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WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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"AND WHEN IT RESTED....."

"IN CHRIST"

OIL AS A TYPE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

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"AND WHEN IT RESTED....."

Numbers 10: 33-36; 1 Chronicles 6: 31-33

E.C.B. I wondered whether we might think about the ark being at rest in what we speak of as the provisional time. Eternal conditions are coming - we touch them already by the Spirit - when the ark, that is to say Christ, will for ever be at rest, but God has in view rest in this present time also. At the time we read about in 1 Chronicles they were actually in the land but it was still provisional. In Numbers 10 the ark went before them to seek out a resting-place; it does not say the ark went before them for conflict. We might be helped to think about that "And when it rested, he said, Return, Jehovah, unto the myriads of the thousands of Israel." If my observation is anything to go by a good deal of the conversation and occupation of the brethren still relates to the first thing that Moses said "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thy face." But that was not what the ark went forward for, it was to search out a resting-place. I think the Lord would help us to arrive at the sense of Himself being at rest even in the provisional time in which we are and to consider what flows from that. The first thing as soon as the ark is at rest is an impression of "the myriads of the thousands of Israel". That seems to me to connect with what we touch perhaps at the Supper, that when the Lord comes in and brings in with Him the conditions of rest in which He Himself is we are immediately able to touch the level of things of apprehending "with all the saints." It is not exactly connected with the ark in conflict. We know that when the ark anti-typically has been in conflict, by no means all the myriads of the thousands of Israel either actually or in our own day have entered into conflict with it, but when it rests you have a sense of the whole of what 'Israel' speaks of, "we, being many, are one loaf" 1 Cor 10: 17. I thought the verse in 1 Chronicles was instructive as to what proceeds amongst us in that time; it says, "And these are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of Jehovah after that the ark was in rest." Now that was not in the temple. Evidently (verse 32) they sang from this

time until the temple was set up and then they sang again when the temple was set up - "the trumpeters and singers were as one," 2 Chron 5: 13, but David having in view that the ark was in rest set on the service of song to occupy the saints in the provisional time. That is what we have, and the Lord would have us to experience what it is to minister before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting with singing.

You might say, Could we do that in the wilderness? I think David would tell you that you can and that the Lord would inculcate into our souls the capacity for it. The 'tabernacle of the tent of meeting' conveys a good deal to us,

But the first, historically, was what Moses did, pitching the tent a long way off and calling it the tent of meeting. Now would you go there and sing? That is the position we are in, beloved, that the tent of meeting is pitched and we can go and minister before it with singing. Brethren are not occupied in this section with anything that is doleful or depressing, but with positive enjoyment even in the provisional time. I suggest to the brethren that this is intended to be our occupation much more than "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered".

A.B.P. That is very stimulating. Would the order suggest that there must be a measure of rest with us first, as the ark searched out a resting-place for them?

E.C.B. Yes; we would learn, I suppose, and probably have learned that it is not possible for the saints to rest where Christ does not rest. There was a time when He rested and people could not rest with Him. He was asleep on a pillow but men around Him could not rest even though He was at rest. Unless He is at rest there is no rest for us: but I think He is at rest now. There is conflict still and there will be, but the ark did not go before them to seek out the next conflict, but to seek out a resting-place; and as soon as the resting-place was touched they had an impression of the completeness of what the ark stood for. I think these things should impress us in our present broken day.

E.E.H. Do you think the singing of a hymn after the Supper, and going to the Mount of Olives would somewhat synchronise? It says, "And having sung a hymn, they went out to the mount of Olives", Matt 26: 30. The singing is what I have in mind.

E.C.B. The Lord set that song on evidently.

E.E.H. They were peculiar circumstances too, He was restful in the midst of what was before Him.

E.C.B. Do not these things connect also with the quotation from Psalm 22 in Hebrews 2: 12 "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises"? Hebrews has not to do so much with the brethren in the land but with the brethren in the wilderness. We are in that position characteristically, and it is there as to the outward circumstances that we touch what it is for the Lord to hymn the Father. Mr Taylor and Mr Darby also taught us, that the breaking of bread is in the wilderness and that situation does not change externally. We are lifted into other conditions but externally it is the wilderness. I think our capacity to minister with singing at the entrance of the tent of meeting is related to our capacity to learn what the Minister of the sanctuary is setting on within.

A.B.P. So the hymn that Mr Hoyte has referred to in a sense provides a resting-place for the Father.

E.C.B. Yes, I think so. The Lord evidently set something on there; I think Mr Taylor said that it would be the Lord who set it on, but the disciples evidently were able to join in. I think he also said something to the effect that it would be a hymn prepared for the occasion by the Lord - it is not as if they had a hymn-book - but He set on a hymn and they were all in it. That seems to indicate some capacity to discern His own movements as He proceeds in that realm of the Spirit.

G.D.W. Is that the effect of "in the Christ all shall be made alive", 1 Cor 15: 22?

E.C.B. There is a sphere of things in which nothing dies at all. You might say, Well, that is out of the wilderness: but it is while we are in

one sense in the wilderness that we touch it. When the ark rests in the wilderness and returns to the myriads of the thousands of Israel you have immediately the sense of what Paul touches "our whole twelve tribes" Acts 26: 7. It is a complete idea with nothing failing or diminishing or dying.

L.MacF. So would the seeking out, the three days' journey, be preparatory to our entering into this singing or knowing anything about it?

E.C.B. I suppose we would be concerned to observe the movements of the ark in the three days' journey and discern where it went so that we could discern what kind of resting-place it was seeking out for us. There are many different resting-places in the Scriptures. The cattle go down into the valley and the Spirit of Jehovah gave them rest (see Isa 63: 14), that is one resting-place; then, as I said, Jesus was asleep on a cushion in a storm, that is another restingplace. From week to week, or from day to day, the ark finds a different resting-place for us, but in any case it is a resting-place and as you come there your immediate response is, "Return, Jehovah, unto the myriads of the thousands of Israel." That is to say when He rests He rests in relation to what is complete.

E.T.M. I wondered in regard to the entrance of the testimony into Europe whether both these features were resident in the jailer at Philippi but Paul emphasised the latter. He would have had, you might say, right grounds for pressing the former, "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered;" but what he did emphasise was the latter, "in praying, they were praising God with singing" Acts 16: 25.

E.C.B. There is the woman with the spirit of Python and then the jailer, but as you say, Paul is not occupied with " Rise up,..... and let thine enemies be scattered"; he and Silas with their feet fast in the stocks hymned God, things they had learned from Christ hymning Him in the midst of the assembly.

C.S.E. Would you say a little more as to this thought of rest.

E.C.B. It seems to me that it is very easy for us to be detained on conflict, and I expect all the brethren would confess that they are very detained on reminiscences of conflict. My impression is that the Lord would seek to release us from that. That line of things is related to "Rise up,..... and let thine enemies be scattered", and the Lord does it; and it enters into what might be called a permanent song amongst the people of Israel. The same kind of thought enters into the psalm (not exactly in the same words) as to the Lord being a Man of war and "Blessed be Jehovah..... who teacheth my hands to war" Ps 144: 1. But the Lord would not have us to live on or find our dwelling-place in the reminiscences of conflict. What the Lord would have is for us to be ministering to Him at the tabernacle of the tent of meeting with singing and as soon as David had the ark at rest he set that on. David says, "the ark of God dwells under curtains" 2 Sam 7: 2, but the ark was used to dwelling under curtains. All it ever had in the wilderness was curtains to dwell under and the ark was content with that until the time came to build the house. But in that provisional situation David sets on what is calculated to stimulate the brethren and to sustain them during the time until things are complete.

