembly and those of it will be the nearest family of all in the universe of bliss. Of the many families that will be named of the Father the assembly will have the nearest place, and the Lord seems to indicate that in His prayer to His Father in this verse 24. He had referred, in verse 22, to a glory that was shared, but here He refers to a glory that is not said to be shared; it is unique to Himself. It is a great thing to get beyond what the outgoings of God, and the declaration and revelation of God, mean to us. They mean a great deal, of course, but worship, as I understand, flows from occupation with the Giver and not merely the gifts; and that no doubt enters into the service of God and what follows the Supper.

So here the Lord speaks to His Father. It is most affecting that this should be recorded, we may say, by an appreciative lover, one who knew what Jesus' bosom was like. The Lord says "Father, as to those whom thou hast given me"; they were the direct gift of the Father to Him, the nearest, as we have said, that could be possible for the creature ever to be. "Father, as to those whom thou hast

given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me". Obviously it is a glory given to Him as Man, and yet unique to Him. It will be a wonderful thing, dear brethren, to be there; to be constituted suitable to be there by divine workmanship, and to be so near as at least to apprehend something of what this glorious Man, the Son, is to His Father - "My glory which thou hast given me". But immediately he goes on to say "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world", as though there is an immediate link with what was before the foundation of the world, love being the link. You might say, Well He was loved because of what He was going to undertake, and that probably enters into it; but I do recall Mr Taylor sen commenting that it was not necessarily His being loved anticipatively in view of something that was to happen; it was one Person loving Another. It seems to refer to who it was that became Man. We cannot enter into that but we can behold the unique glory that that Person has as the Son. Think of the creature getting some apprehension of what the Son is to the Father, the unique glory that He has! Think of what it was for the One we know as Father to have One down here in flesh and blood, as we have heard, walking here absolutely pleasurable to His Father! Think of what it was for the Father to have Him in His presence in glorious manhood! Who can penetrate into the links that exist between the Father and the Son in that particular relative position and relationship; never forgetting *who* the Son is? Hence, the Lord goes on to speak of what was before the foundation of the world. It seems that we are in the presence, dear brethren, of divine love, a love which, as to us, is made known in a form that is intelligible at least, and apprehended, if not comprehended, for Paul says "The love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge" (Eph 3: 19), and yet to be near enough to see the unique glory that Jesus has, the glorified Man in the presence of God, His Father. What a privilege it will be to be there without a thought about ourselves as to our blessing, though that will enter into it, but to have occupation uninterruptedly with Him who is everything to His Father and His God.

So Paul touches on this. He says that we are accepted or "taken ... into favour in the Beloved". He had spoken about adoption but he seems to single out the Lord with this remarkable designation, "The Beloved". Who in the universe, dear brethren, could be that but this glorious Person? Who could have a right to that title? David in some representative sense, is called that, but uniquely Christ is it, I believe, and we are "taken ... into favour in the Beloved". What fulness there is in that title which Paul gives Him in Ephesians! It seems to run very near to "My new name" (Rev 3: 12) that the Lord speaks of to Philadelphia. The Lord has a new name and we are to know it and understand it, that He has a new name in those conditions of glory - eternal conditions. But what impressed me was the final results of the divine workmanship. We are understandably occupied with transformation and conformation now, and that has to proceed and should be proceeding, particularly as conditions amongst those we are walking with are more amenable to the disclosures of divine thoughts, and the flow of the Spirit is more evident, and the spirit of the occasions, as well as the content of them, is being enjoyed. But what it will be in those eternal conditions, and to look upon the unique glory of the Son, to understand in some measure what He is to His Father. What do we know about the relations between Them and the positions They have assumed in the disclosures of love? But to be there, dear brethren, and capacitated to be there by the divine workmanship within us that is going on now (see Eph 2: 10) and to see His glory which the Father has given Him, and then to understand that He, the Person, was there, not as Son but as loved before the foundation of the world.

Well, dear brethren; what higher favour could there be than to be accepted, or taken into favour, in the Beloved? That is the divine purpose. It is what the Spirit of God is at, that the family in which we are included in this dispensation is going to be the nearest to the blessed God in the fullest possible way. We should highly prize the present moment, for the preparation and the work is to proceed

according to the place divine love has devised for us. May God help us in this direction!

