

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THE DIVINE OBJECTIVE

E.T.Maynard

Ruth 1: 3-7; John 1: 43-51

I felt encouraged to refer to these scriptures; - I trust it is of the Lord, following on what we have had before us during this favourable time. I trust that the Spirit will be free to bring forward something that would encourage us with the thought of divine objective, having before us what is finally in the divine mind in our being secured for the pleasure of God. I thought that these two scriptures would illustrate how we might become affected profitably by the word of God coming to us, and set ourselves to reach the divine objective.

We have been encouraged to see that there has been no diminishing of what was set on in the beginning from the divine side for carrying through to completion what God has in mind, and there will not be any diminishing until the end. I believe, beloved brethren, we need to be alerted and encouraged by what we hear, and move in relation to the divine objective.

These two passages involve some of the choicest thoughts. One is that the food supply, as a result of God coming in in recovery, is assured until the end. Another is that Christ is the centre of divine operations, and the Spirit of God would attract us freshly to Him as the Son of God, the One who is able for everything that relates to the pleasure of God, and the Son of man in relation to men in the securing of persons like you and me, involving the work of God, among whom God will tabernacle eternally.

The reference to Naomi affords a wonderful incentive in the way of help. Like ourselves, she had had a history of failure; not all failure, of course, because the work of God is what goes through and comes through in recovery in spite of failure. But I would like to mention a few points in these passages for our present help. In the passage in Ruth it speaks of a way: "the way... to the land of Judah". I believe the same thought applies in John; although it is not formally mentioned it is demonstrated. I want to suggest the land of Judah as an area where the praises of God are sustained - the way to the land

of Judah - and the way to the Son of God. These two thoughts, among others, seem to be suggested to us in these passages.

Naomi, after her long years of experience (which we trust each one of us here has profited by, years of experience in discipline and the wondrous ways of God) comes to a point where there is a direct word from God about what He has in mind. It says of her, after this bereavement and all that attends it, that "she had heard in the fields of Moab how that Jehovah had visited his people to give them bread". This involves what was current; they must have been getting bread when she heard about it. It does not say (although it involves it) that Jehovah had visited His people *and* given them bread. Notice what it says; "to give them bread". I believe, dear brethren, in the faith of our souls, that this will obtain to the end. He had visited his people to give them bread, and what we need to be encouraged about in the local assemblies is the food supply. What a wonderful thing, that we have been recovered, rescued from ruin.

Jehovah has visited His people to give them bread. It is past, it is current and it is future; bread is assured. She heard that. We have heard much today. Her hearing the word of God is immediately followed by her move from "the place where she had been".

Whatever we have attained to up until now, one would encourage us all that we remove from the place where we have been. It is a question of fresh movement as the Lord comes in with a particular ministry, and Naomi illustrates how you and I can, with the help of the Spirit applying these scriptures, get on to the divine objective. It says here, "Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she had been, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah". You would like to feel that after these meetings today there is some fresh movement in our hearts towards the land of Judah, which means that something freshly springs up in our hearts in relation to what is for the pleasure of God in the system of grace to which we belong and that the service of God will be enriched. I think that is a good application; she moved from the place where she had been. Up until then much was accumulated that was going through, but you can never have too

much, you can never get to the place where you must not go further, never! So I felt encouraged to call attention to this because there should be some evidence, beloved, that we move from the place where we have been and get on to the way that leads to the land of Judah. That is an incentive.

These two scriptures, I believe, synchronise in the way they illustrate this idea. Here is a man, Philip, who has been secured by the Lord Jesus, by His own personal service. He finds Nathanael.

Nathanael seemed to be thinking of a future time when every man shall sit under his own vine and under his figtree (see Mic 4: 4). I believe it is right to say, beloved brethren, that the Lord takes account of the slightest expression of our appreciation of what ministry involves, as to what God would secure in us for His pleasure. He finds Nathanael, who was sitting under the fig-tree, I suppose, when Philip found him, and said "We have found him of whom Moses wrote in the law, and the prophets, Jesus, the son of Joseph, who is from Nazareth". That would cover quite a lot, more than you and I could ever attempt to cover - Moses and the prophets. Think of the fulness of the ministry of the incoming of Jesus, Son of God. Think of all that was involved in Philip's word to Nathanael, "We have found him" ; that is the whole line of ministry that has gone before, the One in whom this is personally concentrated. What a thing that would be! But Nathanael wants to be sure. We are learning, beloved brethren, more and more the truth and the experience of the fact that God's ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts (see Isa 55: 8). Nathanael said "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" We are being helped currently as to the good, the wonderful things that the Spirit of God is bringing out of conditions of reproach, conditions that men as such would regard with contempt. But Nathanael was real. We make mistakes, we blunder sometimes; who does not? But if you are real, if the thing at bottom is real, it will come through; the Lord will see to that. Nathanael said "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"; and Philip was very simple and I suppose the simpler we are the better; he said "Come and see". He did not argue with him, he did

not attempt to give him an address; he just said "Come and see". It was the same thing that the Lord had said to the men that left John and followed Him; he uses the Lord's own words "Come and see"; and he went. He is going on the way that leads to the Son of God.

