

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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WHAT GOD LOVES

STIRRING UP

SOME FUNDAMENTALS - THE DEITY OF CHRIST

THE CHILDREN'S MEMORIES

INQUIRY

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Luke 2: 46-51; Psalm 27: 4; Isaiah 21: 11,12; 2 Samuel 20: 15-20

These scriptures present the importance of inquiry. It is a feature that is proper to manhood according to God. The attitude of inquiry involves dependence, it includes the idea that we need to learn, and as long as we are here, no matter how old we are, we are always learning and we always need to learn. If the trust that we were speaking of is rightly to be fulfilled by any of us there will be the need to maintain the attitude of inquiry. We can be so fixed at times in our outlook and in our ideas, which is not proper to manhood. The attitude of inquiry is a receptive attitude. It is an attitude that would be ready to receive anything that God may say to us about any matter and is important for each one of us to maintain individually and locally when we come together. There should be always with us the attitude of inquiry.

This attitude is very attractive when it is seen in the Lord Jesus Himself. In this chapter two of the gospel of Luke we have presented to us Jesus as a boy of twelve with his parents. Some here may be about twelve. What a model Jesus is! Young persons here, Jesus was once your age. What a wonderful thing to contemplate Him here, perfect in flesh and blood condition, brought up at Nazareth, living in the household of His parents, and Jesus one of that household. What an example for young persons in households. Maybe sometimes they, as we all have, rebel against certain restrictions which are for our blessing to accept. There were never any of these features with Jesus. It was a poor household; when it came to a certain offering required, the offering of lesser value was offered (Luke 2: 24; Lev 12: 8) which would indicate that the household had not much material resource. It would not be a home such as we live in, dear brethren. His parents went up yearly at the feast of the Passover, and when Jesus was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast and the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem. Think of Jesus as a

boy of twelve, already committed to His Father's business, rejoicing to go up to Jerusalem. The psalmist said "I rejoiced when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of Jehovah. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem", Ps 122: 1,2. Think of Jesus as a boy of twelve anticipating going up and His feet actually standing within the gates of Jerusalem! What God purposed regarding Jerusalem, and will yet be fulfilled, even regarding the earthly Jerusalem, would come into the heart and mind of the Lord Jesus as a boy of twelve.

As His parents returned, Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem. They went a day's journey supposing He was amongst their acquaintances and friends. "And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers and hearing them and asking them questions". Think of Jesus asking questions. We would have to view this setting of the temple and teachers as normal. There was the abnormal side where the doctors of the law were sitting by, critical of the actions of the Lord Jesus in chapter 5, but here we would have to regard. This was normal, just as in chapter 1 there was normal priestly service, Zacharias being in the temple in his course. We were speaking about the failures which took place between what was established by David and Samuel the seer, and what was recovered in the time of Nehemiah (see 1 Chron 9: 22). There were many serious lapses also between the recovery in the book of Nehemiah and the history recorded in the first chapter of Luke. There were over four hundred years of history, some very sad history; there was actually idolatry set up in the temple during that time. What a lapse that was, but you come to the first chapter of Luke verse five and you find the course of Abia functioning as set on by David in 1 Chronicles 24: 11. The line comes right through.

So in chapter 2 there are these teachers: "sitting in the midst of the teachers and hearing them and asking them questions". I suppose in our day teachers would be scarce. Thank God we have teaching, and there is printed teaching, but teachers are scarce. We are not living in a time when gift is prominent. I do not think persons could be named as teachers today. We are not living in that kind of time but in a time when things are more mutual, and we help each

other. We need to help each other because there is not the distinctiveness there has been previously. Nevertheless there is to be in our localities the element of teaching. The Lord Jesus Himself as a boy of twelve was sitting in the midst of the teachers and hearing them and asking them questions. It is an attitude of dependent manhood here; He asked questions of teachers in the temple. What a model for us, dear brethren! "And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers". We are not surprised that those who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers, knowing who He is, knowing the perfection of His committal, but we might be surprised that He was hearing the teachers and asking them questions. It would no doubt emphasise the importance of this attitude of inquiry. So when we come together we do not come together to teach exactly, we come together to inquire and there is help in every occasion as we inquire. The Lord Jesus said "Why is it that ye have sought me? did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?" He was already committed to His Father's business. The more we are committed to the Father's business, and the more we accept being entrusted with the things of God, the more we will need the feature of inquiry, and make use of everything that can help us, and anyone that can help us. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth and He was in subjection to them. Jesus, committed to His Father's business, was in subjection to His parents in Nazareth. How beautiful it is! How attractive it makes this matter of inquiry, I trust, to each one of us!

