

A
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SEASON

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Edited and Published by –

E.C.Burr

50 Red Post Hill, London, SE24 9JQ

POWER TO PROGRESS

N.T.Meek

Numbers 13: 26-30; 14: 24,25; Genesis 45: 25-28

In reading these Scriptures I am thinking of the power that there is to make spiritual progress, that power being the Spirit. We read elsewhere that "the flesh profits nothing" (John 6: 63) but the power to make progress in divine things lies in the Spirit.

I have read about Caleb and the land because the land represents the way that God's thoughts are laid out before us - not exactly heaven, but God's thoughts laid out before us now, like the rolling country, with the hills and the valleys, the shafts of copper, and the stones containing iron. Past and present ministry is full of the way God's thoughts are laid out before us. As the people come through the wilderness this inviting land is before them, this land which God Himself had described as a land that flowed with milk and honey. For us the apostle Paul especially lays out God's thoughts, His divine thoughts and purposes and what is for our present enjoyment; but only too often we see the difficulties, even as to finding time to go in for them.

God has protected His thoughts from the mere mind of man. The mind of man as such is incapable of taking in divine thoughts and they are protected thereby. It is part of divine providence; they are too precious for the vulgar eye of man. There are many scriptures which speak about the emptiness of man's mind, such as "they are but fools, the princes of Zoan" Isa 19: 11. God has protected His thoughts so that they should be intact, and laid hold of by us in the way that He wants us to lay hold of them. To this end He has provided the Spirit. Now Caleb here is one who really availed himself of the Spirit; this is just what I would like to draw from this chapter. The land is described, and the difficulties too. It is a land that is taken by overcomers, it is laid hold of by overcomers. It is not a land that you can enjoy, so to speak, from the guide books. It is a land that you *eat* your way into, you must put your foot on it to enjoy

it. But the difficulties are real. The housework, to speak simply, and the stress of business, also (one cannot speak personally) the raising of a family takes time, and rightly so; these things are right in their way, but nevertheless the land is to be laid hold of and the Lord would encourage us to go in for it. We may feel our inability. We may sometimes reproach ourselves even with lack of desire. We often feel our inability but the land is to be gone in for. God's thoughts are to be gone in for, and by the Spirit there is an element in us that can lay hold of them. New birth has put in the believer an element that can appreciate and lay hold of and understand God 's thoughts and enjoy them.

So Caleb here is an example, a pattern. The difficulties are gone over - Anak is in one place, Amalek in another. No doubt these things have teaching in them. Anak is a great looming difficulty, which casts its shadow a long way. Amalek is another difficulty.

Amalek is in the south, and the Jebusites and the Amorites are in the hill country - that would be a good place to get but there is more difficulty. There is only Amalek in the south but there are three in the hill country. Then the Canaanites dwell by the sea and by the side of the Jordan. Such an element might bear on the testimony because on the one hand it would prevent us getting close to men and on the other it would militate against our being kept near to the death of Christ. Nevertheless, in the face of all this, Caleb says "Let us go up boldly and possess it". Such words are a cheer for us, to cheer us and strengthen us in our faith. A man like Caleb is not the object of our faith but he is to cheer and strengthen us in the path of faith. He says "We are well able to do it". Now that was not an idle boast, dear brethren, because God said of him, "he hath another spirit in him".

The only way we can rightly apprehend God's thoughts is by the Spirit. The Spirit is available for us, without prejudice, without partiality. Let us ask for the Spirit, ask and ask again. I do not mean that we keep on getting the Spirit afresh but we can keep on proving His power as freshly anointed with oil, freshly invigorated. "We are well able to do it". It may seem impossible but it is possible by the

Spirit. One would desire to be able to convey to us the assurance that the whole land is open to us and the One by whom we can enter is available for us. The power for movement, the power for progress in divine things lies in the Spirit; so let us give ourselves to Him in simplicity and dependence. Let us read the Scriptures, let us read the ministry, and let us learn what it is to trust, and to pray to the Spirit that He might help us. Caleb says "We are well able to do it".

Faith rejoices in the difficulties because there is power in the Spirit that is greater than the difficulty. A man like Caleb must have been a man of portent at this time. You think of Achsah, his daughter. She evidently became quite spiritual herself. But you can think of her as a girl in the home pondering how things were going in the wilderness, how so-and-so had died, and then another of her father's age had died, and eventually she would ask herself on what principle was her father being sustained in life. You see, they all died except Caleb and Joshua. A thinking child would ask herself, On what principle does father live? Well, he lived by faith, by laying hold of God's thoughts. God had not delineated the land as something to be admired from a distance, it was a land to be occupied. But also she would come to it that he lived by the Spirit.