Immediately after Philip says "Come and see", "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him", and He spoke to him. He evaluated His own work as He does in you and me; none is able to evaluate His work like Himself; and He said "Behold one truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile". What a word for Nathanael! What a word for you and me, beloved brethren! The Lord is able to show His appreciation because He is a real Man; the reality of His manhood is more and more being impressed upon us by the blessed Spirit.

What a Man He is! How He must have gone out to Nathanael in His feelings in the midst of what was murderous, soon to be apprehended and insulted and spit upon and killed. But He saw this man coming to Him. It is the way that leads to the Son of God, because of what he had heard. Jesus says "Behold one truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile. Nathanael says to him, Whence knowest thou me?" It must have been a delight to the Lord's heart for He knows all things from beginning to end. We look forward, beloved brethren, to Israel's recovery: the rapture of the saints, the coming out with the Lord Jesus of the assembly, and the recovery of Israel. What a joy it must have been to the heart of the Lord, in the midst of a murderous condition of things and rejection, to see a man who is cherishing the divine objective. He said "4Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee". What a wonderful thing that was! Who can express fully what it was to the heart of Christ when He saw Nathanael sitting under the fig-tree; it was the appreciation of divine objective.

I want to encourage our hearts, beloved brethren, that we commit ourselves individually, from the youngest to the oldest, that we are prepared to remove from the place where we have been because of what we have heard, and follow through the way that leads to the divine objective, the way that leads to the land of Judah and the way that leads to the Son of God. May this be our portion as

we are sustained through the period that we are left here, that this way, I might say this two-fold expression of the same way, may possess us and that we may provide conditions that will finally issue in our getting through to the divine objective. May it be so, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

18 October 1974

MY ASSEMBLY

J.A.Petersen

Matthew 16: 17,18 ; Genesis 20: 3

I felt encouraged to remind the beloved brethren here of this well-known scripture. What we read in Matthew are the Lord's own words. We are reminded that in this gospel He said, "The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but my words shall in no wise pass away", chap 24: 35. In the day in which we live, beloved brethren, there have been matters which shake us, and the Lord is bringing us back to our relations with Himself, our relations with the Father, our relations with the Spirit and our relations with the brethren.

So it was in mind to encourage us with the Lord's expression here as to "my assembly". He is the only Man that can use that expression. No servant can say that; no brother, no sister can use that expression; He reserves it to Himself. He will have no intrusion on that. It says in the section we were reading this afternoon, "Christ... loved the assembly and has delivered himself up for it", Eph 5: 25. He alone has done that. The assembly has been secured through "the blood of his own", Acts 20: 28. God has brought this great vessel into being through the work of redemption and through Christ's death. How great it is! We need to understand that flesh and blood has not revealed this to us; it has not come that way. The Lord says, concerning Peter's confession as to the Person of the Son of God, that "flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee".

He leads on from that to the great thought of the assembly. There is its heavenly position, but here in Matthew it is in the scene of testimony, in the scene of difficulty; nevertheless we are reminded of the power of God in regard to the revelation given to Peter here, and the power of God that comes in to establish in our souls the great thought of the assembly, and to get back to the beginning of things, the Lord's own words. Is it not wonderful, to think of the Lord's own words about the assembly, to think of the Father's own words about Christ? How wonderful to start with that, to get right thoughts in our souls. Much else has to be put out. In the chapter we read this

morning (1 Cor 2) there are, I think our brother said, some eighteen negatives. For the moment we are not dealing with that, except that the Lord says here, "flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee". It does not come that way; the knowledge of the Son of God, the knowledge of the assembly, is a question of divine communication to our souls, that you have something in your soul that is unshakable in the knowledge of God, and in the knowledge of what is revealed as to the assembly, and the Lord's own committal to it. O, beloved, are we committed to it as He is? The truth of the assembly: even in our small localities we are to hold on to the light of it. As Mr Taylor used to say, We keep to the light of it and we act in the light of it.

