

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 36

March 1976

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MY FATHER'S BUSINESS

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E.M.W. I was thinking of the Lord Jesus as engaged in His Father's business, or with His Father's things, and that from a very early age. In the same way that the first few verses of the books of Scripture give us an indication of what is contained in the book, so I think that the Lord's first utterances in the gospels give us some impression of how the gospel will help us, what is in mind in it. Matthew, for example: "for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (chap 3: 15), and here: "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?" The Lord of course is perfect, He is Himself unique, but at the same time He becomes a wonderful pattern for us which, as we dwell upon Him and His perfect committal and occupation with His Father's things, would encourage us to act in like manner. No doubt on that action and committal God's testimony will be carried through. In the second scripture the Lord is serving consciously with the Spirit upon Him, and no doubt we could regard it as a continuation of His engagement in His Father's business. Luke is very broad, as we know, so that mankind is in mind for blessing; the genealogy of the Lord is traced back to God: "of Adam, of God", chap 3: 38. No doubt mankind is in mind. So Jesus speaks of being anointed to preach glad tidings, and the several things He mentions are enclosed within two preachings - preaching glad tidings to the poor and preaching the acceptable year of the Lord. It is wonderful to think of the Lord's operations in the day of grace; they "wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth". The basis of it all of course, and the ground of blessing and the fulfilment of the Father's will, is His death. No doubt in Luke we could say it is the death of the Priest looked at generally with a view to securing the praise of God in the priesthood. I thought that might lead us to the Lord leading them out as in chapter 24 and blessing them. All this in which He is engaged has the Father's glory and pleasure in mind. He leads them out and blesses them, and they "were continually in the temple praising and blessing God". So that,

as we have often been reminded, Luke speaks early on of a dumb priest and he finishes with a priestly company who are continually in the temple praising and blessing God. I wondered if that might be fruitful.

R.L. I am sure it would, as we are concerned to be wholly in those things now. The note links it with Paul's word to Timothy: "Occupy thyself with these things; be wholly in them", 1 Tim 4:15. Would that encourage us in our day to set ourselves that way?

E.M.W. I thought that. We can ponder His perfection, and in the light of that we may feel our limitations, but I think as pondering His perfection and His being fully occupied in His Father's things it would strengthen us to commit ourselves to His Father's things. I believe the object and motive before the Lord, in all His thoughts and impulses and actions, was His Father.

A.A.B. Is this what Mr Darby refers to when he says 'Sonship in conscious nature'?

E.M.W. Yes, I think that is implied in "my Father's business". So that while the Lord Jesus was in the form of a bondman and served, He never acted beneath the dignity of sonship - not simply sonship as to relationship but in all the affections and feelings and responses proper to that relationship. Hence the expression 'Sonship in conscious nature, His words and ways declare'.

L.A.B. Does the beginning with the temple and the ending with the temple indicate that there is a sphere where these things are to be known?

E.M.W. We would not perhaps consider too much in this setting what the temple may have become but rather the thought that is contained in it. Luke looks at a good many things as normal, does he not? Jerusalem for example. So the temple, even in this position in Luke 2, is still recognised.

R.L. Would it be the same area as He speaks of as "my Father's house"?

E.M.W. Yes. That is another simple evidence of the Lord's occupation in His Father's business, the way in which He would protect His Father's interests, His Father's house.

J.C.E. Do you think there is something to learn from each of these four places that we have read of? I was thinking of Jerusalem as being the centre at this time of God's ways on the earth; I wondered if it would correspond somewhat to our interests having a wide outlook. Then coming to the place where He was brought up might suggest that we should begin to show our committal in the place where we may be set. Then learning what the place of the skull meant and then Bethany - the Lord led them "out as far as Bethany".

E.M.W. That is helpful. As you say, Jerusalem is looked at as the centre in God's ways, the temple service was carried on there, and I suppose if we think of today we would think of the assembly. Outwardly ruined, the breakdown is very much pressed upon us, but at the same time God's primary thoughts should be maintained in our thoughts and affections. It gives us a broad outlook. Then the simplicity of a committal where we were brought up. We have often been reminded of Mr Taylor's committal in New York (not that he was brought up there) but in the place where he was. The lesson of the place of the skull is a very severe one but a necessary one, learning our lessons in the death of Jesus; the Christian's lesson book, it has been called. Then Bethany, such a home of love, a circle here in which Jesus is cherished. It is a wonderful thing to be in that circle where the Lord Jesus is loved.

E.C.M. Does Nazariteship enter into it? think we have been taught that the Lord is the heavenly Nazarite in Luke.

E.M.W. Very much so. So that the committal really is total, wholly in the things of His Father. As we have just been reminded, Timothy was exhorted to be "wholly in them". So the reference to Nazariteship is appropriate. It is of little value to the testimony of God if I am half-hearted. Nazariteship involves a total committal. I may say 'I shall fail', and who does not? But that should not change my fundamental committal to the Lord Jesus in His handling of His

Father's business which involves the testimony and the praise of God.

C.G.H. With reference to committal, the Lord when young was subject to His parents, indicating respect for certain relationships of life which we have down here. Now I take it, in relationships and in our connections that are of God, full committal may be none the less before us, because in the filling out of those relations God is glorified.

E.M.W. I had thought a little of that, that the Lord should say on the one hand "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?" and yet He went down and was subject, showing in the simplicity of it that the filling out of these relationships in life, simple subjection to His parents, was all included in the way in which He glorified His Father in all that He did. So a young person of twelve is pleasing the Father and, I think, contributing to His business in being in simple subjection to his or her parents. It does not make us hyper-spiritual; that needs to be watched so that we are not artificial but simple. So the Lord at the age of twelve - this gospel alone drawing aside the curtain as we have often been reminded - shows us how a total committal to His Father's business in no way impairs the simple responsibilities and relationships of life.

D.J.H. It speaks of "favour with God and men". The exhortation to Timothy goes on: "that thy progress may be manifest to all". Are there the two sides, what is for God's glory and what is before men?

E.M.W. I had thought of that because the gospel itself has mankind in mind - wonderful breadth. I came to it recently that one has been rather narrow in outlook. You take such an expression as someone put to Mr Raven: All that Christ is giving is for all the saints; he said, All that Christ is giving is for all men. Primarily what is before Him is the assembly, but what He gives and what is brought in in the glad tidings and the ministry is for all men. How many will avail themselves of it is another matter. It gives us a broad outlook, very much like His Father's outlook, if we lay hold of that.