He would have been a great object lesson, a man of portent, as we read elsewhere, someone to be observed as a sign and a type. It says "Caleb the son of Jephunneh, lived still of the men that had gone to search out the land", chap 14: 38. Others had gone, they had seen it, but the report had not been mixed with faith and it did not profit them. Let us learn to speak to the Spirit more freely, individually. Ask Him to give us entrance, ask Him to give us understanding, ask Him to help us to lay hold of God's thoughts, what they are. They are delineated for us in the writings of holy men. As we go in for them the difficulties become reduced.

According to verse 25 of chapter 14 there appear to be only two difficulties left. Where has Anak gone? There are only Amalek and the Canaanites left. The Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites have all gone, the hill country is yours. These things are to encourage us, dear brethren, there is always something for us to overcome, of course, but faith and the Spirit together will see us through.

Now I would just like to refer to Genesis as typifying in Jacob a believer who found it difficult to apprehend Christ in glory. I think most of us, speaking simply, would say that we can say more about the Lord Jesus as He was here on earth than as He is now. It is very blessed to be able to speak of Him on earth, as He was and how He was. We have the four gospels and Mr Darby wrote a whole volume of his Synopsis on the four gospels; which has point, I think. He did not write a whole volume on any other four books. It is lovely to read the gospels and to think of Christ as He was here. It is not so easy to lay hold of Him as He is now, at least I do not find it so. We need the Spirit in a peculiar way to bring to us the knowledge of Christ as He is now. Of course, we need the Spirit rightly to think of Him as He was here, otherwise we can become sentimental; but to think of Him as He is now we peculiarly need the Spirit because He has been with Him in heaven. When Christ went up the Spirit was there for those ten days and has come back with a full, complete knowledge of Christ in glory. Now Jacob may represent one of us who finds it difficult to apprehend Christ in glory. He had known Joseph, we might say, in his lifetime here, seen him in his perfection, seen him here and had appreciated him, appreciated his moral worth, the way he was different from others, the way that moral quality, purity and beauty were seen in him. Then the time had come when he had lost him, in that respect, and he finds it difficult to lay hold of the fact that he is still alive and in glory. Well, if we speak simply and honestly, I think we would say that we find it more difficult. What happens here is that Joseph sends the waggons to convey him. They are a type of the Spirit as the carrying power, the power to progress to Christ where He is. We can think of this in many ways. In some ways it could be regarded as the last journey of the believer as he goes to be with Christ. Jacob had many journeys, and many tortuous journeys too. To very many places he had gone: to Padan-Aram, to Shechem, to Bethel. He traversed many journeys, like a believer in his lifetime. Many things as he went over them he would regret, many things he would become adjusted about in his mind, but the time was coming for him (in type) when he was going to be with Christ. That time will come for us all,

dear brethren, and even in that we shall find that the Spirit will encourage us and will see us through. If I might speak simple to any old person here to whom death may seem comparatively near, the Spirit will see you through and will carry you through to see Christ as He is. But, in our minds and in our affections it is possible for us to lay hold of it now. It is intended that we should be governed by Him as He is, as we have often been taught: "As He is, we also are in this world", 1 John 4: 17. It would be a great matter of testimony, the life of a person who actually in their affections has been with Christ in glory, who has actually laid hold of Him in His own realm. Dear brother, dear sister, the One who died for you, your Saviour, the One who came here and died for you, who took your place as a substitute, was raised again, and He ascended and is now in glory.

Do you not want to see Him? Would you not like to know Him as He is? You think of Him there on the cross as bearing your sins but would you not like to see Him as He is? Would you not like to see Him in His own realm, aside from sinners, aside from all the degradation? Think of Him in that realm, filling even heaven. He will fill all things; every spiritual intelligence was filled when Jesus went up and the Spirit would help to carry you in your affections to apprehend Him and to be with Him. You say, Finally? Yes finally, but in our spirits and in our experience, in measure at least, even now. Joseph sent the waggons because he wanted Jacob to know him thus; and the Lord wants you and me in our affections to be with Him, not to be thinking of Him only as He was here, a Man amongst men, but to think of Him in His own realm. The Lord, dear brethren, wants us to take this journey and He has provided the Spirit to encourage us. This dear man, Jacob, rose to it. To begin with he fainted, it appeared to be too much for him. Of course you can understand it literally. It does not take much to think of this in its literal sense, but let us try and think of it in its spiritual sense. It says "And he saw the waggons that Joseph had sent to carry him. And the spirit of Jacob their father revived. And Israel said, It is enough". He said, so to speak, It is all I want. The Spirit is enough, dear brethren, to take us.