H.C.M. Mr Darby went through much conflict but rest seemed to be always before him - 'Rest of the saints above' Hymn 74.

E.C.B. I think that is very good, the hymns that Mr Darby has written - 'There is rest in the calming grace that flows out from those realms above'; Hymn 85 - but he was in conflict almost every day sometimes. He says in his letters, I have not much known the saints at rest but I have been a man of contentions rather, yet he says, 'There is rest in the calming grace that flows out from those realms above'. I think he is at the entrance of the tent with singing.

A.B.P. The thought of peace would be similar to rest, would it? I was thinking of the Gospel by Luke, the way of peace is referred to (Luke 1: 79) and it seems to be arrived at in the assembly when He comes in.

E.C.B. It is. You get that in John 20, He came in and said, Peace.

As Mr Stoney says, If He speaks again He says the same thing again, Peace. But Mr Taylor said that that peace means that the conflict is over. There is no more any question of "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered". They are scattered. When Christ is out of death the enemies are scattered for ever. If we were in the gain of that we would not be so much occupied with reminiscences of conflicts through which we have been, but would be seeking out what it is that the Lord had in view in the conflict, that is a resting-place for the people of God.

B.T. I was thinking that David was a musician as well as a warrior; there is a certain equivalence in that, is there not?

E.C.B. Exactly. It is interesting that as things are set out here in Chronicles the genealogies are interrupted to bring this in. David set on singing at the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. It seems to me that he had in view the way in which the people of God could be sustained during the whole of the interval until Solomon built the house. That is, there is something that goes on until the ark comes into its final resting-place, but it is not conflict, it is singing.

E.E.H. During the interval of this provisional time we are provided for in this manner with this service of song. We are able, every first day of the week, to enter into something of this, to set aside what we have had to do with in wilderness circumstances and be restful so as to minister to divine Persons in the service of song.

E.C.B. Would you not think that as the brethren come together for the Supper and the service of God with a song, that is like ministering to the Lord at the tabernacle of the tent of meeting with singing. The hymn that we sing to begin with has a great part in detaching the brethren from what they have been engaged with in the sphere of conflict and setting them together so that they are together for the Supper and then for the manifestation of the Lord.

Then normally as soon as the Lord is known and the cup has been drunk - there is of course the collection - immediately the saints are singing again. It seems to me that all that we touch in the service of

God on the level of singing is intended to convey something to us as to what our whole lives in the wilderness position are meant to be. Conflict is not everything and the rehearsal of conflict is not everything, what is to engage the saints is singing and I think composition in singing.

S.B.F. The book of Revelation is a book of judgment and yet there is considerable singing in it.

E.C.B. Does not that bring out that even in parallel with the conflict, and while God Himself through Christ is working things out to finality, He is looking for this note that belongs to what the position of the saints in rest is.

G.D.P. Would that connect in any way with the thought "thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel" Ps 22: 3?

E.C.B. I think that is exactly what is in view here, that as the people gather together, as the ark rests, they would all have to take their position in relation to the ark, and then God dwells amid the praises of Israel. As God finds the saints in this spirit of singing in these provisional and difficult times you will find that He Himself finds His abode there in peace.

E.T.M. I was peculiarly struck this morning as never before with the idea of turning, which has a great place in scripture. The first hymn we had, 'Lord, together Thee recalling, turn we now to praise;' Hymn 41.

E.C.B. That is Moses' second expression here, is it not, or at least it is preparing for it. There is the side of "Rise up, Jehovah", but then the 'turn we now to praise' requires the myriads of the thousands of Israel. Do you think that?

E.T.M. I thought that. Turning from one point of view, thinking of Moses and Aaron again, is direction towards the glory of God appearing at another turn.

E.C.B. I have an impression that there is a very great tendency amongst us still to be occupied in detail with conflicts through which we have been over the last two or three years, and it seems to me

that some work of the Lord is needed to release the brethren from that so that they are the more engaged with the order of things in which the ark is at rest. Sometimes as the brethren are together in houses and elsewhere you can discern an attempt to change the conversation but then things seem to revert again; we all know it.

But I think the Lord would be amongst us to help us out of that so that the spirit of the ark finding a resting-place brings the brethren on to ground where they are at rest with Christ and can enjoy spiritual things with Him.

S.B.F. Before a step was taken in the wilderness it was said, "I will prepare him an habitation;" (Exod 15: 2 A.V.) I was wondering if you do not get the thought there of rest, a habitation preparing, and that was before the wilderness journey commenced.

E.C.B. You get there "Jehovah is a man of war; Jehovah, his name", He is highly exalted, and what He has done to Pharaoh and his chariots, all that line of things is there, but Moses is looking forward to the tabernacle, the sanctuary that God's own hands have prepared. I think every time the ark rested Moses would be inclined to say to himself that this anticipates the sanctuary that God Himself has prepared.

G.D.W. Is it a question of aim to which you were referring yesterday - whether we are going north maybe to conflict or south like the returning.

E.C.B. That enters into it. I am not in any way suggesting to the brethren that we should not deepen in our apprehension of what the Lord had to say in matters through which we have passed, but everybody knows that in the Lord's mind conflict is never its own end; the end is that the saints may be in a situation where the ark rests. Now can we discern, brethren, whether the Lord is preparing to rest. That seems to me to be important. Can we discern whether the three days' journey are nearly over at any time and that the ark is about to rest? Because if we can we shall be prepared for what He will develop in a situation where we are 'apprehending with all the

saints'. You cannot finish Ephesians 3 unless you can apprehend something with all the saints.

C.C.G. Do you think the hymn 'Sing without ceasing, sing' (Hymn 12) would give us so me peace within our souls when we come together on the first day of the week to give us rest so that we can open our hearts and give our praises to God?

E.C.B. Yes, I think that hymn is very useful: the first three verses at least fit well after the Supper. 'There all's unsullied light, Our hearts let in its rays; And heav'nly light makes all things bright, Seen in that blissful gaze'. Is that not Christ coming in amongst the saints? And that is the ark at rest. This is the order of things, I think, in which the Lord would have us and hold us; and unless we get on to that ground with Him we shall fall short of what we might otherwise apprehend in the short time that remains for the testimony.

A.G.S. Do you think this reminiscing would be like jarring notes in our singing?

E.C.B. They might be, but the brethren are fairly harmonious about them. For one thing they all have one mind about the past conflicts so there is not too much jarring about that, but if we had tapes of our conversations we would be surprised how much there is on them about past history. I think the Lord would begin to turn us, as Mr Maynard says, to what is forward and what is positive in relation to what is forward.

E.T.M. Do you think it is right to say that in reminiscing on conflict we are largely occupied with ourselves and what relates to ourselves, while conversely singing has in mind what is for God. Is that right?

E.C.B. I think that is right. But when we think of conflict we would say to ourselves, The Lord acted in that. Why did the Lord act? He acted to deliver us from this, that or the other. But then why did the Lord deliver us from it? In order that there might be those who could discern the point at which the ark was going to rest, "And when it rested, he said, Return, Jehovah, unto the myriads of the thousands of Israel". I think it is as the conflict gets into focus that you can

begin to apprehend that the Lord is still saying things that bear on the whole assembly.

A.B.P. I would like to know what you have in mind about composition in singing.

E.C.B. "My heart is welling forth with a good matter: I say what I have composed touching the king" Ps 45: 1. I think that our hearts are to flow out in freshness. It is not in any way that I think we need a new book or anything like that, because I think the Lord has left us something serviceable and it would divert too much effort that we can little spare to undertake anything of that kind, and we would use what we have: but then the spirit of singing enters into our conversation, and our prayers and thanksgivings. You can tell whether the time of singing has come for a brother who is on his feet.