E.C.B. Do you therefore have to relate what you have in mind to what the Lord says in addressing the Father in John 17: "As thou hast sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (v 18)?

E.M.W. That is helpful, but add a word please.

E.C.B. The Lord speaks in John's gospel, not about His Father's business but His Father's work, but I suppose it would be the same thing. He says "As thou hast sent me into the world" (that would be to be engaged in "the work which thou gavest me that I should do it") "I also have sent them", that is that they are to follow the same pattern. Then in resurrection He says, "as the Father sent me forth, I also send you", chap 20: 21.

E.M.W. Yes, that scripture, "the work which thou gavest me that I should do it", was in one's mind in connection with this. No doubt, as you say, it would be the same thing substantially if a little different in aspect. I had thought that as presented to us it is a pattern for us: "as thou hast sent me", and "as the Father sent me"; showing, I suppose, the level of the service that is to be rendered.

R.L. Would this add a dignity to the way we fill out the responsible side? I was thinking of paying to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

E.M.W. I am sure it would. In His acting in the liberty and affections of sonship, not simply bondmanship but sonship, He was never less than Son, never acted in any way that was beneath the dignity of that relationship. In connection with John 17, "glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee" (v 1) , the Lord Jesus had not Himself before Him even in asking to be glorified, but in order that "thy Son may glorify thee". His whole life, impulses, thoughts, actions, had His Father before Him.

E.C.B. I wondered whether those verses did not also bear on what you were saying about the breadth of things. While in John 17 the Lord speaks of the world in different connections, He says "thou hast sent me into the world", that is, what was in Christ was for all men.

E.M.W. Exactly. Earlier some said that He is the Saviour of the world (see chap 4: 42) and John says in his epistle " that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world" (1 John 4: 14): Saviour of the *world*.

V.E.W. For us does it not only involve knowing and understanding the business, but also the Person whose business it is?

E.M.W. Yes, I would think that. Here the Lord says, "my Father's business" or 'the things of my Father'. How well He knew the Father! As Mr Bellamy quoted, 'Sonship in *conscious* nature'. He was born Son of course, and I suppose that is why Mr Darby uses that expression. But the level for the saints is the same, it is not different. Hence you can understand Paul urging Timothy to be "wholly in these things". The reference to Nazariteship is very appropriate, I think.

L.A.B. The broadness of this is seen even in the way the Lord refers to the question of receiving the Spirit: "The Father who is of heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him", Luke 11: 13. We need grace to have more power to reflect what heaven thinks and how heaven views things.

E.M.W. Yes, very much so. We are very much affected by the environment in which we live but we should be increasingly affected by heaven and what heaven thinks.

F.M.K. Are these two things, wisdom and stature, very necessary for us to be marked by?

E.M.W. Well, that would be so. Jesus "advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men". We always use great care when we speak of the Person of the Lord Jesus; nevertheless scripture says this about Him as man. I thought that all these simple touches, such as this section and His advancing and so on, show us that it comes within the scope of His occupation with His Father's things. You could not think of Him being insubject to His parents in order to fulfil His Father's will.

F.M.K. As contemplating that, as His mother did here, shall we gain very much by it?

E.M.W. Yes, as feeding upon it. We are apt to make our failures our food, and plead our weaknesses and so on; but to feed upon Himself as wholly in the things of His Father would stimulate us to be wholly in them too.

E.C.M. The Lord says in John 8, "I do always the things that are pleasing to him" (v 29). Do you think that His going back in subjection to His parents was pleasing to the Father?

E.M.W. Yes. Here He says "my Father", but a little later the Father says "*Thou* art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight", chap 3: 22. I do not doubt at all that He found His delight in One who was subject to His parents. Now is that not so with our younger people? To think that I am subject to my parents, perhaps at the age of twelve, is pleasing to the Father. We think perhaps too much of what others may think; we should get an impression and an appraisal of what heaven thinks, what the Father thinks.

R.L. Would this be the basis of what is said in the Psalms to the saints: "In them, is all my delight", Ps 68: 3? And would that encourage us on this line?

E.M.W. It would. That gives us an impression of the Lord's committal, simplicity, devotion, and piety as Man here.

D.J.H. Does the way He puts it, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?" - He does not say that 'I am occupied in it' but 'I ought to be' - imply a holy obligation? How would that extend to us?

E.M.W. It is a challenge to them. You wonder at the relation that had existed in the previous twelve years, and why the Lord puts it like this. No doubt He puts it as an obligation because He came for that purpose. It is interesting that the Lord should put it as a challenge: "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?"

A.T. Therefore should they have known, being His parents? It says they did not understand. Before that, they were astonished at His understanding and answers in the temple, but here there is someone that has been with Him for twelve years, and had the visitation of the angel, and yet does not understand.

E.M.W. I think it would have raised an exercise with them step by step, especially with His mother, because she pondered it. I think the Lord raises such exercises with us. He more than once asks the question, after all His patient service, Do ye not yet understand? In grace He is continually stimulating the work of God and stimulating exercise and affection so that there should be this greater committal with those that are in His company.

C.B. Is it important then to know the Person? They did not know exactly who He was.

E.M.W. That is important, to know the Person, because we are under Him and with Him. What is brought out in the passage is the perfection of Jesus at this tender age, and yet a wonderful pattern for others at that tender age. It is remarkable that Luke should give it to us because, apart from this, the first thirty years of His life is unseen, there is no record of it.

D.E.B. The second chapter of 1 Corinthians refers to the things of God, and they are particularly connected there with the Spirit rather than the Lord. Would you say something as to the distinction.

E.M.W. In so far as we are concerned we can only know the things by the Spirit, and all that is made effective in us is made effective in His power. He has been given to us that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God; so in Him there is a wonderful resource for apprehension and realisation of the things that have been given to us.

D.J.H. Would you say also that, because of the indwelling of the Spirit as flowing out of what you have already referred to in John 20, this obligation here extends to us?

E.M.W. Yes, I think so. While we are not under law we must understand the moral obligation. Hence John in his epistle uses the word 'ought' several times, as the Lord does here - "I ought to be", and we *ought* to be. It is a challenge to us but we ought to be engaged in these things. Although we are not under law but under grace, there are moral obligations.