Now this involves subjection, it involves obedience, does it not? One takes these things as read, that we are characteristically subject and obedient to the Lord's word. God has given the Spirit "to those that obey Him", Acts 5: 32. You say the gift of the Spirit is sovereign - that is true in one sense; but there is also the side of our obedience. Mr Taylor sen said 'let no one speak of having the Spirit aside from the element of obedience' (VoM 43, p.433). I will take it as read that we are characteristically that way. We are very conscious, when we are young especially, how we fluctuate, and we are kept aware of it constantly; but still, the Lord would, so to speak, bring before us these waggons that He has sent expressly so that we might see Him as He is. May we be encouraged in these things, dear brethren. The greatest things, the deepest things, are the things to go in for. They are too sacred, as I have said, for the mere mind of man but they are available for us in the Spirit, and may they lay hold of us and may we in our affections and in our desires go in for them, for His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

13th July 1974

THE CITY OF GOD

J.G.Chalmers

Psalm 46: 4,5; 48: 1-3,8; 87: 3-7

I have read from these three well known Psalms because of the references in them to the city of God. As far as I can see they are the only three Psalms in which the city is formally mentioned as the city of God, and it is interesting to note that each of them is written by the sons of Korah. The language they use would show to us that they had a great appreciation of the city of God. In New Testament language the sons of Korah would be vessels of mercy. I trust the sense of being a vessel of mercy is deep, very deep, in the soul of every person present, for as we review our responsible histories in a priestly way we have much to be ashamed of and we should really appreciate that God is rich in mercy and that behind his actings in mercy is the great love wherewith He loves us. What a God - rich in mercy! and the God who loves us. It is a great comfort, too, to take account that, at the present moment, God is working out something very precious and very choice in those very vessels of mercy. Think of us, vessels of mercy, being engaged with the great subject we have been engaged with today as to Christ and as to the assembly - the assembly for the heart of Christ; the assembly, too, for the pleasure of God. These are the greatest thoughts and God is working them out in vessels such as you and me, vessels of mercy.

That expression comes into Romans 9 at a time when God is enduring "with much long-suffering vessels of wrath fitted for destruction" (v 22). God does not fit vessels for destruction, they fit themselves for destruction and God is enduring them. But at the same time He is making known "the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy... prepared for glory". We would have said, the riches of His mercy or the riches of His grace, but Paul says "That he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy". Think of that, God making known His own choicest thoughts of glory in regard of Christ and the assembly and working that out at the present time in vessels of mercy. It affects our hearts that it is so.

The sons of Korah loved God, they had great affection for God Himself and they love the city, that is, what is here of God. If someone said to a son of Korah, There is no collective position today, what would he say? - "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God" and he would show it in his face. His countenance would radiate the joy and satisfaction he finds in this sphere in which are all his springs. It is the sons of Korah that say of the city of God "All my springs are in thee" and they would show it in their expressions that "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God... God is in the midst of her and she shall not be moved". Mr Raven said that what is of God here is as impregnable as God Himself. God has established something here and it is impregnable, it is going through; and thank God that we, vessels of mercy, are linked with it.

Psalm 46 shows that their appreciation of the city stands over against what is happening in the world. Verses 2 and 3 show us that things are happening which, naturally, would be very disturbing - the earth being removed and the mountains being carried into the heart of the seas, the waters thereof roaring and foaming, the mountains shaking with the swelling thereof. I think the mountains there would refer to institutions which have been providentially set up by God for the benefit of humanity and yet the masses of men as energised by Satan are trying today to overthrow these established institutions.