Now Psalm 27, a psalm of David, is in a section which begins in Psalm 25. It has been suggested that this section of Psalms may have been written during the time of the rebellion of Absalom, and David was in exile, and some of his inward feelings are expressed.

It says in this verse we have read "One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after". You remember when he accepted exile and left Jerusalem and Zadok and the priests brought the ark to be with David in exile, he said "Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I shall find favour in the eyes of Jehovah, he will bring me

again, and show me it, and its habitation", 2 Sam 15: 25. David says here "One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah; and to inquire of him in his temple". It is a longing he has to get into normal conditions, and the privilege of inquiring of Him. It is the one thing that occupies David's mind and heart here. If he is in exile when he writes this you can understand how he would value the privilege he once had, and pray that it should be restored to him. What a privilege we have in an area like this! How privileged we are to have meetings of this kind, to have occasions of fellowship, to be in localities close to other localities! We are not in outposts; there are the outposts.

If we are to experience temple conditions there must be with us the attitude of inquiry. The temple of God is where the Spirit of God is, but even if persons who are indwelt by the Spirit come together without the attitude of inquiry there would not be temple conditions.

There needs to be this attitude of inquiry with us. We are thankful for help we get when we come together in occasions such as we had before we had this one, but I sometimes wonder if such occasions could be even more profitable, because the more we are coloured by the attitude of inquiry the more profitable these occasions will be because, the Spirit dwelling here in the temple, there is the answer to any genuine inquiry. What is needed on our side is this attitude of inquiry. We do not come together as knowing everything; we come together as inquirers. Some might know more than others, but it is not a matter of knowledge in any case, it is a matter of what the Lord might say and what God might say to us whether we are a large number locally or whether we are few. Temple conditions do not depend on numbers; I believe temple conditions depend on the attitude of the persons, and if the attitude is one of inquiry we will get more and more help in our occasions of gathering, because there is no limit to the help available to us. There needs to be the receptive inquiring attitude on our part. We do not just come together to talk about the scriptures, we come together to inquire as to what the Lord would say to us on any particular occasion. He is more ready to

speak to us than we are to inquire. The need is on our side for this attitude of inquiry. May we be alerted and have more of this spirit of inquiry that there might be divine answers coming to us.

The book of Isaiah consists of a large number of prophecies, and we have the advantage in Mr Darby's translation of indications of when the prophecies start and finish. Some of the prophecies consist of one chapter, some consist of a number of chapters; this one we have read consists of two verses, but it is a prophecy of Isaiah, by itself, which would remind us of the need to be available to answer inquiry, and to be on the outlook for inquiring persons. Not only do we need to have the attitude of inquiry ourselves but we need to be on the outlook for persons who are inquiring. This is the burden of Dumah: "He called to me out of Seir". Who is the 'me'? It might be Isaiah himself. Isaiah's experiences come into his prophecies more than perhaps we realise. He makes several references to himself and how he felt in certain circumstances. He had to walk barefoot and naked for instance in chapter twenty, as indicated of God. Here Isaiah writes "he calleth to me out of Seir".

The call is "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" We need to be watchmen, on the outlook for persons who are inquiring. The inquiry is "What of the night?". There are many around us in conditions of night, in darkness; we know something ourselves of that darkness. Paul wrote in the first chapter of Colossians: "Who has delivered us from the authority of darkness". I have no doubt that around us there are dear souls held in the authority of darkness. It is something where Satan has a foothold, where he has authority over the conscience. The consciences of persons are under an authority, but it is not of God, it is the authority of darkness. It is a very solemn thing and we have known something of it. Thank God that we have been delivered from it: "Who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love". The authority of darkness would be like the night. "What of the night?" "Watchman", it is repeated "What of the night?" Persons may be living near to us under this authority, there may be some longing with them. Would we be in an