E.C.B. For that obligation to be apprehended by us, and especially perhaps by the younger brethren, would it be necessary to understand sonship?

E.M.W. I think so. When you say understand it, you perhaps do not mean understand the fulness of it. Would you say what you mean?

E.C.B. Well, there are probably few things spoken more about amongst us than our place in sonship, yet I wondered whether you would say something to help us all, and as I said perhaps the younger brethren, to understand how they are brought into that relationship, because unless there is a relationship there is no obligation. I wondered if it would be apposite to strengthen our understanding of what our entrance into sonship is.

E.M.W. I think it is right that we must enter into the consciousness of it as well as understand the relationship itself. Scripture says, "ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus", Gal 3: 26. That is just a simple fact; that is the light of the thing, and everyone should be established in that, that through faith in Christ Jesus we are all sons. The degree in which we have realised and appreciated it would be another matter, but we are all sons: "because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father", Gal 4: 6. I think as we make room for the Holy Spirit we are brought in our exercises into the realisation of what that relationship means. I have often noticed that the exercises in the first few chapters of Romans seem to be intended to lead to the consciousness of sonship: "ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father", Rom 8: 15. Persons are normally brought into the realisation of it.

E.C.B. I was enquiring because, if we speak of being here and engaged in the things of our Father, then some apprehension of the relationship on the level of its privilege is needed in us. There is the aspect dwelt on in Matthew where the Father provides for us providentially, and that helps to build up our sense of relationship, but the reality of it, as you say, lies in the Spirit making it good in us.

E.M.W. Yes, hence the importance of developing and strengthening our links with the Holy Spirit.

E.C.B. It is interesting that, in chapter 11 to which Mr Barlow referred, the Lord says "When ye pray, say, Father" (v 2), but it is a continuous paragraph down to "the Father who is of heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him". It is as if the relationship is entered into because the Father gives the Spirit.

E.M.W. I think that is helpful. I do not doubt that that passage, if we weighed it over and followed what the Lord says, would bring us into the consciousness of our relationship with the Father.

L.A.B. And is our realisation of it in the measure in which the Spirit enables us to apprehend it in the Person Himself?

E.M.W. That must be so, I think. That is why the Lord Jesus is presented to us in this way. It underlay my thought that occupation with what is presented in Him would strengthen our own exercises and affections.

L.A.B. This had an effect upon persons; they wondered, and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. The sense in our souls that He is different from every other man is the initial lever in our hearts to go after Him.

E.M.W. So there was a wonderment or, as it says in chapter 2, they "were astonished at his understanding and answers". Here it is "And all bore witness to him, and wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth". This is characteristic of Luke; as the Lord goes on in His service there is astonishment, there is wonder as glorifying God who has visited His people. He is presented,

especially perhaps in this gospel, as food for our souls to build up in us this order of manhood.

F.G.M. I think you said earlier that the Lord was serving in the conscious power of the Spirit. In chapter 4 it refers to Jesus being full of the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, and returning in the power of the Spirit. Would you say a little more as to the consciousness of it?

E.M.W. In the passage read it says "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me". That is not an observation by somebody else but by the Person speaking. It was fulfilled that day, and Jesus was moving in the power and grace of the anointing, consciously so. So it is not someone else pointing out the fact that the Holy Spirit descends and abides upon Him, but He Himself says "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me", as though serving in the consciousness and grace of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which involves of course the Father's pleasure - not only His committal in the first instance to His Father but His Father's unreserved committal to Him.

L.A.B. And in measure this should not be beyond the experience of any one of us, do you think?

E.M.W. Just so; that is a very challenging remark.

L.A.B. It is still the truth, is it not?

E.M.W. Yes, it remains the truth; we should lay hold of it in faith and seek to be serving in the consciousness of the anointing.

E.P. In the verse referred to in Romans it speaks about receiving the spirit of adoption (small 's'). Do you think that would be something on our side that is ready to answer to what the Spirit would do for us?

E.M.W. Yes, in that way it becomes the character of the believer.

E.P. The truth of the glad tidings is often presented but there are some that are not prepared to receive it.

E.M.W. Quite so. I think there is a distinction between the giving of the Spirit and the reception of the Spirit. Scripture seems to make that clear. So we have "received a spirit of adoption, whereby we

cry, Abba, Father". Then there is also the side of the anointing. It would be an exercise to every person who serves as to whether the Father approves, as to whether His pleasure and committal rest upon the person serving.

D.J.H. The Spirit came upon One who had already said "I ought to be occupied in my Father's business" .

E.M.W. I thought of the two sides in that way; He says "my Father", the Father says "my...Son". There is a wonderful flow of reciprocal affections between the Father and the Son, and I think the Lord's service flowed from communion. It was not a forced thing, although of course He accepted the obligation for which He came.

D.J.H. He uses the word 'as' in John - as He hears and so on; it is not only 'what' but 'as'. Would that involve that communion?

E.M.W. Yes, and I suppose what is emphasised in this second passage we have read is the grace of the Spirit resting upon Him. I judge that, while He is in the consciousness of that, it has more in mind public service. Had you something in mind about that in raising the question?

D.E.B. I do not know that I can say much more about that but I was wondering as to these words, astonishment and so forth, that have been called attention to. While they are right, if we stop at that there is no active result in the Father's business. The wonder and astonishment should go on to stimulate enquiry and a constructive result in the power of the Spirit.

E.M.W. Very salutary, that! If you serve you ask yourself the question, What effect will the service have? What would I in faith expect to achieve in serving the saints? You do not just stop at astonishment in what is before you, but there should be exercise with each that as the truth is presented to us it should lay hold of us and be practically effective. As it is effective it brings us into correspondence with Him.

A.A.B. Would there be any link with what the Lord says to the Father in John 17, "for the words which thou hast given me I have given

them, and they have received them" (v 8)? I am linking it with the words of grace that were coming out of His mouth and thinking of what you said a moment ago as to service flowing from communion; the Son and the Spirit do not speak from Themselves in the economy, do they?

E.M.W. No, just so. It is said both of the Lord and the Holy Spirit that He does not speak from Himself. I think what you refer to as to His words, that "they have received them", shows that there was effectiveness. The Lord says on the one hand, prophetically, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought" (Isa. 49:4), but on the other He can say "the men whom thou gavest me out of the world". They received the words and they were effective.