They are trying to overthrow governments. The mountains are shaking and the waters roaring and foaming, men becoming more beastly in their features and trying to overthrow everything that is providentially established by God for the sake of humanity. We feel these things. Mr Darby speaks about the insolence of power. Think of these unions usurping power and the insolence they are showing even towards government, saying, We are going to rule; and what a mess they will make. Thank God we belong to the assembly. We turn away from it all and say "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God." What a comfort, what a relief, to be in this wonderful system where the Spirit is free! The river is a reference to the Spirit. The Spirit is here. To say there is no

collective position is, to say the least, an insult to the Spirit; it is virtually saying that the Spirit has broken down in His commission.

But "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God". Thank God for the city. Over against this insolence of power there is an area where there is light and rule and order. That is God's thought of a city, where these elements are, and that is where the Spirit is flowing; He is working in local assemblies. The habitations (verse 4) refer to local assemblies and "the streams" to the way the Spirit is acting through vessels, through channels, through persons who are helping us. These persons are making us glad, are they not? You rejoice to be in this sphere, you feel your heart is being gladdened. You get gladdened in your local assembly; and at fellowship meetings; and you come to a time like this and, as the Spirit acts through persons and brings on to view such choice thoughts as to Christ and as to the assembly, the hearts of the saints are gladdened. There is sorrow in the world, there is distress out there. You come here and find the Spirit free, operating through vessels in whom He has liberty, and you find that He gladdens your heart with thoughts as to Christ and as to the assembly. That is what we are experiencing: "He shall glorify me for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to "you", John 16: 14. It is in that way the Spirit gladdens the hearts of the saints.

Psalm 48 is their appreciation of the assembly but it does not seem to relate to anything else. Their appreciation in Psalm 46 seems to stand over against what is happening amongst men but it seems that these sons of Korah in Psalm 48 appreciate the city just because of what it is in itself. They say "Great is Jehovah". We can say that - He is great! God is great - a pardoning God, a God who is rich in mercy, a God who has loved us, a God who has preserved us to this moment and preserved us in the position we are in - He is great, is He not?, and He is greatly to be praised. The service of God is in mind in this great thought of the assembly, the city of God.

Then I think verse 2 is choice: "Beautiful in elevation". We have had our thoughts elevated today as to the local assembly. I never saw Damascus in the light in which I have seen it today; it is fresh and

living, the local assembly, "beautiful in elevation". Every moral feature of the city is worked out now in the local assembly - what elevation! Beloved brethren, how do we regard the brethren? To be more pointed how do we regard the local brethren: "Beautiful in elevation"? Are they elevated in your thoughts? They should be today. We have seen Damascus in a fresh light "Beautiful in elevation". Paul would elevate the saints: "the Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother", Gal 4: 26. He answers the awful meanness of legality coming in in Galatia with elevating thoughts, shewing that the city is "beautiful in elevation". "The Jerusalem above" is a moral thought, it is above everything here and she is free. Then God has taken each one of us from the dung-hill and set us among nobles, among the nobles of His people (see Ps 113: 7, 8). You look round upon your brethren and say "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth". It is not that yet but it should be the joy of our souls - our local brethren! Then we gentiles are elevated to sonship: "Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon," Gen 48: 5. That is what Mr Taylor sen said of that scripture. We gentiles "being dead in your offences and sins" and "having no hope and without God in the world" are elevated to sonship, God in His grace conferring sonship upon us! As we look round upon these faces we say "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth".

"On the sides of the north". This is the suffering time. The reigning time is coming and so is the dwelling time, but meantime is the time of suffering and I think all the saints are affected in some way of suffering, some in their bodies, some in their circumstances, some in their families; and then there are the sorrows linked with the testimonial position. What sufferings there are - "the sides of the north"! God is working out His choicest thoughts in a poor and afflicted people, a suffering people, but oh, there is nobody like them, "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth... on the sides of the north, the city of the great King". Not one of the cities of the world with their millions is the city of the great King, but the Lord says in Matthew "For where two or three are gathered together unto

my name, there am I in the midst of them", chap 18: 20. Just two or three and they become morally the city of the great King. How wonderful these things are! It is filling my soul as it comes to me as I speak, what these things mean; it just means your local brethren and you rejoice in it, these two or three become the city of the great King.