A.B.P. You mentioned that it is possible that the Lord composed that hymn that they sang, and we know that Moses composed a hymn in one day apparently in Deuteronomy. I wondered if you had in mind that the result of these things that we go through, not only past but currently, might take some sort of form in our minds for expression in praise. Is that what you had in mind?

E.C.B. That is exactly it. We are apt to confine that line of things to what we speak of as psalms. If any one asked what a psalm was I dare say that you would refer to what is formed out of experience. But that ought to enter into spiritual songs which are also developed out of some experience with God but the heart is going back to God because of what has been learned from Him in some fresh experience.

A.B.P. I do not know whether others are as incapable of composition as I am or not, but I can see the point of what you are saying and it has been a concern with me, but to be able to do it seems to be so difficult.

E.C.B. I think then the first thing that is needed is the Spirit, first of all to get some sense in the soul that the Lord has taken up conflicts and determined them. If the Lord has done that, we are free in

relation to those conflicts; He has determined them. If the ark rests you enter into rest with Him in the place where He rests and you are entirely free. That seems to me to be what David is touching in 1 Chronicles where we read. The ark is in rest - Oh, you say, it is provisional, and we could say a lot about it. We could have three-day meetings on the ark being at rest under curtains. But David does not stop to have a three-day meeting, he institutes singing in that provisional position. I think that that relates to the free state of expression, of course, under divine control because control was there, that comes from apprehending that even at the present time Christ has somewhere where He can rest.

A.B.P. That service of praise that David instituted had long been in his heart, had it not? Is that not a test to us as to just what our outlook has been. We cannot just arrive at this overnight - we need to search ourselves as to just what our outlook has been, do you not think?

E.C.B. I think that, but I am often overwhelmed by the grace that belongs to Christianity that can release you from an encumbrance very quickly and load you with substance that you never thought was there, almost overnight. You say that you cannot pick these things up quickly but get the saints together for the Supper with the assurance that they are at rest and see what kind of time you have! This is the spirit of things that the Lord would have us engaged with all the time.

E.E.H. How would this fit in with what you are saying, "Yea, from the horns of the buffaloes hast thou answered me. I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee", Ps 22: 21-22?

E.C.B. I suppose we could relate "from the horns of the buffaloes hast thou answered me" to God rising up and His enemies being scattered. He was compassed about by His enemies, was He not? But immediately He turns to the ark at rest and "Return, Jehovah, unto the myriads of the thousands of Israel". That is brought into Hebrews which belongs especially not to the eternal state of things

but to the provisional time. Is not Hebrews the testimony in the wilderness?

G.D.W. One of the exercises I have as to not going back into the conflict time of things is that so many of us have members of families and loved ones who have been lost to the world or its systems that we often tend to reminisce because of this feeling, maybe of frustration. How do we get free into the positive line of things which you are referring to so that we would not reminisce but have a more practical outlook spiritually?

E.C.B. The first chapter of 2 Samuel helps, David's lament over Saul and Jonathan and the feeling that enters into that. You could almost have sung at the morning meeting what David says in relation to Saul and Jonathan; you can distil out of it what he is learning from God in relation to the circumstances. I hope the brethren do not in any way think that I am suggesting that we are to be unfeeling in any way in regard to the past - in fact I think the deeper our feeling in regard to it is, the better will be the singing that fits into 1 Chronicles 6 - but the brethren are unduly detained on reminiscences of the past conflicts and I believe the Lord's desire is to set us forward into the positive and substantial gain of the truth that belongs to the whole assembly. I think that unless we are here for that we are not rightly here.

E.E.H. Conflict is intended to yield something for divine pleasure, is it not?

E.C.B. Yes.

B.T. You have the silver trumpets in this chapter. Have we not known in our local experiences where alarms have come up and have been dealt with a sense of rest, so to speak, following that in our worship and praise?

E.C.B. I am sure that is right. I think Mr Taylor sen frequently remarked on that, that when the brethren had been through painful and severe exercise perhaps in the care-meeting the service of God on the next Lord's day was the finer. The silver trumpets to which you refer were themselves made of beaten work, and every fresh

exercise that the brethren went through improved the quality of the trumpet because some fresh beating entered into the making of the instrument.

A.B.P. Those trumpets were also to be used in the day of your gladness (Num 10: 10), so that in the discerning of alarms or the need for an alarm, the facing of the enemies, the capacity needed to sound an alarm seems to be the same as that related to making a joyful noise.

E.C.B. Yes, it is the same instrument, and the more value you attach to the seasons of gladness the more readily will you sound an alarm when there is an occasion for an alarm. But let us not have alarms blown when there is no occasion for one. I suggest to the brethren the question whether we have learned from the Lord the capacity sufficiently to relax to believe that He is going to enter into rest.

When you have been kept on the *qui vive* for a very long time because of alarms in the night you tend to think that if you relax from your watch something terrible is going to happen. But the Lord may be saying, But relax, the ark has found a resting-place. It is not that conflict is over or that danger is over but have we sufficient confidence in the Lord to relax into the belief that He can find a resting-place for Himself? If He is at rest He does not want people round Him strung up with tension, He wants a situation in which everything rests around Him.

H.C.MacG. You mentioned the Spirit, where would you bring Him into this matter of relaxing?

E.C.B. I think the Spirit is the greatest help to us in that regard, because the Spirit knows perfectly the movements of the Lord. He knows perfectly the feelings of the Father. The Spirit is able to minister peace and comfort to the brethren so that they are able to understand that the Lord has touched a point where He is at rest.

The brethren were kept on tenterhooks for years by being told that the Lord had 'turned a corner', but there is no scriptural basis for that. The Lord goes straight ahead; as Mr Maynard says there are occasions where He turns, but He turns in the line where He is and

looks round. But the brethren were kept on the hop as it were, if they will pardon the expression, all the time to see if they could discern where the Lord was. But if the Lord is entering into rest has any one the capacity to discern that, and the confidence in Him to enter into rest with Him in conditions where He rests?

E.T.M. Do you think the numeral 'thousands' in itself accentuates the thought of love? I was thinking of God setting it out in the very beginning, "thousands of them that love me", Exod 20: 6. Moses would have been full of that, do you think, when he spoke of thousands?

E.C.B. So that in Revelation that we alluded to, I think this morning, you get ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands (Rev 5: 11). Well, you have one hundred million before you add in the thousands of thousands. Think of the fruit of the work of God that needs a number like that to describe it. We will never compass the fulness of the work of God, but John looks for a way in which he can describe it and he gets up to the hundreds of millions.

Does not that show the immense, fruit of the manifestation of God Himself in love in Christ? Does not that provide an area of rest for the soul?

S.B.F. I was thinking of the turning-point. There was a turning-point in Matthew 11: 25 "At that time, Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father", there was praise there when the Lord was rejected.

E.C.B. Could not the Lord in that chapter have said, "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered"?

S.B.F. Yes. The subject of His praise was the Father's wisdom, was it not?

E.C.B. But the cities where His mighty works were done rejected Him, John the baptist was questioning Him, you might say nothing was going right, and He could have said, "Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered;" but what He says is, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest". You can see in the surrounding rejection that the ark is going three days

ahead to find rest for the people of God even if they are burdened and heavy laden.

S.B.F. Help us as to how we discern divine wisdom. I mean we would perhaps naturally find it hard to find the exercise of wisdom at that point, but the Lord speaks of it, does He not?