J.C.E. Do you think the fact that the Lord sat down to teach here would induce, or should induce, the word going down deep into the soul? To what extent it did may be another matter, but He stood up and gave the word of God its dignity, especially in reading, Was there a patient and restful way in which the Lord taught in order that things should sink in?

E.M.W. It is deliberate and restful. A little later it says that Mary "sat down at the feet of Jesus" (chap 10: 39) - deliberate and restful. I think that is helpful in a day such as that in which we live when everyone is dashing around; a lot of it is just a frenzy in the mind, persons do not achieve anything more. In days in which there is tension and build-up this deliberateness of sitting down is important so that we can imbibe in quietness of mind and spirit what the Lord would bring before us in His words or communications. I say communications because they are distinct from the word. I think I am right in saying that as to John 17.

A.A.B. Yes, that is an important distinction. The side of grace is stressed here, it is the manner of His speech. It says at one point that Paul and his fellow servant so spake that many believed. It was not exactly the thought of the word but how they spoke. Is it the same as we have in this passage in Luke?

E.M.W. I think that would be the character of it. Again it says of one, that "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke", Acts 6: 10. I believe it is dependent (we need to be very careful in speaking of the Lord Jesus) but it is dependent upon the Father's pleasure in the anointing - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me". Would you think that?

E.C.B. Yes. That they wondered at the words of grace that proceeded out of His mouth implies that the Father was active. Does not Mr Raven say something to the effect that if the Father is made known, then He is active in grace and things are no longer on the basis of works. So the scripture the Lord reads is of administration to people rather than requirement from them.

E.M.W. That is very helpful. In that sense it is the spirit of the new covenant. It is not demand but giving, not 'thou shalt' but 'I will'.

E.C.M. Do you think what Moses said in Deuteronomy 32 would fit in; "And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth! My doctrine shall drop as rain, My speech flow down as dew, As small rain upon the tender herb" (vv 1,2)? Is there something like that in the grace of the anointing?

E.M.W. I would think that. I like the expression 'the grace of the anointing', it is very wonderful. That it is by the 'Spirit all pervading' is the general thought, and I suppose largely future although it is known now in the assembly, but this seems to be specifically the anointing upon a person, pre-eminently Jesus; but then the anointing involves the Father's pleasure and the Father's committal to Him, and henceforth the Spirit, as the hymn writer puts it, was to be the power of His hand. Now that is so for every believer, especially those who serve.

F.M.K. Would wisdom be needed to discern the need as any service is carried on? These things here bring to light need: "preached to captives deliverance, and to the blind sight".

E.M.W. I suppose that would be right. It is a touching reference to the Father acting in grace for man's deliverance: "to preach glad tidings to the poor ... to preach to captives deliverance, and to blind

sight, to send forth the crushed delivered, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord". It is an administration of blessing and that is what the glad tidings is.

C.G.H. Would the Spirit as the anointing be that which would be looked upon more as coming upon, whereas the Spirit indwelling would be more a question of what is life in us and what affects the mind and spirit?

E.M.W. I think generally that would be right. There is the reception and indwelling of the Spirit and I think that is distinct from the Spirit coming upon a person. No doubt there is a close link between them, but nevertheless the Spirit coming upon (what we speak of as the anointing) involves God's committal to and pleasure in the person or persons anointed; so the assembly is the anointed vessel.

W.E.E. Would you link it at all with the fine flour mingled with oil and the unleavened cakes anointed with oil in Leviticus?

E.M.W. That is a helpful allusion in the type.

W.E.E. The fine flour would be the evenness of the pathway of Jesus, and the mingling with oil that every step would be in relation to the Spirit; then the anointing, as we have been speaking, would be what would be seen outwardly.

E.M.W. Mingled with oil and anointed with oil - both references fit in with Luke's gospel. The anointing is upon that kind of man. As I see it the only Man that is anointed really is Christ, whether it be Christ personally or Christ in character.

A.A.B. When transmitting the responsibility for the care of the assembly to the elders in Acts 20 Paul makes reference to the words of the Lord Jesus, that were to be remembered. Would that involve, in seeking to care for the interest of Christ in our localities, that there would be a refinement and savour in the service rendered which would be relevant to those precious words? He Himself said "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v 35) and it is in the context of labouring and coming in aid of the weak.

E.M.W. Although we cannot cover very much in an hour or so, I had thought that care for and protection of the Lord's interests (and surely His saints in their localities must be His chief interest) would be included in this, not only what we do but the way in which we do it. I think the anointing enters into that

A.A.B. David speaks of "his father's sheep" 1 Sam 17: 15. That would be a very prominent feature of the Father's things, would it not?

E.M.W. Very much so; the types help us in this.

J.C.E. In unrolling the book the Lord would have passed a chapter such as the 53rd which would remind us of the events of the place of the skull, the way and the basis on which these things could be so freely said.

E.M.W. That is interesting. Before we can really come into the gain of these things Jesus must have gone that way; is that what you mean?

J.C.E. Yes. You are pressing upon us rightly that we should give more pondering to these things. If we just think of the Lord unrolling the book chapter after chapter, He would have passed that passage in the 53rd of Isaiah, He would have known what it was.

E.M.W. Indeed, "He found the place where it was written". It was not an indiscriminate opening, it was an intelligent finding of that passage as appropriate to that particular moment. So He passed Isaiah 53: "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities", and so on.

L.A.B. Does this show the way things work? We do have customs, but what we would look for is something fresh and living on each occasion?

E.M.W. I think that; so He "stood up to read". Our brother stood up, it is a right custom. What you are emphasising is that there is what is fresh and living, the words of grace which were coming out of His mouth.

L.A.B. There are things that we do customarily and it is good to have customs, it is good to be together, but it is not just that; it is a question of the way the Spirit of God may come in on any occasion, and that would always keep us in the element of expectancy.

E.M.W. So you do not set aside a custom just to be spectacular. It is a good custom to sing a hymn before we open our meetings, and speak to God. Many of these customs are good customs; but then if they are just customs, and the Holy Spirit is not free to bring in what is fresh, what do they become? Many have similar customs to us, and you might ask the question of them and of us, and of us underlined, what liberty and freshness is there in the Spirit in our occasions?