attitude of watchmen? Would we be ready to answer any inquiry? "And the watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire; return, come". Through divine mercy some of us have known something of what the morning is. There is life and love and liberty and hope in the shining of the sun; how good to come into the morning! Do not let us forget there are persons who are still in the night and let us be available. Peter speaks about "sanctify the Lord the Christ in your hearts, and be always prepared to give an answer to every one that asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you" 1 Pet 3: 15. It is somebody who understands the morning light and hope and is prepared to give an answer. He is like a watchman, he is testifying in his behaviour that he has hope. He is not in the night, he is not under the authority of darkness, he is in the kingdom of the Son of His love and, because he is expressing something of that morning, he arouses inquiry and is "always prepared to give an answer to every one that asks you to give an account of the hope that is in you, but with meekness and fear"; not in any boasting attitude, not in an attitude taking any credit to ourselves but in meekness and fear. This brings before us the idea of the watchman on the outlook. Habakkuk takes up his stand upon his watch tower (see Hab 2: 1). We have often referred to part of the panoply in Ephesians 6: "shod your feet with the preparation of the glad tidings of peace" (v 15). Shod your feet, not just our minds, not just our hearts but our feet, which must involve movement. Such would be available to answer any inquiry. It says here "if ye will inquire, inquire; return, come". In the day in which we are there is a need for this attitude of the watchman being on the outlook for persons who are inquiring, who are troubled, who are burdened; and there must be many of them, persons who have misgivings, who wonder, who possibly did not know all the facts that we knew at a certain juncture. Through mercy we are delivered, but let us never forget persons who are still in bondage and be ready to answer inquiries.

In 2 Samuel we have before us the importance of the attitude of inquiry when a difficulty arises. We tend to jump to conclusions and

we can be quite sure we have the right judgment, and so we pronounce it very often. The need, dear brethren, is to inquire; whatever the difficulty may be, the need is to inquire. There is a difficulty in this scripture, a very serious difficulty, and Joab proceeds to act. Actually he was not commissioned to do this. Amasa is recognised as the captain, and then Abishai is commissioned to see to this matter, but somehow Joab comes into it. Joab is never far away when something like this arises. They gather together and come and besiege this city Abel-Beth-Maacah and cast a bank against it. They proceed to sap the wall, they proceed to destroy this city because of this difficulty that has arisen. Joab makes no inquiry, he does not consult anyone, he proceeds to act on his own ideas; but there is a wise woman there. "And a wise woman cried out of the city, Hear, hear: say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee". This woman succeeded in getting Joab to listen. One of the last things Joab would do is to listen. Joab was acting here, proceeding according to his own mind, quite sure he has the answer, but she succeeds in getting this man to listen. "Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee. And he came near to her; and the woman said, Art thou Joab? And he said, I am he. And she said to him, Listen to the words of thy handmaid. And he said, I am listening". If you get someone listening, even Joab listening, there is some hope of a settlement of things. "I am listening", he says, and she spoke saying "They were wont to speak in old time saying, Just inquire in Abel". Think of that word, "Just inquire"! A difficulty arises - just inquire! There is need to have an open mind and to inquire - just inquire. "Just inquire in Abel; and so they ended". We need, dear brethren, to develop this attitude of inquiry regarding any difficulty arising. Difficulties are arising and difficulties will arise, but "Just inquire"; "Just inquire" before you come to a conclusion. Fortunately, inquiring takes some time; there is time gained by inquiring.

I desire to draw attention to two incidents in the Old Testament. The first is in Genesis 34 where there was the difficulty when Dinah the daughter of Leah went out to see the daughters of the land, and

all of us would know the calamity that happened there. This difficulty was answered violently, Simeon and Levi took the matter into their own hands. There is no doubt that it was a wrong thing that was done, but Simeon and Levi made no inquiry; they did not ask Jacob what he thought about the matter. They took the law into their own hands and acted so violently that sixty years afterwards the matter was still on the spirit of Jacob; he was still bearing the burden of what these sons Simeon and Levi did. A wrong was done, there is no doubt that it was wrong, but their action was so violent that it brought in grief which remained for sixty years or so afterwards for when Jacob was blessing his sons he recalled to Simeon and Levi this incident. We can make matters worse by an over-reaction to any difficulty that may happen.

The other incident is in the book of Joshua chapter 22, when the two and a half tribes had been with the other nine and a half tribes and the conquest of the land of Canaan had been completed, and the two and a half tribes were sent back to their own inheritance on the other side of the Jordan. Before they went to their homes they built an altar of grand appearance. The thing looked very bad.

A very serious view was taken of it in Israel. When the children of Israel heard of it, the whole assembly of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh, to go up against them to war (v 12).