LONDON

30 October 1973

THE NEED FOR DIRECTION

F.von Rein

John 21: 1-12 (to "and dine")

Beloved brethren, this is nothing new. This scripture is well known to us, but I came to it in our reading that the Lord has something to say to us this day. Here we have a picture of what can happen if we try to act without a directive from above. Wanting to feed the brethren is a good thought and as Peter looks around and sees they are hungry, he decided, 'We will have to provide some food for them' and says "I go to fish". It is a very good desire to want to feed the brethren but how can we think of bringing anything to the brethren that will feed them if it is not directed from above, having no instruction from Christ? It is remarkable to observe that the whole company went with him: "We also come with thee". One wrong direction, one wrong thought, and the whole company, all these brethren went with him. One would have thought that they would have asked 'But Peter, who told you to do this?' Where did you get the instruction from? Did you get the direct instruction from Christ? No question is asked. "We also come with thee". This is the danger of any movement when seeking to do anything without having direction from above, without the Lord's and the Spirit's direction. Let us beware of that. Beloved brethren, we have gone so wrong in recent years. We said something about it today, we said we have made a mess. Did they not make a mess here, a real mess? They worked

the whole night and caught nothing; yes, caught nothing. Just think of it! Ah! beloved, only if we do anything under the leading and direction of Christ and the Spirit will we be able to provide food for the brethren and get food for ourselves. But if we do it out of other motives, just because we think we can do it in our own strength, we will be defeated.

How gracious the Lord is! He comes there and says "Children"; if you see the note, it means 'little children'. Look how he speaks to them! You know, they were those who walked with the Lord Jesus all those years, you would have thought they had gained experience and had learned. Now He has to turn and go after them, and He said to them little children, "have ye anything to eat?". They have to be honest; they could not help but be honest; the answer is, No. Beloved - be dependent upon the Spirit and the leading of Christ, and the direction from Christ, then we can be of help to our brethren and get helped ourselves. So the Lord Jesus shows His grace, He teaches them a lesson. He says "Cast the net at the right side of the ship". Now, you know, it is quite interesting to me to read this instruction because these men were fishermen, they would have known their job; but, you see, without direction from above, their effort became a dismal failure. But then when the Lord says "Cast the net at the right side" they obeyed and cast the net as directed, resulting in a net full of great fishes. I think that teaches us all something of great import, namely always to bear in mind that we want to have directions from above at any time when we desire to be of help to the brethren and also to get food for ourselves. Are we then throwing the net out under directions from above? Sure, there will be a multitude of great fishes. How wonderful to think that there was one who recognised the authority of Christ; he said "It is the Lord". Yes "It is the Lord". What impressions they must have gained! They had tried to do something in their own strength and they failed miserably, made such a mess of it, but when Christ comes and gives instructions the whole expedition becomes a great success. Oh! Let us be subject to the Lord and the Spirit's leading in all that we undertake. How often we have erred – I speak for

myself – but then, you see, when you have instructions from above you will do the right thing, and then you find that the Lord can make use of it. It says here "When therefore they went out on the land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus says to them, Bring of the fishes which ye have now taken".

Observe that a meal was there already. Christ has all the provisions, Christ had feeling for His people and discerned that they were hungry and needed feeding, but they needed teaching too. So now He says "Bring of the fishes which ye have now taken. Simon Peter went up and drew the net to the land full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty three". How useful he became, after having misled the brethren! Now, under instructions from Christ, he becomes a most useful servant. He pulls the net in by himself, a big net full of fishes. How wonderfully the Lord teaches us!

Let us ponder how the Lord in His grace and patience in these last few years has sought to teach us so that we might see what is right and continue under divine directions in the testimony. He says "Come and dine"; yes, "Come and dine". What a wonderful thing!

You can go through scripture and find that, wherever there is a new movement of the people of God, God saw to it that they were well fed. When they moved out of Egypt they did not go hungry. When they moved across the wilderness they were fed; when they went through Jordan - of course there they had to secure food in hunting, but the food was there - and then in the land the old corn of the land and the unleavened bread and roasted corn. Oh how wonderful God is! God provides for each one who depends upon Him, and is under His directions, that which is needed for sustaining power; and so He will reach the end with each one of us that He has in view. We are not supposed to be left hungry, spiritually hungry. There is always something to sustain us, to support us. When we sometimes become discouraged - and I can assure you when you are in a locality where there are only two, that is the truth; the devil comes and tempts you to rid yourself of this loneliness - then we are revived by turning to Christ; He says, I am sufficient, I am the bread, I am the life; and He feeds us anew and encourages us again, strengthens us

to continue not in our own power and strength but under His direction, by the Spirit, in His power. So let us be dependent upon the leading of the Lord and the Spirit and on the feeding by Christ.

Do not seek to do anything in your own strength, you will not succeed, the net will be empty; but put it out on the right side under the direction of Christ and it will be filled with a multitude of great fishes. How wonderfully God has provided what is food for our spirits, food for our souls! Beloved brethren, how wonderfully God has provided for all of us and He will see us through. He will surely see us through to the end; He will not forsake us. God is faithful. Amen.