S.D.K.R. In Psalm 45 it says "grace is poured into thy lips" (v 2); here they say it is coming out. Would you say a word as to the distinction.

E.M.W. It might connect in some way with the Spirit typically, I do not know; but in both cases I notice it is grace. Here it is "the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth". I think that is well worth pondering, but I could not say that I could explain it.

C.B. Would you say that these operations of grace should have an effect and an end to them? This healing and giving sight were not just for the relief of man.

E.M.W. I had that in mind in the latter passages which the brethren can reflect upon, but the death of Jesus is the sacrificial basis on which all is brought to pass. I thought in a general way, without entering into detail, we get the death of the Priest. The whole order of man displeasing to God is set aside there, but think of the Lord Jesus going this way to give effect to His Father's will. He says in this passage, "Father into thy hands I commit my spirit". Then in resurrection He is active. I think He is still active in His Father's business in maintaining the testimony and the praise of God.

H.P.W. Would the appropriation of the sacrifice of Jesus in the way we are looking at it set the captives free and give the blind sight and be part of the acceptable year of the Lord?

E.M.W. We should dwell on it more. It has often been called the Christian's lesson book, and there are many lessons to be learned at the cross.

H.P.W. I was thinking of the many Christians that are in bondage although they may not think it. There is wonderful liberty to be known by pondering and appropriating the work of Christ, the sacrificial basis of what is for our benefit.

E.M.W. As we go over these things we would be helped; as you ponder you are giving scope to the Holy Spirit to help and form you. If you ignore them or forget them you are not giving Him room to form you according to them. Finally the Lord had in mind the praise of God: they were "continually in the temple praising and blessing God". So the Lord's service was effective. You might say outwardly it was a failure, but it was effective in that He secured the praise of God, if it was only in a handful of persons.

MAIDSTONE

22 November 1975

Key to initials

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OUR MINDS

A.J.E.Welch

Genesis 40: 23; Philippians 4: 6-8; 2 Timothy 2: 7

I want to speak briefly, and I trust in practical terms, about our minds. The last two scriptures read give us Pauline injunctions as to how we may use our minds, reminding us of things that we should think about. There is a great deal of scope for spiritual expansion as we think about what is of God; and the avenue by which the truth becomes effective is by way of our renewed minds. The mind of the flesh is death. Nothing that I seek to say is to allow any excursion of our minds that is not determined by divine truth. God uses our minds and would have us to use them as men's minds are intended of Him to be used, that is to arrive at a knowledge of Himself in the great rich extent of it. What is before us, if the Lord is pleased to leave us a few hours longer, is a remembrance of Himself. We well know from the measure of experience we have, which the Lord would still deepen, that that leads us into the wealthiest of experiences, to be in the presence of God's beloved Son. It begins with this remembrance: "this do", as the Lord said, "in remembrance of me", Luke 22: 19. It raises the question practically, as we approach that occasion, How is Jesus in our minds? As we assemble, you might say with the gaze of the hosts of heaven upon us in that assembling, How is the Lord in our minds? Those minds become a channel by which our affections are reached and held, but there are impressions there of the Son of God, at least it is divinely intended that there should be. Do we receive and hold such impressions? Do we find those impressions expanding as we proceed in the service? As we set out into the further matters of an assembly week, what is really held in these minds and affections of ours?

In Genesis 40 we have a man before us who had greatly gained by the service of Joseph, in exceedingly oppressive circumstances, and it says of that man, "the chief of the cup-bearers did not remember Joseph, and forgot him". We marvel that it could

be so when Joseph, apart from every personal quality that must have been with him to impress the man, when Joseph had filled such a key relation to that man's life, that he "did not remember Joseph, and forgot him". Joseph was not in his mind - an astonishing thing. Where was this man's mind going? Was he so imbued with the qualities, as he supposed, of his own service that every thought of Joseph was crushed from his mind? As to that we can only reflect and wonder; but here is the fact that he did not remember Joseph, and forgot him. What a personage Joseph was! What grace had been manifest in him in the prison, how distinctly he had appealed to this man to have him in remembrance when he secured his liberty. All the circumstances build up to remind us what pressure there was upon this man not to forget Joseph but to remember him. Yet the sequel shows that it was two full years before he came to the remembrance of Joseph - "I remember mine offences this day", chap 41: 9. Two full years afterwards! What a claim the Lord has upon us! What a claim the blessed God has upon us! We owe everything to Him; what marvels of grace we have experienced! Yet sometimes, I acknowledge it freely for myself, we have to recognise that in some sense we have forgotten Christ. I do not mean that every remembrance of Him has been erased from our minds, but we have set about our affairs as if there was no such Person in our reckoning. That is true, is it not? We have set forth into matters and gone through things in our own way, yet the divine thought is that Christ should be in our minds as to everything. I do not want to be hard or discredit any one, far less to discredit the work of God in anyone, but I would call attention to this feature, a feature really of the flesh in us which is such that what is most precious is for the time put from our minds by things which in very truth have a far, far less claim. It is needful to fulfil righteousness. When we go to work we need to see that work is well done under the eye of God, and we have to use our minds to do it; it may be much that presses in and claims our attention to do it, with most of us these days that is so, but it is never to be said as to us, as the scripture says of this cup-bearer, "that he did not remember Joseph, and forgot him". So how are these impressions, beloved brethren, working with us? When

the Lord comes in at the Supper - 'Majestic, Almighty and Glorious' as we sometimes sing - is there anything to exceed the experience of that? Is not every second of time precious when that holy moment arrives? Does it not seem that the Spirit, as it arrives, is pressing so much into a short space of time, engaging us with glory after glory? It does not say that the cup-bearer forgot the prison; he forgot Joseph. How much depends on the way that the Person of Christ is held in our minds and affections! How is Jesus in my mind? Sometimes when we start making statements about Him we may exaggerate a bit, but behind what is in that spoken word there is something in my mind and yours. What is it? and above all, how is Jesus there? As having the blessed Lord Jesus Christ before us we have, speaking in all reverence, a Man before us, and we can discern the features of the manhood of Jesus. We have not some mystical thought before us, we have the concreteness, speaking in reverence, of the manhood of Jesus before our hearts; something that our minds as enlightened of the Spirit can take in and hold, something that can be expanded to us by that same Spirit. So our minds are to be under control - a fine point that comes up at the end of the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans - and we are to seek grace in the Spirit to control them.