Such was their answer to the difficulty and even Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest and the princes were in it. "And they came to the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and spoke with them, saying, Thus saith the whole assembly of Jehovah: What wickedness is this which ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following Jehovah, in that ye have built yourselves an altar, rebelling this day against Jehovah?" (vv 15,16). They pronounced it wickedness and rebellion and turning away from God. That is what is pronounced by even Phinehas, the son of Eleazar; and they go on to refer to precedents, which are often referred to when difficulties happen. "Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us?" They would say this is just Peor all over again. Then they refer to Achan's sin. We have

these kind of things said when difficulties arise. Immediately we jump to conclusions and say this is Glanton over again, or some other issue over again. After they have said all this and after they have given their conclusion about it, and called it wickedness and rebellion, they find that there is an explanation, so that it says in verse 30 that when they "heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spoke, it was good in their sight". There was an explanation for it, you see. The thing was good in the sight of the children of Israel. It says in verse 33 "And the thing was good in the sight of the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God, and no more said that they would go up in warfare against them, to destroy the land". It was explained. It was not on a very high level, it was on a low level; nevertheless it was accepted. In fact they said it was good. The idea was that they were so far from Jerusalem that they should have an altar just to prove that Jehovah was their God. It was a very poor thing, and yet it was an explanation which was accepted and instead of war, there was peace restored. It came through inquiry. They inquired. They would have been better to inquire first, before they made their pronouncements, but anyway they inquired afterwards and it was accepted. We had a word on Tuesday night as to our reactions when certain things happen. Maybe the Lord allows certain things to happen to test our reactions. We are always being tested as to what our reactions are to certain things that happen. We are safe, dear brethren, to inquire and to keep inquiring, and the Lord will answer true inquiry and genuine earnest prayer to Him.

May the Lord help us to value the attitude of inquiry and to be maintained in it that we may prove trustworthy as to what is committed to us.

SUNBURY

22 February 1975

WHAT GOD LOVES

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Hebrews 12: 22-25 (1st sentence); Psalm 78: 67-72; 47: 4; 87: 2,3

I want to say a word about what God loves. There is that which God loves and that which God hates and rejects. The question when we are together like this is as to what we have really come to, what we have experienced in our souls in the knowledge of God, because we want to be stable. Some of us have not been too stable but we want to be concerned now that we are preserved in stability.

Hebrews is an interesting book. I suppose Paul wrote it; I think we get a clue to that in what it says in the end of the epistle: "that our brother Timotheus is set at liberty"; that is Christianity, that everybody should be set at liberty, no bondage. We have not come to a mountain that is on fire. What we have come to, dear brethren, is mount Zion. It is a great thing to have some experience in ourselves of what we have come to. We might have a reading, as we have had, and at the end of it ask ourselves what feature of the truth has registered in our minds and affections? Well, this is an elementary epistle; and there is another reason why I think Paul wrote it; the use of the word 'heavenly'. Paul was seeking to get the dear brethren into a spiritual elevation, into the enjoyment of heavenly things. As the Lord said in John's gospel: "If I have said the earthly things to you, and ye believe not, how, if I say the heavenly things to you, will ye believe?", chap 3: 12. Christianity is to help us get into heavenly things because they are eternal and abiding, they are stable, and we want to encourage one another to get into these heavenly things.

The apostle speaks about what we have come to: "ye have come to mount Zion". I think that mount Zion stands for divine sovereignty, a great principle with God, and what He loves is related to His sovereignty: we can see that all through the Scriptures. We want to encourage one another in relation to what God loves, so that we love what He loves and we hate what He hates.

So we might refer to the gospels in relation to what God loves; they bring out what He loves in Jesus. Think of what God loved in Jesus in manhood! You will recall that when Solomon was born it says that Jehovah loved him - a beautiful touch as to him. And when Jesus was born God loved Him. He had in Jesus in manhood something that He had never had here before. We do well to encourage one another to live more in the gospels, and to feed on heavenly food. So there was that in Solomon when he was born that Jehovah loved. I think it is a beautiful comment that the Spirit gives, that Jehovah loved him, and He loved him because he was peaceful. So Solomon brings in the glory. We love to think of Jesus; He says Himself "more than Solomon is here". How God loved Jesus in manhood! We come to love and appreciate what God loves and to hate what He hates. That is a thing we need to dwell on and it is based on the principle of divine sovereignty, it enters into God's choice. There is what He rejects, what He hates, but there is what He loves; and I think if we look at the brethren we see what God loves, what He loves in the saints is what He sees of Christ, and that is the result of the formative work of the Spirit. We need to keep ourselves in constant self-judgment so that the Spirit can go on working in us and forming us after Christ. That is the new man, which is a creation, and what is going to abide.