Then "God is known in her palaces as a high fortress". The city has palaces. Do you young people know that the city has palaces? If you went to London I suppose, like the rest of us, you would want to see Buckingham Palace but you would only get to the outside of the gate. But "God is known in her palaces as a high fortress". What are this city's palaces? Ah, it is that aged brother alongside of you or that aged sister. I say in all sincerity that our brother who is serving us here is palatial, God is known in him. I look upon these older sisters here, they were in the testimony, standing by things faithfully, when I was in my sins. They are palatial! God is known in them. Get alongside of these aged persons and you will find the knowledge of God acquired through experience that we young persons do not have. God is known in these palaces as a high fortress. How palatial Jacob was! We think of him as crooked but how palatial he was when he took Joseph's two sons and said "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day, the Angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads", Gen 48: 15,16. Jacob shines in his palatial glory; God is known in that palace as a high fortress, and you will find it the same in your local brethren. You younger persons keep near the older brethren and get the gain of their knowledge of God. God is known in them, in those palaces, as a high fortress. Then it says "As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of Jehovah of hosts, in the city of our God". These persons had heard these things about the city and they had come and seen it; they had experienced it and, like the Queen of Sheba, they would say "the half was not told me", 1 Kings 10: 7.

Then we come to Psalm 87 and it says "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God". It does not say who is saying these

things, it just says "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." Well, divine Persons are saying glorious things as to the assembly. Think of Christ saying "my assembly"; we have heard Him saying that today; "my assembly". The Spirit is calling attention to the assembly as for the heart of Christ; and as a great vessel, too, that is to be for the pleasure of God. Think of all that Paul says as to the assembly. "I speak", he says, "as to Christ, and as to the assembly" (Eph 5: 12) - glorious things. Think of all that Mr Darby said as to Christ and the assembly; all that Mr Raven said, glorious things as to the assembly; they even accused him of making too much of the assembly. He said, What else is there here to make much of? He saw that the saints had the truth doctrinally and he laboured to get them into the experience and enjoyment of all that was here in the Spirit. Then we have had over fifty years of Mr. Taylor's ministry as to Christ and as to the assembly and he said some glorious things as to Christ and as to the assembly. Think of how God would effect the knowledge of Himself in our souls, "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ", 2 Cor 4: 6. God would effect in our souls the knowledge of these things. How attractive the glory is, the glory of God in the face of Jesus. Mr Taylor says in the last paragraph in the readings on Divine Names: 'That lovely face in which the glory of God shines' (N.S. Vol.50, p.425). The face of Jesus, beloved, is a lovely face. As looking on it by faith, beholding His glory, we are transformed by the Spirit. So that glorious things are still being spoken of as to the city of God. It is still extant. The Spirit is still here, through vessels He is still speaking these glorious things as to the city of God. The Psalmist goes on, "I will make mention of Rahab"; that is Egypt, the world of man's independence of God; Babylon is the world of religious veneer; Philistia is the world of religious intellect; Tyre is the world of commerce; Ethiopia is the world of darkness and carelessness. One of the prophets says "Careless Ethiopia", Ezek 30: 9. We want to be free of all these elements. Men are boasting in their part and place in these spheres, the commercial sphere, the religious sphere and so on, but it will all come down. Even Babylon in all its greatness will be brought down in one hour. But, oh! think of being vessels of

mercy. In Psalm 87 they appreciate the city as over against all that man is boasting in. It says "of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her". Think of that, you and I born in this great system of mercy, this great system of grace; it is our mother city, the Jerusalem above. Let us rejoice in that. "And the Most High himself shall establish her". The Lord said "hades' gates shall not prevail against it", Matt 16: 18. There is that there, and God is in relation to it, Christ is in relation to it, and the Spirit is in relation to it, and "hades' gates shall not prevail against it".

Then it says here: "Jehovah will count, when he inscribeth the peoples, This man was born there. Selah". You will notice the distinction between verse 5 "This one and that one was born in her" and verse 6 which says "This man was born there". I understand verse 6 to be a reference to Christ; it is something distinctive, something special; it is the place of Christ in relation to the assembly, the place of Christ in His pre-eminence, in His Headship, in relation to the assembly. Think of belonging to a system that Christ is in relation to as Head. It rejoices your soul; and then to know that God has put everything in this city to satisfy us and make us happy and joyful. So vessels of mercy can truly say "All my springs are in thee". We need nothing from Egypt, we need nothing from Babylon, we need nothing from Philistia, we need nothing from Tyre, we need nothing from Ethiopia. God has put everything into the assembly to sustain us, to satisfy us and to encourage us. May we then say from true hearts "All my springs are in thee". May the Lord be pleased to use the word for our help and encouragement. For His Name 's sake.