So we have these scriptures concerning what we may think about, two remarkable references in the Pauline ministry. There are some very impressive circumstances touching them. In Philippians "the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ Jesus". That follows on the exhortation, "Be careful about nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God"; that is, the person is accustomed to speak to God about them. Freely, simply, plainly, in practical terms bring everything to God and speak to Him about it, which means that we get into God's presence. We were speaking on an earlier occasion of the necessity for reading scripture; may I now take opportunity to emphasise the necessity for prayer. It is just a question how long we spend in prayer, whether we allow things to be cut short a bit

sometimes. I would earnestly entreat the dear younger brethren here especially to take time to pray. It is not only the younger ones that need it but, maybe with the busy activities of such a day as this, that time for prayer tends to get restricted a bit and perhaps a bit more and a bit more still. Take time to pray, pray when there is not any urgent necessity to take you away in five minutes, fifteen minutes or half an hour or longer. Pray when you can get to God undistracted and tell Him about everything. Speak to Him not just about your needs - He loves to take account of your needs and His grace is proved in the way He answers them - but speak to God about His interests, about the impressions you get; you will find that they will get bigger and richer and get a fuller hold on your mind. One idea of prayer which perhaps would be in some of our minds is that we just come to God with our need, and of course He knows it in any case better than we know it ourselves. But how He loves to hear us speak to Him about what relates to Him and His interests; I believe scripture would show us this. What it was when David went in and sat before Jehovah and spoke to Him! You marvel that in his day David could do that and say the things that he did, but it just shows how things can become promoted, strengthened and expanded in our minds as we speak to God about them. So the answer here is that the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your *thoughts* by Christ Jesus; because as we speak to God it tends to subdue our minds. Maybe you have your mind full of this matter and that matter; you get before God and pray, and things seem to fall into place, your mind is liberated and you come out peaceful in the sense that things are not in disorder but that the hand of God is upon them and upon *you* in them; and the peace of God is something that you know, it leaves your mind free of stress and doubt. Then he goes on to tell us what we should think about, running on to the end of verse 8; he says, *think* on these things; that is, there is an avenue in which we may use our minds for great profit, not your own profit but the profit of divine interests. What you find as you look at the things he mentions is that morally they are pure and right according to God. There is a wonderful diversity that our minds can rest upon and enjoy, things

which our affections enter into and are stimulated by; and as we *think* of God and His things there is a certain productive power in the mind enlightened by the Spirit. I have wondered often what must have been the point in Isaac's mind when he was meditating in the fields at even. It is perhaps one of the scarcest activities in most of our lives - meditating; and yet it is a very productive activity as the mind is under the control of the Spirit. Sometimes in a sense it is forced upon us; you may have a sleepless hour in the night, and as the Spirit is free with us we meditate; what rich impressions come, things become expanded in ways in which you have never seen them expanded before. It is a question of where our minds are. If on our puny difficulties at our work, the household difficulties, the things that tend to crowd in when our minds are left for the time unoccupied, what a wonderful thing to find help from the Spirit to leave those things where they belong and to find the great things of God, which come into expression supremely in the glory of Christ, engaging the mind and leading you on in the knowledge of Himself. These things we are enjoined to think of; pure, true, noble, just, amiable, of good report, virtue, praise. They are things of moral excellence, things that are far above the dark degraded level of the world in which the testimony is still extant. Let those things be cast in the Spirit's power from our minds, for much that we see and hear will tend to obtrude; but the Spirit of God has set a certain moral standard concerning things which we think about, and in the Spirit there is power to keep these minds of ours under control. Look to Him about it and you will find how speedily and definitely, if we are submissive to Him, He answers by giving us that which we can think about which is pure and holy and undefiled by the flesh of man. How much there is to think about in the glory of the Person of Christ! It is not that the human reasoning mind is released in the holy things of God; far be the thought! but a mind controlled by the Spirit becomes a channel for great enrichment, firstly of persons whose minds are thus opened, but secondly of the assembly. For what is in those minds comes into the assembly and is under the Spirit's touch to be presented there. Every divine thought is to find some presentation in the assembly where it is for the pleasure of God. There is moral

excellence in the things spoken of here, showing the level on which we are to examine ourselves as to where our minds are. There is no thought of being unpractical, but it is a question of what our minds have recourse to when they are left free.

So we have in Timothy, "Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things". Paul does not say, looking back over his long history with Timothy, 'Think of what I have said', but "Think of what I say"; that is, there is that coming to the saints as a matter of current concern and interest which is particularly to be in our minds. Lying behind this injunction and the way in which it would be received would be that long link of respect and affection between Timothy and Paul his spiritual father, between Paul and Timothy his beloved child. We are in the testimony, dear brethren, which has such links as these running through it and strengthening it, especially in the course of this wonderful recovery. We can look back on those, thank God, that we have respected in relation to the truth; they have said things to us and in a certain sense are still saying things in the force in which their ministry comes. Are we ready for this? Are we ready to think? I use the word 'think' in the productive sense, the way impressions come to our minds and get hold of us and work on our affections and hold us in relation to divine things. What a wonderful recovery God has brought about! It is not that I want to delve back into history but let us see what our heritage is, let us see that of which the entrusted deposit consists. Let us see how God has wrought in the Spirit in the past century and a half to bring the most refined and choicest elements of the truth into place through the canon of Scripture, and what wealth the Spirit has opened up from it. You look at the bookcase sometimes and see the extent of what is there, and you ask yourself how much of what is there in print has come into our minds and our hearts and formed us, as the Spirit delights to form us, in the truth itself. Dear young people, let us just review today our heritage. Let us get some fresh view of what Paul in writing to Timothy speaks of as the good deposit entrusted and let us rise to our trust as holding what has been held faithfully through conflict and held in such wise that the truth has

constantly been expanded and consolidated in the sense of our apprehension of it. The truth itself is out, but there is the apprehension of it in which saints stand and God is pleased, in His tenderness and often His patience, to carry things along that we may become established in what His mind is. Whilst there is what God brings in from His side, there is our side to think, to devote our minds to divine things so that what is spiritual becomes more characteristic and definite in its association with our whole life and course, and that what is only of passing value is excluded in the power of the same Spirit. Practical things take their necessary place but, as our minds are free let us think on the things which according to these appealing, forceful, scriptures are to be thought about according to the great line of Pauline truth. For His Name's sake.