You act as if every believer in your city and mine were there, and you are carrying on the testimony for God, because Matthew has in mind what is down here where the tests are; but the light comes from the Father, it comes from above. The Father gives something to Peter to establish him in his soul as to Christ, and the Lord Jesus gives Peter something to establish him in relation to the assembly ; and He is telling Peter that it is Mine - "my assembly". It is a great matter to lay hold of that only one Man can say that.

We are faced in this chapter with the great matter of conflict; men are saying different things but the Lord is guarding the position; He is saying, This is My matter. The testimony is Christ's matter. He has left things with us but He is saying, It is My matter - "my assembly". God said as to Abraham, "Touch not mine anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm", Ps 105: 15. They are God's property. The servants are God's property, the prophets are His property. We are not to speak lightly of them, or against them. If any brother prophesies, we are not to speak against him. We are not to do harm to one another. God says that about a servant, Abraham, at a time when he did not hold to the great thought of the assembly. In the 20th chapter of Genesis Abraham was on a journey, difficulties arose, and he adopted an unspiritual contrivance to get through, as we would say, an assembly difficulty. That is what he did, and that is what our tendency is. The Lord says about the assembly, "On this rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates

shall not prevail against it". Now that is something we need in our souls. We need the faith of that in our souls, so that if we have, like Abraham, to go on a journey - perhaps he should not have gone the way he did - on whatever journey we are going, we are going to remember that no Abimelech, no Egyptian, no Philistine is going to intimidate us and we are going to hold to the great thought of the assembly. We are not going to say that the brethren are our sister but we are going to say it is a question of the wife. God said to Abimelech, "Thou hast... a man's wife"; that is, God was bringing this matter back by Himself. "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son", 1 Cor 1: 9. We have not been faithful, but He has been faithful. "He cannot deny himself", it says, "He abides faithful", 2 Tim 2: 13. So God comes into this matter. He says, The issue is a man's wife. The Lord says it is "my assembly".

We are in a very broken day, small in our localities, but let us hold on to this great matter of the Lord's committal. He said, "On this rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against It. Now beloved brethren, let us get that into our souls, that until the Lord comes hades' gates not only will not prevail against believers, against the redeemed, but they will not prevail against the assembly. We need the faith of that in our souls, and to hold the faith of it and not give it up, and not let anything intrude on it either, any unspiritual contrivance whatever it may be. How we are guilty of them! You can see that Abraham had a heavy matter to solve - the fear of man in his heart. We know what these things are, but let us trust God. Let us trust the words of the Lord Jesus: "The heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall in no wise pass away", Matt 24: 35.

Let us hold on to what He is saying about His assembly. Let us hold on to what the Father said about Christ: "This is my beloved Son"; Matt 3: 17. He is "the Son of the living God", Matt 16: 16. The assembly is a question of the living; "The living, he shall praise thee", Isa 38: 19. The assembly is going through in spiritual vitality, beloved, and God is going to preserve it, not only in relation to heaven, but in relation to earth. This is where the test is, down here, and the Lord Jesus has committed Himself to this matter and He wants us to lay hold of it by faith at this time, that it may be in the

soul of every brother, especially of those who minister. Think of Abraham, a great servant; for a moment his faith failed. How we have done that! But God recovered him, and God would not allow him to be attacked either. He said, "Do my prophets no harm", Ps 105: 15. So we are to love one another, we are to protect one another. God recalls His people to this great matter of the assembly, and to see that it is a living and vital and workable matter which He will see through, and that we may trust Him for it.

LONDON

18 October 1974

HEALING THE BREACH

J.Munro

1 Samuel 25: 18-33

This scripture suggested itself as illustrative of wisdom and skill and grace allied to a practical provision of what would heal a breach.

This is one of the critical times in David's history when, showing what might be regarded as justifiable anger, he was on his way to satisfy his feelings of vengeance, and he is prevented in the most attractive and skilful way possible by the intervention of Abigail. The scripture has often been taken up for it is so rich. The Scriptures are wonderful; time after time they can be opened up and there is always something fresh, they are inexhaustible, and divine faithfulness will always give some impression. It may not be much but, if it is a divine one, it is capable of great expansion. Do not despise the very simplest impression that you get from the reading of the Scriptures, or from remarks based on them in readings or addresses, because if it is a divine impression it is capable of great expansion.

This woman, Abigail, comes suddenly to light, no doubt sovereignly, at this critical moment of David's history, for if David had had his way on this occasion there would have been much valuable material lost. I am thinking of Nabal's young men. It is quite evident that there were at least some of them who had right instincts and right desires, and who expressed them in the right quarter and, if David had had his way, these men would have been slain and the economy would have been the poorer because of it. I have no doubt that Abigail saw all this. How unspoiled this woman was! Although linked with a man like Nabal, yet she was superior and was in no way tainted by his characteristics, because she had an appreciation of David. Instinctively, I suppose, in her soul she would experience something of the process involved in the displacement of one and the enthronement of another, and in going through that she acquired substance and wisdom and the ability to save a desperate situation.