BUCKIE

10th May 1974

RECOVERY TO ASSEMBLY TRUTH

J.N.Castle

Romans 8: 3-6; Exodus 36: 20-34; 39: 32-43; 40: 1-3, 34, 38.

I would like to speak of Christ as having come in to provide a basis for the blessing of men, and in so doing, as bringing in all that was needed from the divine side. The Lord Jesus was here "as a root out of dry ground", Isa 53: 2. It has often been referred to that He did not draw in any sense from the surroundings in which He was found. Much the rather, as He was here, He graced those surroundings, as it says: "For he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground". "He" would refer to Christ; it is the Lord Jesus under the eye of God. We might say He was growing up, entering in unique holiness into manhood, and gracing it as it had never been set out before in the whole history of man kind. His presence would be one of moral excellence. He was not here with a commanding presence after the manner of men.

That is a feature of the flesh exemplified by Saul as head and shoulders above others. As regards the Lord Jesus it says "he hath no form nor lordliness" - note that - "nor lordliness". Just let that rest upon our spirits. This was a different kind of man, beloved. This was the Man that God was bringing in to supersede the first order of man. It says "he hath no form nor lordliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him". Consider the greatness of God come nigh to men and the attractiveness of it under the eye of God. That is something to get hold of, what is attractive in God's sight. We can put ourselves right in there where it says "there is no beauty that we should desire him" but the beauty was such as heaven could discern. That is the beauty of the second Man, who was despised and left alone of men. These facts can be verified in the gospels. Have you ever compared Isaiah 53 with the gospels and seen for yourself that He was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and like one from whom men hide their faces? Then, also, you get some impression from such prophetic passages, as in Isaiah and other prophets, of what Christ endured on behalf of

God and on behalf of men. It is not only to be general; it is on our behalf, it is on your behalf. I would like you to feel that you could say 'on my behalf', for this is our Saviour - your Saviour, my Saviour. It continues: "despised, and we esteemed him not". You can be thankful to God for in some way giving you His own viewpoint so that the working of the flesh in you in its usual course can be stopped.

That is the purpose of the glad tidings, that men may be stopped just where they are, reversed in their course of sin and brought into consonance with God's Man and with heaven. Think of God working in Christ and Christ going to the cross, His precious blood being shed, the blood and water coming out immediately; as the scripture says (see John 19: 34). It is immediate so as to meet the urgency of your need and mine. There was no delay on God's part when it was a question of the urgent requirements of His throne and the sinner's need. This is the God that you meet in the glad tidings, a God who brings in a Man that replaces the one in whom He found the workings of flesh. The glory of what He has done is one of the delights of heaven. What Christ has effected and what the Spirit has done and is doing will be carried through in substance and glory into eternity.

That is God's mind, for He always has His final and greatest thoughts, His purpose before Him, and He has provided the means whereby His thoughts can go through. They have already gone through in Christ. He has everything already in Christ. He is getting it now in men by making them like Christ.

So God has provided a Saviour. He has provided blood, blood which has efficacy to cleanse from sin. Think of the blood of Christ as contrasted with all the blood that ran throughout the whole Old Testament system. Think of the volume of it. But even if the volume had been more extended the blood of beasts would never have been able to take away sin. It required the blood of Christ, the blood of a Man who was without sin. We get that here in Romans in the reference to what Christ has done in totality. It is indeed needful to have our sins forgiven, and it is needful also to see that the whole matter of sin has been met. He "has condemned sin in the flesh".

God has brought in a Man who has superseded the other. He has

even brought in a way of doing things, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" that has superseded the old law which only condemned. The old law could show you where you were wrong but you could not find the power to do what was right in yourself. That is what God says: "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh". That is, what it had to work with was unable to fulfil the righteous requirement. What the law had to work with was the flesh of sin, the flesh of man, its workings, and what it produces. God's provision is "his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin". It gives us some idea of what Christ became; He was made sin. That is, no doubt, more than we can take in, but I think it is essential as entering into the souls of believers so that they might have no doubt about having peace with God. You may have your sins forgiven and have peace as to that, but you might see sin still working. Therefore what is needed to come to is that the matter has been fully met by Christ who, "in likeness of flesh of sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh, but according to Spirit". The Spirit of God at this point in this epistle is assumed to be recognised and active in the believer.

Romans 5, to digress for a moment, is connected with Exodus 17. It is well for saints to look into the truth and to see how things are set.