GILLINGHAM

10 January 1976

MEETING NEED

W.McKay

Revelation 3: 14-20; 1 Samuel 25: 18,19; 23-28; 32,33; 2 Samuel 17: 2 7-29;

2 Kings 4:42-44

It will be apparent as we have read the scriptures that what is in mind relates to the meeting of need that exists amongst the saints at any time. It is important that we should be able to discern what the need of the saints is, and not only to discern it but to bring in what would be calculated to meet it in a way that will secure a right result. I say that because I think it is very important, in seeking to bring in something to meet the need of the saints, to do it in a right spirit. For instance, Martha in Luke's gospel was doing a necessary service,

she was meeting a need that existed, but she was doing it in a complaining spirit, she complained to the Lord that her sister was leaving her to serve alone and she called upon Him to tell her to come and help. Her service was good and necessary but the way she was performing it failed of the divine thought. Even a Moses (and we need to be very careful how we speak of a man like Moses) but in Numbers 20 he discerned that the need amongst the people was for water, and God told him to take Aaron's rod and speak to the rock and the water would flow. Instead of that, Moses, harassed by the complaining of the people, took his own rod and he called the saints rebels and *smote* the rock. The water came to the saints all right but the way that the thing was done failed to hallow God in the sight of the people. Paul says to the Corinthians as to the collection (I know that refers to monetary matters, but the principle is there), "that this may be ready thus as blessing, and not as got out of you", 2 Cor 9: 5. He is referring to the way that the thing is done - in the spirit of blessing. We are to be amongst the saints in that spirit and in that spirit only.

I thought perhaps we could get help if we looked at the Lord Jesus first to see the divine perfection that marked Him in bringing in what was required to meet the need of the saints. So to Laodicea He says "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. Thus because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spue thee out of my mouth". How perfectly the Lord describes the state that actually existed at that time. He says "I know", and then details the state that marked them: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and am grown rich, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that *thou* art the wretched and the miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked". This is what the professing system has come to. It ought to solemnise our hearts that it has come to a state where the Lord is about to spue it out of His mouth; He has not done it yet, but the state is such that it is nauseous to Him, and one of the worst features in that state is that they are oblivious of it. *Thou* knowest not, he says, that "*thou* art the wretched and the miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked". He is

not sparing them. Presently the great professing system will be judged with the world. I want you to notice the spirit with which the Lord proceeds to speak; "I counsel thee" - think of the Lord saying that - "I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be made manifest". He has everything in His hands that is calculated to meet the situation that exists in the whole professing body; He has the provision and makes it available. As to the professing system there is no hope for it, but the Lord is appealing to individuals in it: "buy of me". He has all that is needed to meet the present state and He counsels them to buy. He does not say 'I will give you'. What is in mind is that each individual should enter into a transaction with Himself and secure what is required to meet the current need. Is it not wonderful how the Lord brings it in? He says I have it all; there is not a need existing that cannot be met if you will only enter into a personal transaction with Me. So He goes on, "I rebuke and discipline as many as I love". I want you to notice that that word for love is '*phileo*'. There is another word for love which implies a settled disposition, but '*phileo*' means that there is something lovable in the object, and the Lord is saying that "I rebuke and discipline as many as I love". We must not be indifferent to the amount of discipline that there is amongst the saints at the present time. Even in a state like that of Laodicea there are those in whom there are lovable features, features that are attractive to the Lord, and it is *those* whom He rebukes and disciplines. "Be zealous therefore and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking". O what an appeal! He is ready to meet the state in Laodicea. In spite of the fact that the public body is nauseous to Him He lingers over it in infinite grace. And then He says, "If any one hear my voice and open the door I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me". And to emphasise this grace He says that the overcomer will sit with Him in His throne even as He has overcome and has sat down with His Father in His throne. We are thus to be impressed with the attitude of grace and blessing which the Lord maintains through to the end in spite of all that has come in.

Now I refer to Abigail in 1 Samuel 25. Here a very serious situation has arisen, the rights of Christ as typified in David have been slighted. David and his men had served Nabal, had been a wall to his young men by night and by day; all the time they served with them in the fields Nabal lost nothing, David protected it all. Now David sends and says "give, I pray thee, what thy hand may find - He had a perfect right to do that but he is slighted: Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? there are many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master" (v 10). That is Nabal; and what a crisis it was! It would be a very serious thing in any locality if the rights of Christ were not fully respected; a situation like that may arise. David, who is then not a type of Christ, resolves to meet it by force, which would involve the loss of life; he is going to do it that way. "Gird ye on every man his sword" (v 13): how far David is removed from the spirit of Christ at that time! Abigail, a woman of a beautiful countenance and good understanding, weighs over the situation: What are the consequences going to be? What intelligence she has! She took "two hundred loaves, and two skin-bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed", and so on. She furnishes herself with all that is needed to meet the need of the moment and goes to meet David, and when she saw him she hastened and lighted off the ass and fell before him on her face. Then she speaks to David about Nabal, she is not defending him, the rights of Christ have been slighted and she is not defending the man that did it, neither is she justifying David's action, she is not taking sides with any as to this matter; and what she is doing is a result of her discernment. She brings what is needed and says "And now this blessing". David has the sword girded on; Abigail has the supply to meet the difficulty and brings it in in the spirit of blessing. Now David says "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me. ... And blessed be thou".

Oh, dear brethren, what is so important in seeking to meet a need amongst the saints is to do it in the spirit of blessing, not in the spirit of complaining or of grudging, not in the spirit of anything that belongs to the order of man that is here, but to bring it in in the

spirit of blessing. Abigail later becomes the wife of David; what a worthy woman she is a type of the assembly.