TORONTO

1 June 1973

A LETTER FROM MR STONEY

"Holding the Head" must be practically lost when the unity of the Spirit is overlooked, because it is from Him all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and united together, maketh increase unto God. What grieves me is that you should appear to disregard or ignore divine principles, in order to effect what you deem a good service to the flock, as if it were not possible to effect this in any other way. Could anything be urged more condemnatory of the principles we have been advocating at all costs for so many years than that such as you should openly and persistently avow that in order to provide relief for the Lord's people in circumstances of great difficulty you must abandon principles? This is as much as saying your principles will do very well for a prosperous day but in a day of difficulty they are specious and impracticable. I should have thought that the principles of God were the very reverse; that man's contrivance might do in prosperous times but that God's principles alone could meet the day of trial. Surely God can defend His own.

My conviction, thank the Lord, is that the more disorganised everything is the more strictly must adhere to principle. "God hath given thee all them that sail with thee". I am safe if I sail with Paul. I only use this as an illustration to show that if I adhere to God's principles, I must through this be safe. Surely under no circumstances would you approve the act of King Saul? When, disappointed that Samuel had not come at the time appointed, he overlooked all principle and precept in order to secure the countenance of Jehovah, Samuel says, "Thou hast done foolishly" – he should have waited for Samuel. We must wait for the Lord, He has His own time and manner of deliverance. Like the disciples, we may be toiling in rowing, and Jesus had not come to them, though it was already dark.

I have still to say to my soul, "He that believeth shall not make haste". My distress is that you should give countenance by your act to the leaven which is everywhere working - even that the end justifies the means, and that the unity of the Spirit cannot be kept

that there is not as much unity between the members of Christ's body as there is between the members of our natural body, but that any one or more of the members of Christ's body may act independently of the rest when there is any project they think right to accomplish. No one should act independently unless his brethren were committed to independent principles. No slowness, no timidity, no ignorance, warrants one to act independently.

Beloved brother, do comfort us by retracing your steps ... You have transgressed against the church of God - the dearest object of the heart of Christ - you have touched grievously the apple of His eye. Thank God, there is a way for you to retrieve yourself, one both honourable to you and for the glory of Christ. I beseech you, for the Lord's sake, to accept truly and graciously the rebuke you deserve.

Defeat the enemy, and delight your brethren ... by repudiating the step you have taken, and the Lord will help you.

1881

(Letters. J. B. Stoney, Vol 1. New Edition pp 28-29)

THE CONFLICT

Light divine, assuredly provided,
Jehovah-jireh
Gen 22: 14

Jehovah-nissi
Exod 17: 15

Jehovah-shalom
Judg 6: 24

Jehovah-shammah
Ezek 48: 35
Jehovah-jireh
Gen 22: 14

Jehovah-nissi
Exod 17: 15

Jehovah-shalom
Judg 6: 24

Jehovah-shammah
Ezek 48: 35
Of heav'n it is - no mountain here would do
Not Zion's, but Ephesian light recovered,
God never did nor would those thoughts review.
Lord, be Thou our banner ever,
Let Thy truth the standard be;
May our footsteps wander never

Nearer to the world to be;
Keep Thy saints in light recovered,
Lead Thy sheep in pastures green,
(Spirit's service fresh discovered),
From earth's hold Thy children wean.

Peace - O Lord, Thou said'st - I leave it,
Peace, my peace it is, I give it.
Ere the battle had begun –
Thou art Victor - it is won.

Peace to you in resurrection,
Peace again ere His ascension,
Speaking peace to all His own,
Blessed man, supreme alone .

O glorious counsel, matchless ways,
God's thoughts secured to endless days,
For He is there, His rest to share;
And now His joy amongst His own
To reach those thoughts in measure known-
Midst weakness e'er,
But He is there.

D.L.Stewart

EDINBURGH 1973

THE CHILDREN'S TREASURES

The Lord Jesus spoke of being rich towards God which is something that believers, young and old, should strive after. Just as the fear of the Lord will be Israel's treasure in the thousand-year reign of Jesus over the earth, so it is ours now. It means that we refer everything to Him, not that we are afraid of a God who has proved His love in the precious blood of Christ. The cost of redemption of even one child's undying soul cannot be compared with silver and gold.

Yet gold is very valuable in this world. How strange that it should be dug from the earth in one place and then most of it buried again in vaults elsewhere! But faith is much more precious than gold which perishes. The deep mine from which faith comes is the word of God and it is won by hearkening so that we may use and enjoy it.

The apostle Peter wrote of precious promises that have been given to us. The meaning is that we have actually received the things promised so as to give us a longing to know better the God who has given us these blessings and to keep us from the growing wickedness in the world around.

From Moses we learn that the reproach of God's suffering people is great riches. Suppose for a moment that it could be put in one side of a great pair of scales and all the attractive treasures of the world in the other! Can you say which side would go down and which side would go up like emptiness?

J.C.Evershed