She gives practical demonstration of it. Her words were very skilful and her works were in keeping with them. Her provision was large, it

was adequate. It more than covered the needs of David and his men at the time. Two hundred loaves, two skin-bottles of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched corn, a hundred raisin-cakes, two hundred fig-cakes - what an outlay there was with this woman! It was something that she herself had provided and that was used in a skilful way to deflect David from his purpose. I do not know what all these things would speak of, but certainly in a general way there was food, refreshment, stimulation and healing. The loaves would provide the food, the staff of life - simple, understandable. The wine would produce the stimulation. The sheep ready dressed would speak of what was provided on the principle of sacrifice. The fruits would be for refreshment and sustenance, and healing too in the two hundred fig-cakes. That is what the prophet instructed should be put on Hezekiah's boil: a cake of figs (see Isa 38: 2). Here are two hundred fig-cakes: plenty of healing there, healing on the principle of provision, the principle of food and refreshment. This was the first practical step that this woman took in order to resolve the situation. That is something positive, refreshing and stimulating which would build up the constitution so that an abnormal situation would be resolved and made normal. It was done through the provision of food, something real and palatable, because all these things would taste pleasant, they would build up and would be enjoyable. What a picture this is of the principle upon which God has acted towards us in providing and supplying, not demanding, not seeking to pass the thing by with something meagre that would just meet the requirement and nothing else; no, but something that was full and large and adequate for the situation. Abigail sends these on before; her faith was accompanied by works, there was something substantial that David and his men could take account of.

So she meets David on the way down. Much has been said as to this, the necessity to go down. Both of them were on a right course at this particular juncture. "As she was riding on the ass, and coming down by the covert of the hill, behold, David and his men came down opposite to her; and she met them". It shows the

overruling hand that would direct the movements of people that were ready to be adjusted. One thing about David that stands out is that he was always ready to be adjusted. If David was found in a wrong position he always moved quickly and was ready for adjustment. So she comes and takes up this position of taking the blame. The first thing she says is "Upon me, my lord, upon me let the iniquity be".

What a beautiful spirit! Personally, I suppose, she was guiltless but she identified herself with the position as it stood and she took the proper attitude in order to meet the condition that was in David's soul at that moment: Upon me let the iniquity be. That would draw out from David a desire to protect her. That is the kind of man that David was. He was basically a righteous man and when he met this sort of thing it would immediately arouse in him his sense of justice.

So she goes on to speak about Nabal. She has a judgment of Nabal, as David has. Have we a judgment of the man that cannot be improved? God was going to deal with this man. That is what she tells David in principle. She says, Leave him with the Lord, He is able for this. We need to have a clear judgment as to the man that cannot be improved, that has been set aside, that is due for nothing else but judgment, and to be able to go on and identify ourselves with the movements of the Man that went down. What remarkable skill Abigail displays! "And now, my lord, as Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing Jehovah has restrained thee from coming with bloodshed". She took up a position and she used words, no doubt in faith, that were effective in David's soul. Bent as he was on destruction, yet she says in effect, Look, the Lord has prevented you, the Lord is not going to allow this. She has taken up the attitude that he is not going to do it. He responds to it right away. She makes a suggestion, she makes it in faith and dependence and David in his soul responds to it at once and from that point the danger is past.

"Seeing Jehovah has restrained thee from coming with bloodshed, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal". What grace, what attractiveness in the way that Abigail speaks to David!

"And now this blessing which thy bondmaid has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men... And if a man is risen up to pursue