Now in 2 Samuel 17 David is in rejection fleeing from Absalom. It says, "And as soon as David came to Mahanaim, Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim": these are men who have a history. David and his men were in need and these men knew what was needed. David is in the wilderness fleeing from Absalom, and they bring beds for rest, basins for refreshment, earthen vessels and food for sustenance: all what is actually needed. We need to be practical, dear brethren; if need exists amongst the saints, what is it? These are men who had been affected by grace as it had been manifested in David. Take a man like Shobi; his brother had despised grace (see 2 Sam 10: 1-5); but grace had a place in Shobi's heart and he evidently had real affection for David. Machir the son of Ammiel of Lodebar is the man that had housed Mephibosheth; it is out of his house that Mephibosheth came up to David. These men had been affected by grace, and the work of God evidently had taken shape in them, but they had kept in the background up till now. God sees to it that circumstances arise in which every bit of His own work comes into manifestation. There are many secret lovers of Christ around us today but sooner or later God will bring about a condition of things where His own work will manifest itself. At the end of John's gospel there are two men, Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, secret lovers of Christ, but the day comes when circumstances arise in which the work of God in their souls comes into manifestation. We can pray that God will bring about conditions in which His own work will be brought into expression in persons that have kept in the background up till now. What a link these men had together! What is holding them together? What held Joseph and Nicodemus together? I believe it was the work of God. They had a link together which was strong, unbreakable, a link in the work of God, and they did what was necessary to meet the need at the moment. The body of Jesus was still on the cross; who was going to take it down?

Scripture had said that He was with the rich in His death. Who was going to do it? These two men come forward and do what is necessary to meet the need of the moment. I do feel we need a great deal of help to meet the need of the moment and to meet it in the spirit that will reach the divine end. Surely what Nicodemus and Joseph did fulfilled the divine word fully. These men in Samuel brought all this wonderful supply; "they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty in the wilderness". There is a good deal of this kind of thing today - people hungry, weary, and thirsty in the wilderness. Do not let us forget the circumstances of the wilderness. Let us also think of those who are serving us continuously in the ministry. Does it not involve work, labour, weariness? Of course it does. It is not all the bright side of joy and happiness; there is weariness. There are, too, the beloved brethren who are isolated in very small positions. Think of keeping on week after week in a very small position; is there not weariness? Let us be practical, dear brethren, and get to God and see what the need is and bring in what is required in such a way that it will meet the divine end.

Now I thought that the man from Baal-shalishah would give us a good finish. This is a wonderful chapter; it may be applied to the scope of Paul's ministry beginning at Romans. There is the truth of the Spirit, the pouring out of the oil into the vessels, and the increased wealth: "pay thy debt, and live... on the rest" - persons set up in fulfilled responsibility. Then we get the food supply and a man filling his lap with wild colocynths and shredding them into the pot - a careless way of going on, trying to handle divine things in a careless way and not discerning what is there; this man shredded in what was wild and there was death in the pot. Elisha says "Then bring meal" - that is Christ. He did not put his hand into the pot to take the poison out, he brings in Christ; that meets the situation. Then we get the man from Baal-shalishah; I think he represents a man like Paul. Baal-shalishah, I understand, has a connection in meaning with the lord of the third part, the higher level. It is a heavenly ministry. It says he "brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty

loaves of barley, and fresh ears of corn in his sack. And he said, Give to the people that they may eat. And his attendant said, How shall I set this before a hundred men? And he said, Give the people that they may eat; for thus saith Jehovah: They shall eat, and shall have to spare. And he set it before them, and they ate and left thereof, according to the word of Jehovah". It reminds us of the miracles that the Lord Jesus wrought in feeding the multitudes. Paul is a man that has been to another place and he brings the food in - a heavenly ministry. Dear brethren, there is a great need at the present time for a heavenly ministry. This man had been to the place where that ministry is to be obtained. Paul had been there and he brings in a ministry that lifts the saints up I believe the intent of it is that, as the constitution of the saints is built up on this food, it gives a desire to get to the place where the ministry came from. That is what Paul had in his mind; he had been there and he came back and supplied a ministry which, if taken hold of, fed upon, would build up a constitution that would never be satisfied until the person got to the place where the ministry came from - that is the heavenly side. How often we are reminded of it Jesus is there, He has gone to heaven and He says; have prepared a place for you. Our destiny, dear brethren, is heaven; why should we not get there now not in actuality but in spirit? What this man bring in is a crowning feature to this wonderful chapter. It is an Ephesian touch where Paul reaches the zenith in the spirit of blessing.

Well, may the Lord add His blessing. I feel there is something in what has been said; do not destroy the word, there is a blessing in it. That is what the prophet said: "Destroy it not for a *blessing* is in it" Isa 65: 8. It is a question of discerning where the need is and what it is, and being exercised to bring in what is required, and see that we bring it in in such a way that the divine end will be reached, for His Name's sake.

GILLINGHAM

20 September 1975

THE CHILDREN'S HEARING

Samuel, as a child, was ready to listen to the word of the Lord with the result that his own words always had an effect. When grown up he was called a prophet, which means that he spoke for the God who Himself had made the hearing ear to receive the words. Some of the messages were so solemn that persons hearing would have tingling ears. Scripture also speaks of heavy ears that were too lazy to listen and of an itching ear that would like to hear anything but the truth. But the Lord Jesus said that those whose ears listened to His words were "blessed", or happy.

When Peter and others saw the majesty of Jesus on the holy mountain they also heard the voice of the Father calling attention to His beloved Son and saying "Hear him". According to Matthew the next words said by Jesus were "Rise up". This is a great message for us as Christians. Those words are recorded as said by the Lord at least seven times - not only to disciples - but also to a paralysed man, a cleansed leper, a man with a withered hand and to the blind man Bartimaeus.

We sometimes forget that Solomon was only in his teens when he became king. In fact he said that he felt just like a little child when God told him to ask for whatever he would like as a gift. Most of us would think probably of riches, health or something similar just for ourselves. But it pleased God that he asked for 'a heart that hears' - so as to tell the good from the bad and to use his wisdom for the benefit of God's people. Thus not only faith, but also the knowledge of God Himself comes by hearing. Many other persons in the Bible showed their greatness by hiding and pondering things in their hearts and not just in their memories.

As in so many ways, the creation around us gives us an object lesson as to the danger of being deaf to the glad tidings. It is not known exactly how snakes hear but the psalmist wrote about a "deaf adder which stoppeth her ear". It is said that it put one ear in the sand, covering the other with its tail! It would thus not hear the charmer however sweetly he might pipe or play. David knew wicked

persons like that who were willingly deaf to the choicest appeal of God's loving-kindness. Are you like one of those little reptiles?

J.C.Evershed