I read from the Psalms in regard to mount Zion. In Psalm 78 there is what God rejected: "he rejected the tent of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim". God's sovereignty, as we have been taught, enters into what He rejects as well as what He loves. I think that is an important thing to remember; but He "chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved". The darkest period in Israel's history is lit up with this thought of divine sovereignty. God, as it were, comes back to it and it says that He "chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved". That is something to come to in our histories, in our experience, that we love what God loves; and He acts on the principle of His sovereign mercy. You get that touch in Ephesians (I think it is connected with mount Zion): "God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith He loved

us", chap 2: 4. His sovereignty and His love are brought together, He has acted according to His sovereign mercy in taking us up; as it says in Romans: "vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared for glory", chap 9: 23. God had the very best thoughts in His mind when He took us up in His sovereign mercy. The darkest period is depicted here in this Psalm. It says "Then the Lord awoke as one out of sleep, like a mighty man that shouteth aloud by reason of wine". The Lord was like that; it is not that He was asleep, the Lord has never been asleep in the history of the recovery, He is fully awake as to what is current in the history of His assembly. That is a comfort to us, that the Lord can arise and awake like a mighty man.

What a mighty Man He is! We love to think of Jesus going forth as a mighty man and shouting aloud by reason of wine. The Lord is going on, and the test is, dear brethren, whether we are going forward. We may have reached a point in the history of the testimony now, but are we going to settle for something less than what God has in His mind for us? God not only brought His people out of Egypt but His great objective was to bring them into the land, that they should enter into His purpose and into the inheritance which He had prepared for them. So we get what He loves, He loves mount Zion, and Judah is connected with mount Zion. The principle of royalty enters into it, He had David in mind as the man after God's own heart. Let us have a greater appreciation of the Man of the gospels, the Man after God's own heart. Jesus did everything that was pleasing to His Father. "I do always the things", he said, "that are pleasing to him", John 8: 29. What a test it is to every one of us as to whether we are here pleasing to the Father, doing the Father's will. Jesus said at the age of twelve in His holy boyhood: "Did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?", Luke 2: 49. Think of a boy at the age of twelve, how it embraces the youngest of us here, that we might be set to be occupied in the things of the Father. I know of no occupation like it. It is something that is to characterise us every one. That is one of the things that must have been lovely and delightful to God, to look down and see Jesus in holy boyhood occupied in the things of His Father. I would encourage the young ones, for we want to carry them along with us. Moses said "We will

go with our young", Exod 10: 9. The enemy would seek to hold them, bring them into captivity by bringing in something of the world, but I think the Spirit of God is giving us an urge to carry the young forward and to show that divine things are attractive because they stand related to a Man whom God loves, and that is Jesus. We love to speak about the Man of the gospels, the Man who was always in communion with His Father. I think that is another beautiful feature seen in Him, and I would encourage all of us to maintain our link in communion with the Father. The gospels bring out that there was one glorious Man who was always in communion with His Father, and therefore He was always occupied in the things of the Father. It brings out the love of the Father for the Son. Think of those precious words: "my beloved Son"! Think of what God found in Jesus, the great anti-type of Solomon, of whom it says "Jehovah loved him", 2 Sam.12: 24. I commend that to the brethren, to dwell on the Man whom God loves, and that is Jesus. There was never a man like Him here in testimony. It goes on to say here that "he chose David his servant, and took him from the sheep folds". That is the kind of man God loves. He was the beloved, and he was anointed; Jehovah said to Samuel "Arise, anoint him; for this is he", 1 Sam.16: 12. There is no other. There is only one Man who fills the heart of God, He is the centre of the whole world that the Father has brought in. This is a delightful thought: "he chose David", just a humble man looking after sheep. What are we doing in our local meetings? Are we caring for the saints? The Lord says "How much better then is a man than a sheep?", Matt 12:12. The sheep involve the idea of care. David was caring for the sheep and God had him in mind. It brings out this great thought of what God loves, he loved David. He rejected Saul, he was not the divine choice. Paul says that God removed him: "And having removed him he raised up to them David for king", Acts 13: 22. God's sovereignty enters into it; that is my point, that God's love is linked with His sovereignty because He loved David and he rejected Saul. It takes us a long time to reject Saul, a man who was head and shoulders above everybody. He was not the divine choice, David was the divine choice, the Man of the gospels is the divine choice. In recent meetings in Edinburgh Mr Bellamy said that if you

have not an ideal you will have an idol; that struck me very much. I think it is true, dear brethren, that if we have not the divine idea, before us we shall have an idol somewhere. Let us be preserved from idolatry. God's supreme thought centres in Jesus, the Man of His pleasure. So God rejected Saul but He chose David. He brings Samuel round; He had to say to him "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him", 1 Sam 16: 1. How long is it that we mourn for that kind of man? God has removed that order of man in the cross of Christ. It says in Hosea (chap 13: 11): "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath". God will remove and has removed that order of man. So it is a wonderful thing that we can come into line with God in what He loves, that is mount Zion. Mount Zion is "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth", Ps 48: 2. Could you find better elevation anywhere today than in a company like this? It is wonderful to be amongst brethren who are seeking to maintain the principle of separation from evil and the world, and to be here in an atmosphere that is so congenial to our spiritual progress and advancement in the knowledge of the truth.