E.C.B. He speaks to the Father about what was well pleasing in the Father's sight. It seems that even the very putting of the things together bears on divine wisdom because there is much for us to learn out of those contrary circumstances. When externally everything seems to be going wrong what is the next thing that we do? Often we fall back on praying that the Lord would rise and take issue with this or that, but it may be that the ark is looking for a resting-place, and as has often been said, at the end of Matthew 11 you have the sabbath of God - the Man who was God's sabbath drawing every one to Himself who felt the need of rest; 'There is rest in the calming grace that flows out from those realms above;' (Hymn 85),

A.B.P. In chapter 12 He protects those who were at the moment in the good of the sabbath.

E.C.B. Yes, He does; well, they were in the good of Himself. The Lord is seeking out a resting-place. In Luke 24 two were wandering away and the Lord was seeking out a resting-place and He tested them as to whether they were ready for it, "he made as though he would go farther". But then they constrained Him and He went in, that is to say they discerned that He was ready to rest and He went in with them. What things opened up there in peace!

A.S.H. The place from which the ark set forward was the mountain of Jehovah, and then it says that Jehovah went before them; it is not a valley and not lowland, I would like you to say something as to that.

E.C.B. The mountain of Jehovah, is a definitive point in wilderness history and in one sense it is the point in Numbers from which everything begins. The journey now is beginning, as far as you know you do not have forty years to do at this point, you have a short

journey. Soon you will learn that through your own failure forty years lies ahead of you. But did the ark take a short cut? Did the ark ever say, Well, I know the way to get there in eleven days? No, the ark went with them every one of the forty years and every day it sought out rest for them. We are told that if it was two days or a month or many days (Numbers 9: 22) that it rested, they rested; when it was taken up they journeyed. As soon as the ark rests you know your place in relation to it; your tent is always pitched in the same relationship to the ark of God.

G.D.W. What is the bearing of the priests standing firm in the midst of Jordan? The ark was stationary which is not quite the same thought as rest, but there is a time when the ark stands still?

E.C.B. That is an occasion that is distinctive in itself. The priests that bore the ark stood firm in the midst of the Jordan and the Jordan went back and it was held back; it has relation to the power of Christ in death. But what we are speaking of has more relation to the power of a living Christ to sustain His people in the testimony.

W.F. Getting back to this point of conflict, for some of us there has been perpetual conflict with various matters, family matters and otherwise, how can we help about that?

E.C.B. I think the thing is to begin to watch more closely what Christ is doing at the present time. It is not that we are to fail in our judgment as to conflict, it is not that we are to fail to be ready in case of alarms in the night - you still need your sword on your thigh - but the ark is seeking out a restingplace. I believe the Lord Himself has some special consideration for the younger brethren who have known nothing but conflict since their more early conscious days in the testimony. And if I may say so to the older brethren, I think they have an obligation to begin to minister to the younger brethren about conditions of rest rather than of constant battle.

G.D.P. Would that be seen in Naomi, she said, "My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee?" Ruth 3: 1?

E.C.B. Exactly, that is a very good scripture, "shall I not seek rest for thee?". Would you not yourself share some obligation to seek out

rest for the younger brethren?

G.D.P. Yes, I would like to be able to do it better.

E.C.B. They will never put any roots down if they cannot stand still, will they? As to 1 Chronicles 6, "And these are they whom David set over the service of song in the house of Jehovah after that the ark was in rest." I suppose for us it would link with Ephesians 1 as to being holy and blameless before Him in love, and the position in Christ Jesus - the ark in rest. That is, it is conditions that suit itself perfectly. David here does not in any way go back over conflict or history, he does not even go back to Jonathan, he is engaged in what is forward in relation to the occupation of the saints, and what he sets on is singing. And the singing went on until Solomon built the house of Jehovah in Jerusalem. That is to say, I think we could interpret it, that David set on something that occupied the whole of the remainder of the provisional time.

A.B.P. I think I discerned in the three three-day occasions that we were privileged to attend that the great concern was on the one hand a suited state but on the other hand a greater entrance into and substantiality in relation to the service of God. As though this is the thing that is being established to carry through until the rapture.

E.C.B. I think that is right. One thing that attracts you onwards to this line of things is the readiness and capacity of the brethren to enter into it. Matters come up in readings, matters of very profound truth, and the Lord has the key to unlock them. You will remember that in the meetings in London the brethren were getting engaged with what was 'absolute', and what was 'relative', and so on, and a brother just said, What do we mean by absolute? The Lord uses something like that in a sense to relax the meeting so that brethren do not feel that everything is going on over their heads; a question is asked that begins to unlock things for the brethren. And Mr W Dickson's remark about the need for an impression that there is always what is transcendent about God is something that the simplest person can get hold of; you do not need words like absolute

and relative, you just know that God is greater than man. I think if the brethren can get on to that line of things they will be helped.

L.MacF. Are these Kohathites related in any way to the sons of Korah. I just thought of the kind of persons that come into the appreciation of the singing.

E.C.B. One of these is said to be the son of Korah in verse 38.

There are several Korahs in the bible, but we perhaps are able to attribute to any of them what the Psalms attributed to the ones that the Spirit knew whom He was speaking of. Whether it relates to men that David set over the singing or to those who had a history in the wilderness the thing is in a sense the same, that you are lifted out of failure and conflict and all that belongs to that line of things on to a level that can sustain things at the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.

This seems to me to give some fresh colour to the position that we may rightly take up in separation from the world. The tent of meeting involves separation from the world socially and religiously. What are you going to do when you get there? You say, Oh, well, we have to take up this position and we have to make our own way through.

What David would do is tell you to sing. When you come to the tent of meeting, sing. When you take up the position in separation to the Lord's name, sing. That is to say, be there as one who has something to rejoice in in the position that you have taken up.

A.B.P. "The tabernacle of the tent of meeting", does that refer to the covering, the curtains were really the tent?

E.C.B. I think that is right. But the verse seems to contemplate the thing set up, does it not, remarkably enough in the land. The tabernacle, in a sense was the covering, but the tabernacle is the idea of dwelling, and it is the place where God will be in this time that we speak of as provisional. We speak of it as provisional because it is not final; the final position for the saints of God is eternity. In the meantime we have this provisional position connected with the tent of meeting and as you go there you sing, that is to say, you are confident in God in the position you have taken up.

A.B.P. In chapter 10 the sanctuary and the tabernacle are, in a way, separated, as though the tabernacle is set up for the sanctuary to arrive. I wondered if there might be some reference to that here that the Kohathites alone could carry the sanctuary but the Levites could carry the tabernacle, and whether there might be some suggestion of these distinctions in relation to the service.

E.C.B. That may be, and some of these expressions in which Scripture almost seems to use two words where one would have done test our capacity to penetrate into what the Spirit had in mind in the language that He has used. You wonder at the tent of meeting being in the land, it is a wilderness idea but David's time was in the land, and you wonder at that. Then the tabernacle of the tent of meeting may involve the court and the sanctuary, but whatever it involves it seems to me it is the place that God has taken up in testimony in this time. As you identify yourself with it, it is in the spirit of singing.

E.T.M. "The Father seeks such" John 4:23, "Heman the singer, the son of Joel," and sonship goes all the way up-stream to Israel.

E.C.B. Does that not suggest something of the praises of Israel being established here? A line of song that traced right back to Israel, and He dwells amidst the praises of Israel. Heman is the current representative of it.

E.T.M. Characteristic - the "such", "the singer".

E.C.B. John 4 was in the wilderness, was it not? It would never have been remarked that there was a well there if it had been in fertile country where everything was adapted to use. The well was the significant feature in that scenery and it suggests that there were wilderness conditions around, but in those conditions you have the Lord leading a woman in the direction of the Father and of God.