thee and to seek thy life, the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with Jehovah thy God". She was occupied with divine thoughts; she took a positive approach. She did not take a middle course, she did not seek to defend an evil man, but she regulated the movements of David with the way she addressed him. I have the impression, dear brethren, that in principle David saw something of the assembly at this point, he saw something (I am speaking typically) of the system of life and blessing that he was going to have a prominent place in - "the bundle of the living". That included, it may be, some of these men that he might have destroyed, those who would be under the influence of Abigail. Abigail was to have a very special place, not only in David's estimation, but in his affections. She is a type of the assembly and I believe David saw it in principle. Brethren, let us not lose sight of the assembly. I feel, in everything that comes in amongst saints, that we do not want to lose sight of the assembly; that in everything we should have that before us. There was a suggestion in 1972 that the brethren should stop breaking bread. That, in principle, would have been giving up the idea of the assembly. I was thankful it was resisted because it was going to put the matter on the basis of a quarrel between two parties, which it was not. So the idea of the assembly and the service of God going on was maintained. I believe in all things that happen, if we seek to maintain the idea of the assembly and that it is functioning somewhere with someone in a locality, we shall be preserved from putting things on party lines. The enemy would like us to get on to party lines. He would like us to lose sight of what the real thing is, that is Christ and the assembly. Satan is seeking to attack Christ through the assembly at all times. This, I believe, came before David's mind and heart, and it has such an effect on him that, not only was he restrained from doing what he had intended to do, but he was so impressed with the words and attitude of this dear woman that his affections reached out to her and, after the Lord had dealt with Nabal, he sent to make her his wife. What a wonderful picture it is of the skill and discernment and sensitivity of a sister, of a woman seeing what the dangers were! Something too was aroused in David, so that he was sensitive

enough, and considerate, intelligent and spiritual enough to see all she was pointing out and to see that he was on a course that would end in disaster. Because of sensitivity on her part, and answering sensitivity on his part, things that might have been a blot on his position we returned to account for his own comfort and for the well-being not only of David's men but of Nabal's men, of such at least who were under the influence of Abigail.

Dear brethren, things are so easily made abnormal and we are so easily diverted because of personal feelings, it may be, or by feelings which, though not personal exactly, are nevertheless upset because of certain conditions. We want to seek that things are normal in our movements and attitude. If there is an extreme swing of the pendulum, let us wait until it is normal before we do anything.

I am not suggesting for a moment that brethren should not take up matters, but let us see that things are normal, straight up and down, and that thoughts and feelings and tensions are not such that we would do anything in a wrong way because of an abnormal state.

May we be before the Lord that the healing •hat He Himself has administered so bountifully may extend through all our localities and that each one of us may come under the benefit of it, so that things are dealt with in such a way that the ultimate end is, as Luke so constantly brings before us, that God should be glorified. May it be so for His Name's sake.

GRANGEMOUTH

15 March 1975

WHAT GOD LOVES

J.Lovie

Luke 3: 21,22; Isaiah 62: 1-5

I would like to say a word as to what God loves. In the gospels the Father's delight is in the Son. The epistles bring out that His delight is in the assembly. We begin with the gospels because, in the four gospels, we have conveyed to us by the Spirit, who is the author of Scripture, the life of Jesus, Luke particularly bringing out the moral excellence of that humanity in the path from the manger to the cross, in which the will of God was so perfectly done. There was a Man here in conditions of flesh and blood in whom the Father found His perfect delight. There had been in the old economy various types which suggested how God looked on to what He would find in Christ. The Old Testament looked forward to what would come into view in the excellence of that humanity in Jesus. You get glimpses, in certain persons in the Old Testament, in the way that they appear as types of Christ, but when you come to the antitype you come to the fulness of things, to the great standard of what God looked for from man, and what He found in His beloved Son. The gospels bring out the Father's delight in Jesus. There was the settled disposition of God's love as it rested on Christ in an unchanging way; the Lord enjoyed that - "The Father loves the Son and has given all things to be in his hand" (John 3: 35); that is a reference to love in its settled disposition. "The Father loves the Son and shews him all things which he himself does" (John 5: 20) is love which was drawn out because of what was lovable in the object. Not only did the Lord Jesus enjoy the settled disposition of divine favour but He drew out the Father's love in the way He moved as in manhood -- "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again" John 10: 17. The Lord was doing that in the place of obedience as in manhood. He says "I have received this commandment of my Father", John 10: 18. The Lord was acting, in the laying down of His life, under the Father's commandment. Therefore in Him it was an act of implicit obedience that drew forth

the added wonder of the Father's pleasure as it rested on Him. We should feed our souls on the four gospels because there we find the standard of Christianity as set out in Christ.

The teaching of Christianity is in the epistles, the standard and example of Christianity is in the Man of the gospels. Wonderful to dwell on Him! Oh, let us dwell more on Him! In days of breakdown all around in the assembly publicly, among the nations and among men, breakdown in every relationship in society, let us feed our souls on the kind of man that never broke down, in whom the Father's pleasure centred. As coming up from His baptism, "Jesus having been baptised and praying", the lowly dependent Man, heaven opened upon a praying Man. God loves to find this feature of dependence in you and me. How perfectly He found it in His Son, but He loves to find this feature of dependence, this feature of prayer. Let us not weary in it, dear brethren. Let us not get lax and casual in our relations with God. The enemy would get at us often, to seek if he can to make us casual in our relations with God, but it is upon a praying Man that the heaven is opened: "the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form as a dove upon him; and a voice came out of heaven". So that the Trinity is before us in this verse, glorious in love's arrangement, the way God has come so near to men in a Man, expressing His thoughts for men in Christ, but then finding an answer to what He looked for from man in Christ. Not only was there everything from God manward in Jesus, as among men, but there was everything from man Godward, in what the Father found in His own beloved Son. How excellent, how unique He is!