I refer to Jacob because most of our histories have been very much like his. We often dwell on the discrepancies of Jacob; I do not think the Spirit of God would detain us on those features but on what is excellent in Jacob. So you get in this Psalm, "He hath chosen our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved". I think that is a beautiful touch - God has chosen our inheritance for us.

Could you have anything better? Could any one of us be in a better atmosphere today, greater elevation? This is the joy of the whole earth, to be amongst the saints who love the truth and who love the Lord Jesus, the One who is the centre of the Father's world, that is a spiritual world. We want to get the thought of a spiritual world. Mr Coates fits in with Mr Darby very well on that point, as you may know in the ministry: the spiritual world is the Father's world. We want to be related to that. Let God choose your inheritance. He has chosen our inheritance for us and He has chosen the very best. You have a touch here: "the excellency of Jacob whom he loved"; there was

something in Jacob that was lovable to God. God says in Malachi, "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau", chap 1: 3. His sovereignty enters into that. You know what happened when Jacob and Esau were still in the womb of Rebecca; there was a struggle going on. You can look back over your history and find there has been a struggle, and it may be that the struggle is still going on. Rebecca inquired of Jehovah "Why am I thus?", Gen 25: 22. And what did Jehovah say to her? "Two nations are in thy womb, And two peoples... And one people shall be stronger than the other people". I think that is connected with Jacob because it involves the sovereign work of God in new birth. It is a wonderful thing to think of new birth: "Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God"; and "Except any one be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God", John 3: 3. It is just impossible on the line of nature; we must come back, every one of us, to the sovereign work of God in our souls. I would encourage the young, and all of us, to relate ourselves to the work of God in you. That is something that is stable, something that is strong, stronger than the flesh; as the Lord goes on to say in John 3: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit". I think we shall be characterised more by the feature of stability in our souls if we relate ourselves to God's sovereign work in us, that which is stronger.

Well, the struggle went on and it proved in time that there was that which God loved in Jacob. You will remember that, when he went out to get a wife, he obeyed his father and his mother. Obedience is a lovely feature, and we all need to be obedient. Jacob was obedient when Isaac charged him that he was not to get a wife from the Canaanites, he was to go to his own kindred. I think that unless this moral feature of obedience is with us we shall not get on very far spiritually. Well, that is a feature of excellency that God loved. I think it was found very early in Jacob and God loves to bring it out.

Then the struggle came later still when he had to face his brother. So the struggle goes on because we have to face Esau in ourselves; what God hates is what is after the flesh. The struggle goes on in Romans 7 and you come to it that in me, as the apostle says, "in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell" (v 18). That is the Esau

type of man, that is the flesh, and that which is born of flesh is flesh and will not be anything else. We have to come to it through bitter experience, it is a very happy experience if we do come to it, "that in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell". What is of God is what is good, and that is stronger than the other, and I think the apostle brings in his own experience to help us. The struggle goes on in Romans until you find at the end of the chapter "I thank God": "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord". What a deliverance that is! We have to go through these exercises in order to reach what God loves in us and in the saints. There is what He loves, there are the excellencies of Jacob.

In the other Psalm, as I read: "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob". Or are we forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the custom is with some? The apostle says encourage one another (I think the ministry carries with it the feature of encouragement): "Encouraging one another and by so much the more as ye see the day drawing near". That refers, I have no doubt, to the coming of the Lord; - that day is very near. In the apostle's mind it was approaching, and was very near at that time; and how near it is to us now! The time of our receiving up has come. Well, do we love the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob? How much time we spend in our own habitation. Of course, God loves our habitations but He loves the gates of Zion more. Let us love more what God loves. God is looking for a full committal to His interests. So we are not to be casual; we can become so and settle down in our own habitations; but I think that the Spirit of God would awaken us as to what God loves, He loves the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob. May we be encouraged to go on, to go forward and not backward. There is a verse in Jeremiah (see chap 7: 24) which always challenges me, when God had to say to a rebellious people that they went backward and not forward. We are to go forward in the testimony today and not backward. The word to Moses was "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward", Exod 14: 15. God is looking for a people that have spiritual energy to go forward in

loving the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob. It must have grieved God to have to say to His people in Jeremiah's time that they went backward and not forward. May it never be said of any one of us! In John's gospel it says that many of His disciples went away back and walked no more with Him (see chap 6: 66).