E.T.M. I wondered if there is a touch of what suggests singing in the very end of Revelation. The mention of David, "the root and offspring of David," and then it says, "the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say,

Come. And let him that is athirst come;" Rev 22: 16-17. It is almost like singing, is it not?

E.C.B. It is almost like singing. In Deuteronomy 33 Moses refers to "The fountain of Jacob, in a land of corn and new wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, Israel!" (vv 28-29).

That seems to me to be singing at the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.

B.T. He says to David, "Wilt thou build me a house? ... I went about in a tent and in a tabernacle", 2 Sam 7: 5-6. That in a sense always remains, the word tabernacle is used also in eternity as if God will always be beyond us.

E.C.B. I am sure it is essential that we keep in mind that God will always be beyond us. But I was struck that David says the ark dwells under curtains; but the ark had never dwelt anywhere else until that time and God was ready to go on even in such circumstances as that until the house was built. But in those circumstances they were deprived of nothing.

E.E.H. Those were His words to David when David wanted to build the house.

E.C.B. I have been interested that in Acts 7 Stephen says that David "found favour before God, and asked to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob;" then it says, "but Solomon built him a house. But the Most High dwells not in places made with hands;" vv.46-48 almost to infer that God's thought was satisfied with what David did, that is he found favour with God and sought to make Him a tabernacle. God accepted what Solomon brought in, and it relates, as we know, to what will be millennially for Israel and it has a typical bearing too for us, but God was well content with what David had provided for Him.

A.B.P. I think that is extremely encouraging if we relate it to the conclusion of the testimonial position on earth, the temporal arrangement.

E.C.B. Does it not say, "I will raise up the tabernacle of David" Amos 9: 11, it does not say, I will raise up the temple of Solomon.

A.B.P. And it also says in relation to the tabernacle that it is a representation of things in the heavens (Heb 9: 23), as though the pattern of what is heavenly is seen in the wilderness.

E.C.B. Yes, I am sure that is right. I am sure the pattern of what is heavenly can be learned in the wilderness.

A.B.P. But the touch of what David brings in and this being what Jehovah will carry through I think is a very, very appealing thing.

E.C.B. If we apply it to ourselves, it is not to make anything of ourselves - because as I think I said yesterday and in any case I believe, nothing but humility becomes us - but God gives grace in those circumstances and He is ready to provide what relates to His own fullest thoughts to those who accept the humility of the present day.

A.B.P. It is David who does it, it is Christ who really is doing it, is it not? Therefore the confirmation comes into your soul that through wondrous grace He has put me on the right track - that is a wonderful thing.

E.C.B. Yes. Then if He has put you on the right track does your track lead towards the tabernacle of the tent of meeting with a song or are we still feeling apologetic for the state of things. In one sense we can never be humble enough about not only the public position now but what is attached to the testimony over the last few years.

On the other hand the Lord would lift us above it and would give us to see that the ark is seeking out a resting-place for the people of God. The bearing of that of course is that the greater the things the Lord gives us the more longing we have after others of His own that they might share them with us.

NEW YORK

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Key to initials

E.C.B. - E.C.Burr (London); C.S.E. - C.S.Elliott (New York); S.B.F. - S.B.Fry (Philadelphia); W.F. - W.Fry (Philadelphia); C.C.G. - C.C.Gill (New York); A.S.H. - A.S.Hinkson (New York); E.E.H. - E.E.Hoyte (New York); L.MacF. - L.MacFarlane (New York); H.C.MacG. - H.C.MacGregor (New York); E.T.M. - E.T.Maynard (New York); H.C.M. - H.C.Midgley (New York); A.B.P. - A.B.Parker (New York); G.D.P. - G.D.Pfingst (New York); A.G.S. - A.G.Spooner (New York); B.T. - B.Taylor (New York); G.D.W. - G.D.Ware (New York).

"IN CHRIST"

F.C.Mutton

Romans 5: 8-10; 8: 1-4; 2 Corinthians 5: 17; 1 Corinthians 4: 17; 1 Peter 3: 16.

I desire to say a word on what is established in Christ in life. God sends forth His glad tidings and the object is that we may prove, as we sang, 'the riches of His grace, live for ever in God's favour as it shines in Jesus' face'. That delightful gospel hymn also says, 'God has full delight in Jesus', and the object of His glad tidings concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, is that we might be brought into life and into favour. The epistle to the Romans is full of the most wonderful, profound and affecting teaching as to the gospel, and as Paul begins it he tells us what the subject of it is.

Paul presents himself as a "bondman of Jesus Christ, a called apostle, separated to God's glad tidings.....concerning His Son".

"God's glad tidings" means that it is something which is divinely cherished, something precious to the heart of God. This is a delightful matter to reflect upon as you think of the grief which the human race has caused to God. At an early stage in the development of sin it speaks of God being grieved in His heart, Gen 6: 6.

What must be the feelings of God as to the human race tonight? Men themselves are intensely concerned about the critical situation that has arisen, the confusion, the scale of the problems of all kinds in every sphere of human life, which have assumed greater

proportions than ever before. What must be the feelings of the heart of God as to the position in which the human race finds itself? And this concern extends to every single individual. This is another very affecting thing - that the God who is great enough to survey and encompass in His thoughts, the whole range of humanity, can narrow His view and think of you and me and of the range of your problems and my problems, just as we see in the gospels the devoted, careful, compassionate interest which the Lord Jesus took in individuals. We were speaking of some of them in John's gospel today and we love to think of them; they are so well known to us that they almost become friends of ours, the woman in John 4 and the man of John 9, the man of Luke 10 who fell among thieves. They are so well known to us because as we look at them we see ourselves, our own hearts and our own problems, our own needs and sorrows, and we see there in blessed, perfect expression the compassions and the power and the resource that draw near to us, as they drew near to those persons, in Jesus. *God* was there; God was in Christ in His compassionate, gracious interest in men and women; and not only that, but there in His operative power that men might be delivered and extricated from every need and secured for His own pleasure, secured in life in relation to the Man who is the abiding and eternal object of the Father's delight. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35.

Thank God, that includes me, and I think it would include everyone here tonight. One object of the gospel is that every one of us should, in that sense, be in the hands of Jesus. He would serve us and He would take us over, as He took over the woman of John 4, grappling with her problems, her complicated life. She became a subject of the skilful, faithful, operations of the hands of Jesus and what emerged from that interview was a delivered woman and perhaps an actual, but certainly a potential, worshipper - and a person who could be entrusted to witness to the One who had done every thing for her, and who, in the language of Romans 5: 17, would "reign in life by the one Jesus Christ" in manifest superiority to what once had been superior to her.

I want to touch briefly on the scriptures we have read, great basic scriptures to which we love to return. A brother prayed just now that the preaching tonight might be as if those who preach had never preached before, and in a way as you come back to these scriptures you feel you have hardly begun to understand them, the wonder of them, the glory of them. It stands out afresh in its grandeur that God should approach men in this way, in a way of such perfection, and that a work should be done by Jesus - who is referred to in the first two passages read as "his Son" - the One who came in, certainly on man's behalf, but above all on God's behalf, to secure in men all that God was entitled to.