So, as we said, some of the types bring forward certain features of that pleasure and delight. David is brought forward in the New Testament without breakdown. You do not get any reference in the New Testament to failure in David - "a man after my heart" (Acts 13: 22), suggesting that God's affections were bound up with him.

David was ministering to God 's delight. He was not only a king but a priest. Not only does he fit into Matthew which presents "the city of the great King" (chap 5: 35) but he fits into Luke; "the Lord God shall give him the throne of David his father", chap 1: 32. What

excellence is seen in David, as a king and a priest who gave delight to God, "a man after my heart". When you think of David you think of Zion, you think of Jerusalem; you think of God's rights in sovereignty as Zion suggests, His rights in mercy. When David was established on the throne and the kingdom became established under his hand – his cabinet was there and his kingship was in evidence - immediately you get "Is there yet any left of the house of Saul", 2 Sam 9: 1. Mercy and blessing are flowing out in the administration of the gates of Zion, in loving kindness to those who need it. Proverbs reminds us that "the throne is established by righteousness", chap 16: 12. That would be David in Matthew's gospel. It is the legal way, the righteous way in which God's thoughts are coming into expression. Then you also find in Proverbs that the throne is upheld by mercy (see chap 20: 28). Wonderful!

Once you get it established by righteousness you find it is upheld in mercy. Luke shows the extent of divine grace, how mercy is coming out. The Lord God has given Him the throne of His father David and it is exercised in mercy. Think of how God finds His delight in that, for He loves the gates of Zion. There is what God loves; there is also what God hates (see Rev 2: 6) and we would be exercised to love what God loves and hate what He hates. One of the things that God loves is the gates of Zion. He loves the administration of the bounty of mercy. The bowels of the mercy of our God have reached out to us of the Gentiles. That is Luke, coming out in the excess of grace where need was so manifest, coming out in the display of what God is in His mercy and upholding His throne by mercy. So that a Mephibosheth can come in, you and I can come in, we can come in on this line, the extension of this line of things in which God finds pleasure. So that we do well to feed on and ponder the Man of the gospels, the Man of Psalm 1, the Man who in His own uniqueness and excellence gave pleasure to God and through His precious death brought in a generation in which God would find His delight.

As He speaks about the saints, the excellent that are on the earth, He says "In them is all my delight", Ps 16: 3.

I would like to refer now to Isaiah 62. It is not said here that My delight is in Him but "My delight is in her". I would like help, dear brethren, to speak about this, that we should be attracted into the order of things in which God is finding delight. There is a system of things that is His, that is ministering to His pleasure. God has His system, a glorious system, a system that involves Zion and Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the greatest thought. Someone was reminding us in the interval that you come through Ziklag and Hebron to Jerusalem. Come that way in soul history, you young people. Come that way in your experience with the Lord. Know that at Ziklag He recovered all. It is the Roman epistle, how the glad tidings are coming out, and that God has a new Head for men in Christ in whom He is retrieving the race and recovering men for Himself and for His pleasure; that is Ziklag. Hebron is the Colossian epistle; it is not related to this world at all because it was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. It is God's world and Christ is the centre of it. Jerusalem is the capital, the city of the great king, the assembly in that relation as a city, involving what she is administratively. So that in Revelation the holy city is viewed as coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Wonderful will be the display! Wonderful will be the place the assembly will have with Christ in the world to come! Wonderful the place she will have in eternal conditions! God's delight will ever be centred on what He finds in that family as patterned after Christ. So that this section deals with Zion and Jerusalem, and says what Jerusalem is to be; "a crown of beauty in the hand of Jehovah, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God". Then you come to this expression, "My delight is in her". I think that is the epistles. Paul is bringing out the attractiveness of the assembly femininely in the epistles, bringing out how attractive the assembly is in her relation with Christ. Think of what she is as the pearl, the one pearl of great value. I think that is Paul's ministry; so that the epistles develop this thought of how attractive the assembly is. How wonderful, dear young people, to know that we who have a link with Christ as our Saviour, who have been given the gift of the Spirit, belong to this vessel in whom Christ is finding delight - "My delight is in her". Think of what she is as the