Exodus 17 has to do with persons who are newly saved. They have been brought out of Egypt but are not yet sensitive to the working of the flesh in them. They were murmuring, you might say, against Christ. As to fact they were murmuring against Moses; but God does not chide them. He simply says to Moses "Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel, and thy staff with which thou didst smite the river, take in thy hand, and go. Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock on Horeb; and thou shall strike the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink", Exod 17: 5, 6. God not only provides Christ in all His glory, His blood and the water that is needed for continual cleansing, but He also provides the Holy Spirit. But what is stated in Romans 8 regarding the Spirit is that not only is the Spirit given but He is being made use of. This scripture links with Numbers 21 where you find

persons of ennobled character who have dug away to get rid of the flesh so that the Spirit of God could be free in His intended service in the believer. This is most important to get hold of. The truth in its detail will keep us. Get hold of some of these facts in your mind and they will keep you in a day of trial when the enemy presents himself to you. The enemy is always doing that. We are not out of the world yet. None of us is in glory. We are here in the world just like the tabernacle was in the wilderness. But it was God's building, of material especially designed for the wilderness because it could go through. And that is what God intends believers to do as taken up in the glad tidings, that is, to go through to glory. So we are to use the Spirit. Notice that in Numbers 21 it says, in verse 18, "Well which princes digged, which the nobles of the people hollowed out at the word of the lawgiver, with their staves". This is God moving beforehand on our behalf. Who are these nobles? I think we would say that they are those who have gone before in the testimony and have shown what it means to dig away what hinders the Spirit. It is often spoken of as the disallowance of the flesh. You learn what the flesh is in you, you see that God has condemned that sin in the flesh and you look to Christ and live. You see that the way has been shown how to dig and hollow out. No doubt the lawgiver would be Moses but he would typify Christ. Also, they digged with their staves, as though to say that what is princely and authoritative has been involved in it.

God has every provision for the wilderness. He is able to take you up where you are and make you into a board in the tabernacle. No doubt that has often been referred to, but it appeals to one again that, when Moses set up the tabernacle, the boards were made standing. All the boards were set on bases of silver and the bars were applied, and then there was one bar brought in to produce unity in the whole structure. Then it was covered with gold, as though it was able to support the very finest thoughts of God in relation to Christ. And so it is. God always moves in grandeur in His architecture, whether it is in the establishment of this tabernacle in the wilderness, or in the temple, or in the soul of the believer which

really supersedes everything that He has done in a material way. That is what the final viewpoint will be. Every soul, I am sure, will come to that - the grandeur of God's architecture, which shows that every detail has been provided for. Men do not do that. They replace one design with another and often make alterations as the work proceeds. They add strengthening here and strengthening there, and finally the thing is done. But God has seen the detail through from the very beginning because He has always had Christ before Him, the One who came here in the glory of His manhood and was here reconciling the world to God. How He graced the whole idea of manhood and made it possible for men to be before God! I think this all enters into the matter of standing up as boards in the tabernacle. The thing is set out here in Exodus and then the truth of it is brought out later. I think that is generally the way God works.

He sets out something and then He brings you into the actuality of the truth of it. I refer to the tabernacle because the boards are made standing up and typify believers connected with the testimony of God. Would to God that all were in unity as these boards are! Our privilege and responsibility is to present the glad tidings in fulness, as God would have it, so that the work can proceed in the souls of those who hear. Every believer enlightened in the whole thought of God would keep the best, the whole thought before him. These boards are made so that they bear a certain relation to another board. It is important to get hold of that because God does not save believers in the glad tidings to have them stand alone, He would set them in His own way in relation to other believers. God's work itself tends to unity. We are exhorted in another section of the Scriptures to use diligence to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace", Eph 4: 3. That is said to believers who are intelligent. We might also bring it before all believers because it is a wonderful thought to keep before us. One is only referring to it to show that God's work is one whole. Independency in that way is not a thought of God. God's thoughts and actions effect unity, and a believer enlightened in the glad tidings in its fulness will see that, as a board standing up, he is to be in relation to others in some way. God makes this relation clear. Even the detail for conditions in which we

now find ourselves is furnished. Everything was provided for a broken day before the canon of Scripture was closed. Would anyone think that God would be taken unawares by what has come in? It would be impossible. God has thought of everything. He

has it in Christ, and He has thought of everything for the believer. He is now putting him on a basis that is most wonderful. Notice the tenon into the silver base, speaking of a vital link with Christ in the soul as regards redemption. He is my Redeemer. Do you know the Lord Jesus in that way? I think, therefore, what the tenons would speak of is that you rest on the unchangeable character of the work of Christ which nothing can disturb. These things are needed in our souls so that we might have peace and rock-solid security; that what God has done in Christ is immutable, nothing needs to be altered.