So Paul says, "God commends his love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ has died for us". He had been speaking of the mercy-seat and of the blood, witness to death, the sprinkling of the blood upon, and before, the mercy-seat and presented in testimony, "whom God has set forth a mercy-seat", Rom 3: 25. That is one of the most profound and affecting things that could engage us. All human agencies are excluded and what is presented to us is a divine Person and a completed work which He has done, and which only He could do. It is something most sublime, "Whom God has set forth a mercy-seat through faith in His blood". It is a divine work: no contribution is sought from man, who could never bring any contribution, who is disqualified from bringing any contribution. As we contemplate Christ as the mercy-seat we see a divine Person coming out on God's behalf and effecting this work at such cost, involving His dying and the shedding of His blood, and thus providing a righteous basis on which God could commend His love and on which His grace could flow freely toward us, as Paul says, "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus", Rom 3: 24. What a wonderful basis this is, a divine basis, on which man may be just with God and on which God may righteously be the Justifier of him that is of the faith of Jesus.

So Paul says, "we being still sinners, Christ has died for us". What simple language! When we were immersed in sin, could do nothing about that dreadful situation, could not lift one finger in

relation to it, Christ has died for us, has done all that is needed, shed His blood, given Himself. There in the mercy seat and the blood upon it is the basis upon which men can be justified, set up before God without any charge, set up and clothed in righteousness, the "righteousness of God....towards all, and upon all those who believe". Paul in chapter 5 is coming to the end of the section that relates to the question of our sins, the sins that you and I are responsible for, and the answer to them is in the death of Jesus, "Christ has died for us". I would that that simple expression might make its own way more deeply into one's own affections, "Christ has died for us". That was what was needed, nothing else would suffice, nothing else would meet the essential divine requirements; and One comes forward, "Christ has died for us".

That is not the end, "Much rather therefore, having been now justified in the power of his blood" - what a fine expression that is!

Who can measure it save God? Thank God, faith can have some apprehension of it, "the power of His blood", its power to efface, to cover, to remove from the sight of God, my whole history of sin. But there is yet more, "Much rather therefore, having been now justified in the power of his blood, we shall be saved by him from wrath".

That is, there is no question now of future judgment, no fear of wrath to come for the believer; the outlook is unclouded, settled, and assured, because He has borne the wrath, and the very Person who has procured through His death, through His blood-shedding, this precious blessing of justification, that same Person is the assurance that I am saved from wrath.

"For if, being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much rather, having been reconciled, we shall be saved in the power of his life". What rich thoughts these are that Paul brings in, one upon another. It is a marvellous thing to be justified, like the repentant man in the gospels who said, "O God, have compassion on me, the sinner", Luke 18: 13, and went down to his house justified. But it is a still greater thing to have the consciousness, as Paul says here, of having been reconciled to God through the death of His Son. We are retained in divine favour; it is

not only that something has been removed, not only that you are justified in relation to a grave past history, but you are retained in perfect acceptability to God - "reconciled to God"; not a point, not a detail, nothing remaining, but what God can look upon with complete favour and complacency as being the result of the work of Christ.

Even to that Paul adds, "much rather, having been reconciled; we shall be saved in the power of his life". Paul has referred earlier in this chapter to the presence and service of the Holy Spirit, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us", verse 5, and that must enter into this. Not only is the believer justified, not only is he reconciled, but saved in the power of His, that is Christ's, life.

What a life that must be, what must be the power of that life!

Paul speaks elsewhere of the power of an indissoluble life, to give us some impression of the character of the life of that blessed Person, a Man out of death, alive to die no more. By the Spirit we have part in His life, "Because I live ye also shall live", John 14: 19.

How triumphant this is; the past met, and the believer set up in reconciliation, in favour, and "in the power of His life". You have a link with a Man out of death in whom the whole power of life is concentrated.

When we come to Romans 8 Paul has previously been dealing not with the question of our sins, the acts we are responsible for, but with the state which gives rise to them, a state which merits only condemnation. We are conscious of that state in ourselves, as Romans 7 shows; we are conscious of the action of the law of sin and of death. Paul says in Rom 7: 23, "I see another law in my members, warring in opposition to the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity". What a real thing this is! It may cause years of bondage in the life of a true believer, the inward power of sin. There is the sense of being sheltered by the blood, the sense that there is no question of coming wrath, that that has been borne by another, and yet this perhaps unanswered, unsolved problem of sin in the flesh. The impulse to do the things which I know are wrong, is greater than I can resist. Thank God, the Son of God has provided

the answer to that terrible problem. I am affected tonight, that, in both these scriptures we have read there are references to His Son: "If, being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son" and "God, having sent his own Son", showing that though the bearing of this work is, through the mercy of God, toward us, the work has been effected by the Son for God, in order that He might have what He longed for in men, that they might be before Him in liberty, in life, in complete freedom, in superiority to the law of sin and of death, and to the flesh and its terrible power. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh". What a great divine operation this was, and nothing less could effect it than God sending His own Son. This work was essential if God was to have man for Himself and, no other than the Son could undertake it. There was a reference yesterday by a brother to the capability of Christ to undertake these great operations. God sent His own Son, One infinitely capable, may I say reverently, of such sacrifice, and such devotion, the devotion of the Son to the Father's will, the will of God. Sin in the flesh has been condemned in the work of Christ, when He was made sin. How wonderful this is; what an expression it is of divine feelings towards the human race, the longings of the heart of God to have men for Himself, that this way should be taken. Sin must be condemned; it either had to be condemned in me in eternal judgment or it must be condemned in a substitute. Think of the wonderful, harmonious operations of the Persons of the Godhead to resolve these immense moral issues, and they are completed. "has condemned"; the matter has been effected in totality; the cross witnesses to it, the forsaking witnesses to it, the burial of Jesus witnesses to it, and the glory of resurrection is the public declaration that the whole work has been completed for the glory of God.

Now in Romans 8 we have a man who is in the gain of all this. Verse 3, we might say, is the teaching of it, but verses 1 and 2 express the holy, joyous liberty of a man who is in the gain of what the Son has done. He is speaking in verse 1 for himself and others,

and in verse 2 just for himself. "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death". I trust every one of us has the joy of this experience, but I would like myself to be deepened in it, deepened in the sense of the cost at which this tremendous blessing of deliverance has been secured, deepened in my appreciation of the One who has done it, and of the God on whose behalf it has been effected. Paul here is a man in liberty, and it is a great basic requisite if we are to proceed on the road of Christian experience that we are in complete deliverance from the power, domination, and influence of the flesh and from all its workings within us. So Paul says, "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus". What a wonderful position that is; what a status! "Those in Christ Jesus", those who know the liberty, in the power of the Spirit, of being free from condemnation. The battle is over, though the ground has to be retained, and the Spirit is given to us to that end, that we might be preserved in the liberty and the deliverance to which the work of Christ entitles us.

In the verse we read in 2 Corinthians 5, Paul goes one stage further in this wonderful series of successive divine operations, he says (v.17), "So if anyone be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold all things have become new: and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ". There is something peculiarly restful about the thought of new creation. What we have been speaking of has reference essentially to what has come in, to sins, the challenge to God, the flesh, and all that it has brought in in havoc in the history of the human race - in your history and in mine. All these blessings we have been speaking of, justification, redemption, reconciliation, deliverance, have relation to a past history. Now we come to something to which sin has never attached, a new order of things altogether, "So if anyone be in Christ, there is a new creation". We are familiar with the first creation, how it left the hand of God in all its beauty, its completeness and its variety; it represented ideal conditions freshly from the hand of God, suitable to Himself and to the creature in whom His delight was to be. But think of *new*

creation. Think of an entirely new order of things which takes character from Christ, He who is the beginning of the creation of God, to which sin has never had, and never shall have, any entrance at all, and you and I as in Christ have part in this. This is the sovereign work of God. His work in us had its origin in new birth; that was a completely sovereign operation on the part of the Holy Spirit of God, the first touch of God's own work, which owes everything to Him and nothing to man and nothing to the flesh. Now as we have advanced through these successive exercises Paul brings us to this point - new creation - and he speaks elsewhere (Gal 6: 16) of those who walk according to the rule of new creation. It is not just something abstract, something as it were far away, it is something which is to have a most profound effect upon the believer, that he has part in an entirely new order of things, wholly for the pleasure of God in Christ and sustained in the power of the Holy Spirit, governed by new principles, a new power, a new life, all held in relation to Christ for God's pleasure. How right that it should be so. God was challenged in the first creation. I suppose He has been challenged by Satan in relation to every new human life found on earth; but here is an area where God shall never be challenged, and I rejoice in that. There is a whole glorious, eternal order of things in Christ subsisting for God's pleasure, where, as Paul says, "all things have become new: and all things are of the God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ".