object of Christ's affections! Think of what Rachel was to Jacob! We can reach that experimentally through the understanding of what Leah represents as being hated: "And when Jehovah saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb", Gen 29: 31. What an answer that was! "For now my husband will love me" (v.32). Through the exercises of being in a hated position, knowing what it is maybe to be ostracised and in the position of being hated publicly, God is adding; and Leah says "Now my husband will love me". That is, you reach what is most precious to the heart of Christ through this experimental way, coming into it in our local assemblies. I think Paul had in mind that the Corinthians should reach that, a chaste virgin for Christ. He espoused them in that way. He says, This is what you are going to be in the local meeting at Corinth. Corinth was a city, according to man, of terrible wickedness (Mr Darby says that the wickedness at Corinth was proverbial), a city of man's architecture and learning, and Paul goes in there and stays with Aquila and Priscilla because they were tent-makers. The whole trend of the city was offset. Paul was labouring in the appreciation of what was precious to the heart of Christ, not to build up what was already extant at Corinth but to build up assembly affections, assembly interests, assembly consciousness, assembly characteristics and features, to build that up in the local meeting at Corinth, so that the Lord could say "My delight is in her". "I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ", 2 Cor 11: 2. That was the brethren at Corinth and that was Paul's labour as an apostle, and his yearnings that this feature, "My delight is in her", would come into expression practically, and it did.

Here she is no longer to be termed forsaken or desolate but "Thou shalt be called, My delight is in her". If you go over the epistles you find that Paul is labouring at this; "My delight is in her".

In the Philippian letter Paul is exhorting that their love would abound more and more (see chap 1: 9). You cannot reach a point of saturation in the expression of love; there is always room for more.

The Philippian letter presents heavenly men on earth. Someone once said that he had met a lot of persons going to heaven but had

not met many people coming back from heaven. But there have been some heavenly persons; we have known some. Oh, that we might be more like them, as we find our life there, and come out down here in relation to every interest that Christ has in the gospel and in the assembly. "My delight is in her" - you go over the epistles, dear brethren, and find in each of them rich suggestions as to the delight that God finds in this vessel that is for Christ's glory in the day of His appearing. It says "when he shall have come to be glorified in his saints, and wondered at in all that have believed", 2 Thess 1: 10. That day is near. Think of what it will mean for Christ when the universe is in wonderment, for He is to be glorified in His saints and wondered at in all that believe. It is how the assembly will come out in headship with Him to the universe administratively. What Jerusalem is, as a city set up to function administratively, will shine. The moral and spiritual features of what Jerusalem suggests will be there in her beauty, because it will then be the time of display. Now it is the time for testimony sufferingly, in this world, and that, I think, is the Corinthian position. We come through it sufferingly but what has been produced is a chaste virgin for Christ.

So it says "As a young man marrieth a virgin, shall thy sons marry thee". Let us espouse the local assembly. Let us find in the local meeting that there is an expression of what is proper to the whole. The assembly is not sectarian, it is not a segment, it represents whole and complete thoughts. The assembly is not a remnant, although we are in remnant days, it is the full thought involving every believer who has the Spirit. But it is possible to find the expression of it in saints who walk in the light of it. That, dear brethren, is what the Spirit would help us in at the present time, to walk in the light of this vessel that is soon to radiate Christ's glory to the universe in the day of His manifestation. Even now there is a vessel for His heart - "my assembly", according to Matthew (chap 16: 18). There is even now a vessel in which the praise of God is sustained, in which Christ sings the Father's praises. It is wonderful that the assembly exists and that you and I form part of it as having the Spirit. How dignified the saints are as belonging to the

assembly! How wonderful they are as drawing forth in their testimony here the delight and affections of Christ; "My delight is in her"! The woman of worth at the end of Proverbs is drawing out this delight, this confidence, this trust, this satisfaction, because her husband knows that his interests are being cared for in his absence and he is confident that they will be. He is delighting in that. "She doeth him good, and not evil, all the days of her life ", Prov 31: 12.

I commend the contemplation of this further to our affections, the gospels bringing out the excellence of Christ and His uniqueness, - the Man of the gospels, 'My delight is in Him ' - and the epistles bringing out the excellence of the assembly as a creature vessel, but a vessel that ministers to the delight of divine Persons.