Think of the mercy of God that has put us in touch with the truth, in touch with those who love the truth and who love one another. We are to be a people who are going forward and entering into our inheritance, the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him. Think of God preparing these things for us that we should enjoy our inheritance now, because we can enjoy it as having the earnest of the Spirit. He has given us the earnest of the Spirit so that we can enjoy the inheritance together. May we go in for these things that are eternal in their very nature, because the things which are seen, as Paul says, are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. May eternal things become to us more real and more enjoyable. We shall enjoy the brethren, a heavenly people, as we appropriate them. That is what God would encourage us in.

Well, it is just a simple word, to see how divine sovereignty and divine love are related to each other and that God is working on the principle of sovereignty. Think of God marking us out beforehand for these things, for adoption according to the good pleasure of His will.

God's will will go through; may we be in relation to it because His will abides for eternity. And may we be encouraged as having seen the brethren today and enjoyed our communication with one another over these heavenly things. May the Lord bless the word.

MAIDSTONE

12 October 1974

STIRRING UP

H.J.Taylor

Haggai 1: 14; 2 Peter 1: 12,13; 3: 1, 2

I desire, beloved brethren, to speak quite briefly about the service of stirring up the saints. We had some experience of this here in a reading recently, with particular reference to this kind of meeting, and I wish to show from the Scriptures that this is a wholly right service and is a means that God uses to help us forward in the truth and in answering to it. So I have selected these scriptures: the one in Haggai, in which God Himself graciously engages in this service, and then in Peter who does so likewise.

In the history in Ezra we read that these two men, Zerubbabel and Joshua, are moved to engage in the work of reconstruction as a result of the prophetic ministry, but the Spirit of God here in this verse traces for us the source of that, and that is that "Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel... and the spirit of Joshua... and the spirit of all the remnant of the people". I think it is a very fine consideration to think of God stirring the spirits of the saints, and as a result of this stirring here it says that "they came and worked at the house of Jehovah of hosts, their God". I think we feel some sense of stirring amongst us through this divine service, so that we are encouraged to go on in the work. Perhaps others, like myself, feel that the part he or she has in the work of the Lord is very small indeed. When we consider the extent of that work we would have to admit that it is very small, but let us remember, dear brother, dear sister, that it is the work of the Lord, and we are not therefore in any way to demean it but rather to be encouraged to engage in it in an increasing way. So as we take the application of this verse to ourselves it would be that we discern a certain stirring in our spirits from God which would help us to commit ourselves in an increasing degree to the work of the Lord. This is not limited to brothers who minister but is something that every brother and every sister would rightly be concerned about : In what way can I engage in a fuller degree in the work of the Lord? Let our spirits, therefore, be stirred in this direction.

Now in Peter's second epistle he is an old man; he had had a long period of service but is about to be taken to be with Christ, to put off his tabernacle; but he says, Before I do so - "As long as I am in this tabernacle" - "I account it right... to stir you up". So let not any one of us have any tinge of resentment at being stirred up but rather be thankful for the way in which it would help us to go forward. Peter is not writing to these believers because there are things that they are going on with in a wrong way. He says, You know these things and you are established in the present truth. I received help some time back here as to the meaning of "the present truth"; it is not just something that is brought out by the Spirit of God at some particular time but it relates to the whole truth of Christianity - "the present truth" - what belongs to this wonderful period in which we are, in which Christ is on high and the Spirit is here. These believers were established in that, and yet Peter says "I account it right... to stir you up by putting you in remembrance"; that is, he would keep these things constantly before the brethren. This is something that we experience, and would experience more I think - the service of being stirred up. It does not look as if he envisages just occasionally doing so but, so to say, As long as I am alive, this is what I am going to do - "to stir you up by putting you in remembrance". How fine that is, that the Lord has graciously granted to us brothers who can stir us up in relation to the great truths of Christianity. So let us make room for this service, let us receive it thankfully and answer to it.