Well, this must have manifest results and that is why I refer to these other two passages because they indicate the effect in a believer of the truth of new creation. Paul speaks to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 4: 17 of sending Timothy to Corinth - a very difficult place for one like Timothy to be sent to. He might well much rather have been sent to, say, Philippi, but this comparatively young man, Paul's true child, was sent to Corinth, and the reason is given. He was Paul's "beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in mind of my ways as they are in Christ, according as I teach everywhere in every assembly". Paul was not going himself, he purposely stayed away, but he sent Timothy who would be the expression of what Paul

would be if he were there personally, that the Corinthians might be put in mind of Paul's ways, "as they are in Christ".

In the world there are books on etiquette, how to behave on various occasions, but these would be the ways, the manners, of Paul, what is proper to the assembly wherever it is in expression.

How important this is, dear brethren, Paul's ways, that things should be done in a Pauline way and spirit. What an affinity there was between Paul and Christ in the spirit in which he moved, the faithfulness with which he served, and his motives. Dear brethren, what need there is for this, Paul's ways. Thank God they have been continued; other ways have, alas, intruded and acquired very great influence; thank God for the deliverance that has come in, that what is truly Pauline might be seen in every place where there are saints seeking to walk in the light of the assembly. Let us be concerned as to the perpetuation of it. What comfort Paul must have had in this young man, a man representing another generation, and who was to be concerned about the following generation, that there should be in the lives of persons a reproduction of Pauline ways, Pauline manners, Pauline procedure, Pauline service, in all its genuineness, in all the depth of feeling that underlay it. This is one of the most precious things, dear brethren, and it belongs to new creation.

Then there is to be an evidence publicly, and 1 Peter 3: 16 bears on that. It relates to the public walk of believers as they are here in the world, in a sphere of opposition and adversity. What Peter brings forward is that opposers, "may be ashamed who calumniate your good conversation in Christ", or 'your good manner of life in Christ'. This is why I said that new creation is not just something abstract. There is that side, the thing in its fulness, that we can have some apprehension of, but here it is working out. It was working out in Paul and Timothy in the assembly, and here it is working out in pilgrims and sojourners in the ordinary circumstances of life; their conversation, their manner of life, was "in Christ". What a fine statement if this can be said of a believer. He is not walking in the flesh, but the life of Christ is evident, the spirit of that Man, the power of His life, and the character of His life. In the ways of

believers, what they do, what they put their hands to, and the way in which things are taken up and carried through, there is to be a reflection of the spirit of Christ. I would covet this, dear brethren.

How easily in testing situations something other than what is of Christ comes out. "Your good conversation in Christ" means that as we set out, if we are left here in another responsible week tomorrow, our desire would be that we might be preserved, that our manner of life might be "in Christ". At no point should anybody be able to point a finger, to find a point for accusation that something unworthy of a Christian and unworthy of Christ is in expression. You might say that that is an impossibly high standard, but it is not so; the Spirit is given to us for that purpose.

Well, dear brethren, may we be encouraged in these things.

Peter says in his second epistle that God's "divine power has given to us all things which relate to life and godliness", chap 1: 3. We are not called to an easy path; many powers are against us within and without, but God has given us every resource we require. May we be encouraged and cheered to go on in the path in which divine grace has set us, and in which all the resources of the gospel have reached us to set us up that we might be for God's pleasure.

May it be so for His Name's sake.

BARNET

24 February 1974

OIL AS A TYPE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

W.Dickson

Matthew 25: 1-13; Deuteronomy 33: 24-25; Psalm 133

It would be accepted that what we have freely spoken together about this afternoon would depend upon the blessed Spirit of God having a very real place with us. In the matter of the presence of the Spirit, our dispensation is of course different from the dispensation that we read of together in Revelation. I am increasingly impressed, beloved brethren, that we need to consider and, if I may use the word, exploit the great resources there are in the Spirit, if we are to be in the full enjoyment of God's thoughts for us. A Christianity which does not carry with it joy is not according to the mind of God. The matter of joy enters into the glad tidings, enters into every feature of assembly life and assembly service. Joy in the Holy Spirit is a characteristic feature of all these. The presence of the Spirit also involves reality with persons, to offset the tendency with, I dare say, every person to accumulate things mentally, to be well-versed in the terms of Scripture and of the ministry that God gives His people; but what we have to come back to is that the Holy Spirit imparts reality to us in relation to these things. Perhaps the youngest one amongst us will be aware that oil in Scripture is one of the types of the Holy Spirit.

There are many types of the Spirit in Scripture, such as water, wine, and fire, and yet this type of the oil is something very attractive and something that I feel is spiritually appropriate at the present time.

The oil spoken of is olive oil. It is not the oil that man exploits from underground or undersea resources, and which is the cause of the current crisis in this world - though God put that oil there - but this is the oil of the olive-tree. In other words it is a product of a growth full of spiritual meaning.

In this passage in Matthew 25, the issue is the possession of the oil. There were five foolish virgins and five prudent virgins, and it was the possession of the oil that was the determining factor. I want to ask myself, as I would lay the challenge on every heart here, have

you got oil in your vessels? Has everybody in this room at this time, got oil in their vessels? If not, this scripture teaches us that to be without oil is just profession. You say, 'How can I be in fellowship and be just a professor? The thing is unthinkable'. But it is not unthinkable. The Spirit of God or the Lord Jesus Himself is raising the question with every one of us, 'Have you got oil in your vessel?' You say, 'Well, I'm rightly and happily in fellowship; I subscribe without qualification to what is held amongst the brethren; I accept the ministry regarding the addressing of the Holy Spirit. I'm fully with the issues that were raised in regard to associations'. Beloved brethren, have we got oil in our vessels? That is the point. Have we got oil in our vessels?

I just turn to Galatians. This shows what, I think, the oil means. In chapter 5, verse 22, it says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, selfcontrol". Beloved brethren, have we got oil in our vessels? The fruit of the Spirit is the oil that keeps the light of our torch burning brightly, otherwise we are just professors. The Spirit of God, time after time, comes in with a vitalising touch, and we have experienced it. We can look back on recent history, perhaps, and there has been a demonstration of that, but, as in this case, it is the continued absence of Christ that tests us, and we may slumber and sleep. We can go on with a profession, can go on outwardly in fellowship, and yet not have the oil in our vessels. These virgins apparently allowed their supply to run out. They had some to start with. I suppose we all had some to start with. I think every true believer in his or her time, had a supply of oil, but the supply has perhaps run out. Have we replenished the oil supply for our vessels - these things that Galatians speaks of - fidelity, love, long-suffering, such things?

Beloved brethren, that is what Christianity means. That is what being in fellowship means, and I use that word 'fellowship' intentionally, because it means that you have oil in your vessel and you are not just a professor, but are in the thing livingly. Persons with oil in their vessels go in to the wedding feast with the bridegroom. What joy! These five foolish virgins were sorely tested

when their lamps went out. Has your lamp ever gone out? Is it because of any deficiency in the Spirit that your lamp goes out?