Young people can commit themselves to it - "As a young man marrieth a virgin" - young people can commit themselves to what God has nearest to His heart on the earth at the present time. The assembly is nearest to Christ's heart. God is not building up any other family at the present time. There will be other families, as we know, named of the Father, and every one of them will, in some way, come into the enjoyment of sonship. God will put His stamp on every family; He is the Father of every family. But what is being formed at the present time is this vessel, this creature vessel, that is to minister to the delight of God eternally and is even now in testimony and in assembly service ministering to His pleasure, while we await the fulness of the *condition* of sonship which will be our bodies of glory. May the Lord help us to espouse this in our affections, in the places where we are. Maybe some meetings are very small, maybe just a few meeting in a basement; nevertheless there can be the expression of what is proper to the assembly in which God's heart delights. Let us pursue this line and find the satisfaction of soul that such a pursuit would bring us into, the sense that we are near to God and near to Christ, and near to one another in assembly affections and relationships, in the local places where the Lord has set us. May He bless the word!

GRANGEMOUTH

19 April 1975

SOME FUNDAMENTALS - THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

It is an immensely important fact that there is a living Man actually out of death. The disciples of Jesus were very slow to follow His references to His resurrection, but the chief priests and Pharisees quoted Him as having said, "After three days I arise", and in consequence of their approach to Pilate the sepulchre was sealed with the Roman seal and the guard stood by (see Matt 27: 62-66). It could not be, however, that the Son of God, who could say "I am the resurrection and the life", should be kept in death. In view of the glory of His person He must rise from among the dead. But also from the Father's side divine power and love must intervene, so He was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father (see Rom 6: 4). When those devoted women visited the tomb so early on the first day of the week, there had been a tremendous earthquake and the great stone at the entrance to the sepulchre had been rolled away, not to let the Lord out but that they might look in. The presence of the angel was terrifying to the guards, but to the women he said "Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus the crucified one. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said". So the empty sepulchre bore witness to that stupendous fact that the Saviour who had laid down His life and had been buried was now alive out of death.

Then followed the personal appearances of the Lord, first to Mary Magdalene, then to the other women, and later on that first day of the week to Simon Peter and to the two disciples journeying to Emmaus. Then He was manifested to the eleven and reproached them because they had not believed those who had seen Him risen (see Mark 16: 1-15). Subsequently He was seen by many during a period of forty days; by over five hundred brethren, then by James, then by all the apostles, and last of all by Paul.

The resurrection of Christ is an undeniable fact and an essential part of the gospel. On the cross He bore our sins, and His resurrection is the witness on one hand that the judgment of God against our sins has been exhausted, and on the other that God is completely satisfied, indeed delighted, with Jesus and His finished

work. He "has been delivered for our offences and has been raised for our justification". The believer in Jesus is now accounted righteous, justified in Christ risen, as clear of every charge as Christ Himself and brought into the unclouded favour of God (see Rom 4: 23-5: 2).

What a glorious Victor Jesus is! He has glorified God in respect of sin, has broken the power of death and annulled him who had the might of death, that is the devil. On the other side of death, in resurrection life, He has secured brethren of His own order, the assembly as His counterpart, and sons for the praise of the Father.

What pleasure God found in displaying the might of His strength in raising Him from the dead and setting Him down at His own right hand in the heavenlies, giving Him as Man the supreme place in the universe, and causing Him to be Head over all things to the assembly which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.

How great Jesus is!

W.E.Ellis

THE CHILDREN'S AFFECTIONS

It is of interest that the writer of the Acts tells us of children being at the sea-side with their parents. The shore where they were was sandy with large numbers of purple shells from which a valuable dye was made. The sea itself, unlike the oceans, had no tides. There was at least one large sailing ship in the harbour and this took about a week to unload its cargo for we are told that Paul and his companions had to wait seven days before continuing their voyage.

The disciples at this place, Tyre, must have been very deeply affected to have Paul and other ardent believers with them for a whole week. When sailing-time came all the brethren with their families went down to the shore to see them off. It must have been a very beautiful scene - the only record of Paul being with young children. Before embracing one another and departing they all knelt down on the shore and prayed, and this also strengthened their affections. Scripture tells us of prayer by a well, by a river and, here, by the surging sea. Perhaps we can learn from this that our prayers should be living and by no means vain repetitions!

Many years before this incident, David, so lovable that he drew out the affections of even unlikely persons, had heard in his birthplace about the precious ark of Jehovah, his God. Evidently from childhood he had a longing to provide a suitable resting-place for it, just as we should desire to make more and more room in our hearts for the Lord Jesus. In his affection and also from his affliction, or suffering, he gave what he possessed to serve his God when opportunity came. We may not be able, as he did, to give gold and silver which would today be worth many millions of pounds. The great apostles, Peter and John, had no gold or silver at all, but they gave that which was far more valuable. So each of us can give himself or herself to the Lord. Do you glorify God in your body?

J.C.Evershed