Before he finishes his letter he engages in this service again. In chapter 3 he says "I stir up, in the way of putting you in remembrance". Again, he is not critical of any wrong state in the brethren. He is stirring up their pure mind, "to be mindful of the words spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of the Lord and Saviour by your apostles". What a scope of things there is here! The apostle would stir the saints up in relation to them; he would have them kept constantly before their minds - "the words spoken before by the holy prophets", and then (how choice!) "and of the commandment of the Lord and Saviour by your apostles". How much has come to us in the holy Scriptures, and by ministry which

has its own authority, and there is a constant need, one feels for oneself, maybe others do too, of being stirred up in relation to these things so that we get into them more fully and answer increasingly to the divine desires for the saints walking in the light of the assembly at the present time.

So dear brethren, it was just this simple thought arising from the stirring we have had; and let us all be ready to answer to these stirrings-up, in no way resenting them but rather getting the gain of them, stirred up as to the work of the Lord in any way in which we can be furthered in this, and then to the whole scope of the truth, and be established in it, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

8 April 1975

SOME FUNDAMENTALS - THE DEITY OF CHRIST

The deity of Christ is a truth of vital importance but it has often been bitterly opposed. Twice in the Bible when He asserted His deity the Jews took up stones to stone Jesus, and on the second occasion said "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God", John 10: 33. But the truth is that although His Godhead glory was veiled, the lowly Man who asked a drink from the woman at Sychar's well was not only truly Man, but truly God. If we accept that the Scriptures are inspired, we must necessarily accept that Christ "is over all, God blessed for ever", Rom 9: 5.

The apostle John commenced his gospel narrative with those stupendous statements "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". In past eternity, the One who was known here by the disciples as "the Word" was always there. We know little of those eternal conditions before time, but we do know that He was with God, a distinct Personality, in the form of God and equal with God (see Phil 2: 6).

We do not know when the angels were created or just when the heavens and earth were created, but we do know that "without him not one thing received being which has received being", John 1: 3.

When we think how extensive the universe is and of the comparative minuteness of man we are impressed with the immeasurable greatness of the One of whom it is written: "All things have been created by him and for him ", Col 1: 16. But when the heavens and earth have served their purpose and are changed, He will remain eternally "the Same", Heb 1: 12.

In connection with the birth of Jesus the gospel writer quotes the prophetic scripture: "They shall call his name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, 'God with us'". The incarnation is no doubt the most marvellous event of all time. In the Babe of Bethlehem's manger God was manifest in flesh. No wonder that in His pathway here the Godhead glory shone through the human veil. When he

quietened the turbulent elements men might well say as they did with astonishment: "Who then is this?", Luke 8: 25.

The very name of Jesus involves His deity, and that He would save His people from their sins. He never ceased to be what He was as God because of what He became. As Man He went to the cross, but unless He had been divine (Jehovah's fellow - see Zech 13: 7) He could not have sustained and exhausted vicariously as He did all the wrath of God against sin. Blessed be His Name! But in anticipation of the completion of the work the Father had given Him to do He said, "Glorify me... with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was", John 17: 5. That was the glory belonging to deity. Let us hold firmly the truth of His deity, and so lift up our hearts in worship to Him!

W.E.Ellis

THE CHILDREN'S MEMORIES

The Scriptures speak many more times of remembering than of forgetting and, although nobody knows just how memory works, everyone knows how important it is. In this regard there are two matters of special interest to us as believers.

One is that, because of the shed blood of Jesus, our sins will be remembered no more by a just God. He may sometimes allow us to remember them for some wise reason, but not to fear judgment for them. How thankful we are that it is not said that He will forget them, which would be weakness! But He sees them as not being ours because our Saviour has borne them for us. This is the strength of divine love.

The other thing is that Jesus, who suffered for our sins, has asked us to break bread in remembrance of Him. The Lord's supper was at the first for the apostles but soon there were thousands of persons breaking bread. Later, Paul reminded the saints at Corinth that the Lord Jesus had repeated from heaven His desire to be remembered in this way. In his epistle Paul called the children "holy" - or 'set apart for God' - and they would surely be eager to ask to have their part in this privilege, not just by memory but from their hearts.

It is said of Timothy that from a child he had known "the sacred letters". The use of these words must mean that he had not only heard the Scriptures but had read them for himself and remembered them. The first blessing in the last book of the Bible is to those who read; we find that this holds good for the whole of God's word.

When older, Timothy was told by Paul to give himself to reading. The word means to read aloud to other persons who could not do so for themselves. But to learn the Scriptures 'by heart' is also very important because then the Holy Spirit can guide us by bringing God's word to our memory.

Many hundreds of years ago there were some Christians called 'the Vaudois' who were so persecuted that they had to live in caves

and dens of the mountains. But an enemy of theirs admitted distinctly that some of these poor people knew the whole of the New Testament. Do they shame you into learning more?

J.C.Evershed