Surely not! Dear young people, are you as bright today as you were a year ago, or has the lamp gone out? If you draw upon the inexhaustible resources of the blessed Spirit of God, your lamp will not go out. These things - the fruit of the Spirit as Galatians speaks of it - draw upon these resources and prove that Christianity is not a profession but is a practical expression of the features of Christ in a company of God's people down here upon earth.

As to Deuteronomy, we cannot read chapter 33 but what we think and speak of Anna in the beginning of Luke's gospel. Anna was a remarkable woman. There is one thing I notice about her, that she shares a distinction with the Lord and the apostle Paul that nobody else shares. It says of the Lord that He was of the tribe of Judah and it says of Paul that he was of the tribe of Benjamin and it says of Anna that she was of the tribe of Asher. In the whole of the New Testament no other persons are signalled by the Spirit of God calling attention to the tribe that they came from. Judah, Benjamin and Asher, the Lord, Paul and Anna. I have no doubt the Spirit of God has in mind this wonderful passage in the 33rd chapter of Deuteronomy. It has a bearing, beloved brethren, on our local conditions. Through God's grace we are experiencing much in the way of fellowship and happiness at the present time, but how is it to be preserved? The oil is the great preservative. How are we going to be blessed with sons? How are we going to get increase? The oil is the answer to it. It says of Asher "let him dip his foot in oil". I understand that the allusion is to the fact that his inheritance was so fertile, that everywhere he put his foot down, it landed in a patch of oil. Is that Edinburgh? Is that Grangemouth? Does the Spirit of Christ flow to such an extent that no matter where you put your foot down, you put it in oil? How blessed, beloved brethren, to have fertile conditions in our localities where the olive tree can grow. We do not want our localities like arid deserts, where every time you put your foot down you put it into the sand. Asher dipped his foot in oil. I think Philippi was like that. Paul speaks of these lovely conditions

at Philippi. I think that in Philippi they dipped their foot in oil. That blessed expression of the Spirit of Jesus manifested itself at Philippi. When Paul spoke in the Philippian epistle about these sisters, Euodia and Syntyche, he brought in the oil. I understand that when you are pressing olives for oil, you must do it softly and gently. Oh what a word that is, beloved brethren, in our localities! If you want the oil, you have to proceed softly and gently in the Spirit of Jesus.

That was what Paul did at Philippi. The tribe of Asher, so to speak, was in that local company and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ was flowing amongst the brethren.

It also says, "Iron and brass shall be thy bolts". Oh, you say, that is not softly and gently! Beloved brethren, right conditions are the surest way of strengthening the position regarding the principles of administration. The surest way to see that the Lord's rights are maintained, and that divine principles in administration are maintained, is to ensure the fertility of the inheritance and the flow of oil amongst the brethren. It says "Iron and brass shall be thy bolts"; in other words, the gates are protected. It means that the power of the Spirit of God is so affecting the brethren that the whole position is protected. And we need this principle of protection these days. We want to see that the inheritance of God is protected. It says "Iron and brass shall be thy bolts". In other words the gates are protected against the intrusion of everything that militates against the enjoyment of the inheritance. It also says "And thy rest as thy days". Anna proved this. She lived till she was over 100 years old (J.T.

N.S. Vol.56 page 4). It just proves that the oil spiritually is the greatest life-giving factor that you can get. Do you want to see healthy brethren, do you want to see brethren enjoying the service of God? Well, let us see to the fertility, the growth of the olive-tree and the abundance of the oil amongst us that makes the inheritance, so to speak, a delightful place to live in. Asher's name means 'happiness'. The assembly is a wonderful place. These meetings here this afternoon are wonderful in that it is a relief to get away from the gloom outside. Do you not feel that way? There is a world of gloom outside - and to come into the assembly is to find a place

flowing with oil. You dip your feet in it and have a sense that you are in the sphere of eternal life. It lifts your heart, lifts your spirit, and gives you to prove that God has brought you into something by faith in the Person of Christ which is greater than what this poor world has to offer. Oh, if we could get our young people touched by these things! The world is a poor empty place but the assembly is a place of divine joy, happiness, and peace.

So in Psalm 133, we have one of the Songs of degrees - in the ascent and it says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" That is the territory of Asher. "Together in unity". It is like "the precious oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, upon Aaron's beard, that ran down to the hem of his garments". I think, beloved brethren, that that is an allusion to the general situation amongst the brethren at the present time. That is how it lies in my mind. In the old economy in which the high priest functioned it would mean that his head was saturated with the oil. It was saturated. And then as being saturated, it flowed down over his beard and right down to the hem of his garments. My simple impression of these verses is of what the Lord is doing at the present time generally although we would be marked by humility on account of the breakdown. The oil is flowing from that blessed Man on high, and the effect of it is reaching down to every place. The oil is flowing, the saturation is coming down from Christ, saturating the whole position right down to the hem of His garments. "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Let us be thankful not only for local unity, but thankful for general unity at the present time, amongst the brethren with whom we walk, through grace. The responsibility is on us, beloved brethren, to see that our feet are dipped in oil all the time, facilitating grace of movement amongst the brethren and defeating any attempt by the enemy to spoil the inheritance and what is for the pleasure of God.

It then reads "As the dew of Hermon that descendeth on the mountains of Zion". The dew is a gentle touch. I would plead with the brethren to understand the force of gentleness in Christianity, whether in personal matters with one another or in what stands

related to the administration of divine principles when the Lord's rights have to be maintained. The assembly is a great sphere of salvation, "life for evermore". Moral death reigns in this world, but our young people should increasingly feel the warmth of affection in the Christian circle, and see the difference between the world they face day by day and what they come into as they come to the gatherings of the saints.

"There Jehovah *commanded* the blessing, life for evermore". I like that word "commanded". God says that this is the due reward of brethren who are exercised before God to keep the unity of the Spirit. Let us be exercised to do it. Let us prove what the power of the Spirit is as it flows from Christ down to the hem of the garments. Let us know something of the gentleness of the dew, the softness of it affecting our spirits and then Jehovah commands the blessing as much as to say, 'I love that land; I love the people that are in that land; My appreciation of it is that I command the blessing, life for evermore'. We have had a touch of that today, beloved brethren, a touch of eternal life. That is a great compensation, to leave the world outside and get a touch of eternal life. May God prosper us in His service for His own pleasure on the coming day, Amen.

GRANGEMOUTH

15 December 1973

THE CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

Although chapters and verses are man-made divisions, it is interesting that the middle chapter of the whole Bible is Psalm 117.

It is also the shortest. We are not told who wrote the Psalm but it is addressed to all nations and must therefore include every child as well as older persons.

The Psalm calls upon us to praise God not, in this instance, as the great Creator of all things, but because of His "loving-kindness" towards us. We may love without proving it or may be kind without loving. Our God, however, has not only loved the world, arid but has shown it by giving His only-begotten Son. The verse, John 3: 16, as well as Psalm 117 should be known by 'heart' by every child.

Another Psalm says that from the rising of the sun to its setting God's name will be praised. Yet another tells us that His praise is to the ends of the earth. There is therefore no time and no place where there is not some response to Him.

At the time when the children were praising the Lord Jesus in the temple He said that if His disciples were silent then the stones themselves would cry out! But this is not necessary now because there are "living stones", as Peter describes us who believe in Jesus and to whom He is precious.

Some of these stones may be quite small but being living they can grow up, as it says, to salvation. Have you tasted that the Lord is good, and do you long for the pure milk of His word?

J.C.Evershed