The Holy Spirit, as ungrieved, would normally maintain this in the soul. Believers may lose their joy in what Christ has done. This is not normal and, alas, is due to the work of the enemy. But the fact of what Christ has done remains. That is to say, once saved you are saved eternally and nothing can change that. Your soul can rest on it. God Himself is behind it. In dealing with His people of old God even intervened by an oath. Think of that! Not that He needed to, but just to show His creatures how true and unchangeable is His word. Think of the God we have who conducts Himself toward us in that way.

And so, just to refer to the detail, all that is needed is to point out that God's actions and ways amongst men would put all believers in relation to one testimony. He would set you in relation to the assembly, which is His grand prerogative. He recovered saints to the truth of the assembly in a most affecting way. God never gave up His work with men. If you go back, for example, to the Reformation you can see that it was a time when, we might say, God would hardly revive the truth of the assembly. The Reformation was a great public matter. It had political and commercial and religious aspects attached to it. It was indeed a time that had a precious feature in the mind of God, of course, because there was a man who was getting something in his soul as to the fact that "the just shall

live by faith", Rom 1: 17. But it was a great public thing. God works in a public sense, surely, in the glad tidings; but the truth of the assembly is a matter involving great intimacy. He gave this light that Christ is the Head in heaven and that He has a body here; and that has worked out into the most marvellous truths being unfolded, the truths as to the assembly. Of course, these truths were all there in the Scriptures but God has been pleased to recover persons to them. The assembly is indeed the greatest created vessel that ever will be, because of its marital relation to Christ. All believers are claimed by God for it. How wonderful God is! He was working on this great matter from the moment that the Spirit came, and He will complete it at the rapture when the assembly is taken up. It is really God's grand purpose in the glad tidings to secure persons and bring them into His service in this way.

As the narrative proceeds (Exod 39, 40) He vouchsafed His presence. That is a most wonderful thing. The sense of it is open to men now. The gospel began as towards all. It is still towards all, and it is "upon all those who believe", Rom 3: 22. It is our responsibility to believe, to accept the glad tidings and come into the blessed sense of the presence of God. God would set us up so that we can be free in His presence and in His service, in His praise and in His worship. So, there is the cloud of Jehovah "on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, before the eyes of all the house of Israel, through all their journeys". God in this way would manifest His presence and bring persons into the gain of it. May God bless the word.

PLAINFIELD

21st October 1973

THE CHILDREN'S THOUGHTS

We must always feed our minds with thoughts about the Lord Jesus. The very day on which the Israelites came into the promised land was the day on which they should take the passover lamb. This was not a tiny lamb but one full-grown, without fault of any kind. It had to be kept in the family for four days. How well the children would learn its perfections in that time!

This all happened to teach us that the greater our blessings are to us, the more we need to think upon the perfections of Jesus. By the Holy Spirit we know and see Him crowned with glory and honour but it is the same Jesus who, as man on earth, was perfect in His ways and motives. The four days of the passover lamb can perhaps be likened to the four Gospels and in each case chapter 3 and verse 16 seem of special interest.

Matthew records that the Spirit of God descended upon Jesus as He came up from His baptism. Then the Father's voice from heaven said "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight".

The scripture says 'lo' and 'behold' so it is vital to think of what thirty years of secret life had meant to God. This will lead to our own secret lives being pleasing too.

In Mark, the new name of Peter was given to Simon. This shows that the Lord was watching the work of God in this disciple just as He is now watching it in us. We are to rejoice that our names are written in the heavens - perhaps these names are not just our ordinary ones, but names given to us in connection with God's work and purpose for us!

The verse in Luke's gospel points out the Lord as the One who would baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire. This is all part of the glad tidings and we know that the Spirit is here because Jesus is now glorified. He dwells in the obedient believer and gives power to do what is right and to refuse evil.

Countless children and older persons know by heart the words of John 3: 16. Again we learn what Jesus was to His Father as the only-begotten Son and wonder at the great love that gave Him for us. Are you one of the 'whosoever' that believe on Him and have life eternal?

J.C.Evershed