

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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"MY GOD"

A.J.E.Welch

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We have these persons and others too in the Scriptures who speak of 'my God'. It enters in great wealth into the book of Psalms, a great book of experience where the Psalmist can say 'my God'. It brings out on the one hand the glory of God Himself as apprehended by those who speak thus, and it brings out too the distinctive quality of His own work that shines out in the apprehension of Him, of God. The expression is not so frequent in the Scriptures that its occurrence is not of deep interest when persons are found in circumstances who express themselves thus and say 'my God'. It raises very much the question of how deep our knowledge of God is by presenting to us the cases of persons who have learned God in singular ways. In Ruth's case much is still prospective as to her history but I read of her because of the bringing out in her of this fine element of total committal - not committal of one aspect of her path but of the whole of it, not committal for a certain span of time but for the whole of the time in which she was left in the scene of her committal. In these fine expressions that she uses she says to Naomi "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God". She had seen something in Naomi which carried her back in her mind to the God that Naomi knew, a most affecting matter as we reflect over the God that these persons were brought to know. What was it that had brought out such choice features in Naomi in the midst of suffering? It was the God she knew! What was it brought out in David a long course that culminates in his committing the matter of the house to Solomon, a great extensive matter in which David had shone in many respects. What lay behind this? The God that he knew! And when later Solomon comes to the dedication, as we say, of the house, think of all that lay behind that in David and in Solomon. When Solomon came to the dedication of the house what lay behind it? The God of whom Solomon can say in another scripture more than once "my God". What lay behind the history and

fruits of the service of Paul? What a pathway Paul had had, what devotion it had manifested, what readiness for suffering and for sacrifice, what fruits exceeding rich for God Himself! What lay behind all this in Paul's case? It was the God he knew! And as, if the Lord will, we assemble to remember the Lord Jesus, to partake of the Supper on the coming day, what lies behind the assembling of saints in very many places with one single precious object in mind? It is the God we know!

There must have been much about Naomi that would not have been attractive to the natural person. Hers was a path of suffering. I suppose she depicts for us a suffering testimony, and the testimony into which God has called us is in this sense a suffering testimony and has been ever since it was first set afoot. But there is a God behind it, infinite in love and wisdom and power. There is much about Naomi that to a person with natural inclinations must have seemed unattractive. The testimony of God is to man a despised testimony and has always been so, but there is a God behind it of whom those who have their part in this testimony can speak from experience, experience maybe in suffering circumstances. How was it the martyrs were sustained as their lives were given up for the testimony of the Christ? There was God behind that, there was the knowledge of God; not only was God behind it but in the persons there was the knowledge of Himself that made them ready not only to go through suffering but stand in triumph in the suffering; God was behind that. Now the question is, and it comes to every person here, are we ready like Ruth to be committed to that? It shall involve sacrifice, it shall involve the acceptance of reproach, for Naomi was in fact a person under reproach, but are we ready to go all the way as having, as Ruth had in mind, the same God? Think of what this testimony is. May I appeal to the young people here just to consider what this precious testimony stands for and how it has come through almost twenty centuries triumphantly? The greatness of God is behind that, not only seen by itself, but the greatness that is known in the history and experience of very many persons who have stood in this testimony, sometimes even to die in respect to it. It is God

behind that. The question is, are you ready to come in relation to the same God, the self-same God who has sustained the testimony down through all these centuries and sustains it still in a measure of victory? God is behind that. He is the resource, His is the love, His is the power that has sustained the testimony so precious and He would remind us that all the furnishings of it have come from Him.

Now the question is, can we say as Ruth said to Naomi, "thy God my God"? The God who has stood the resource of myriad saints in the midst of suffering circumstances - do you know Him as your God? Shall you be able, with heart bowed in reference to the One of whom you speak, to speak of the same blessed God who has seen His testimony through thus far as being your God? Are you ready for such a committal as this? The committal as I speak of it now is to God and what is of Him, involving committal to the Lord Jesus in the scene of His reproach, His shame, involving committal to the Lord in the way that He may direct you in the course of His testimony here, involving resource in the Spirit to sustain you in that committal at every point of your path. All this is for you, the experience of it all is for you. I suppose there is not a soul here that would not feel at the present point in the testimony of God the need of fresh committal, the need of a sense of recommitting ourselves to what the Spirit of God is doing in a definite sense, lest we might fall short, lest we might slacken, lest we might lose the keen points of concern in Christ where He is, that He might be glorified in every movement of this precious testimony until He comes. It is that coming of His, as we were reminded in the week, His appearing for which we look. We show forth His death until He come, and we look on to the glorious moment of the disclosure of Jesus in the power and rights that distinctively belong to Him. So let us be like Ruth - "thy God my God". You come into a testimony that is near its close (the history of it is sufficiently known I suppose to every person here) to see the majesty and the glory of the God who lies behind it. The point of the moment is that that God shall be your God, that you may be able to say, not because someone directs you to speak it, not because the thing occurs to your mind, but through the reality of experience in the course of such a testimony as this - my God. Recognising the

resource, the constant resource He has been, recognising the glory in Himself He has opened up to our hearts, the blessedness of the knowledge of Him in the Father, the Son and the Spirit, the blessedness of His thoughts in purpose as to the assembly in relation to Christ; all these things are for you as you commit yourself and say 'thy God my God'.

Now David's case is very full again as he takes up this matter of the house. "David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and courageous, and do it; fear not nor be dismayed; for Jehovah Elohim, my God, will be with thee; he will not leave thee, neither forsake thee, until all the work for the service of the house of Jehovah is finished". What a labour it involved, taken in total, to build this house which Solomon eventually built! What elements of the history of David and of Solomon enter into the provision of this house! But it says "until all the work for the service of the house of Jehovah is finished". David in the course of it had learned his God.

He speaks with manifest feeling at this point to his son, his beloved son Solomon; he was to carry matters through to completion. Well, beloved brethren, we are in the time of completion. I suppose no heart that is in any sense with the Lord as to current events (and I speak not of outward history but of assembly experience) would question that we are in the finishing time. Shall we be ready, dear brethren, for the finish? What a history David had had involving conflicts in many areas, in many times, many experiences involving suffering for him. God had brought him through, and brought him through with the concept in his mind of a dwelling-place for God.

God had told David by way of His prophet that he should not build the house and David accepted that. He went in and sat before Jehovah in the acceptance of what the prophet brought to him.

Wonderful thing, bringing out the stature of the man! What is behind the stature of the man? The greatness of the God he knew. And David failed, he failed grievously, and God had to say to him about it, and repenting he came to the sense of what his failure had been and God forgave his sin and brought him through. Think of a God who is able to do that! Think of a God who could disclose David as a man

after His own heart, and yet this we might say, if we followed our natural conclusions, is the kind of man that God took up. It only brings out the greatness of the God who took him up, His ability to bring that man through even a course involving such sorrowful failure. That is the God that David knew. As He brought him through, a remarkable Psalm was the result in David's history, Psalm 51. Where was the stature arrived at that lies behind that Psalm in which his failure is gone over with such thoroughness in relation to truth in the inward parts? It was the God whom David knew that brought him thus far. God had invested a great deal in that man, as He has invested a great deal in certain of His people in these days, and he brought him through, and David conceived this thought of the house. You might say what a disappointment for David that having conceived the matter he should not be permitted to complete it, but he accepts the situation. Remarkable stature in manhood David in that sense displayed, even before this time of the Spirit in which we are. David had a God and he says to Solomon "my God, will be with thee". We think of what has been prepared, dear brethren. Just as David prepared for the house, we have to think of this very day in which we are, of what has been prepared, what has been set afoot in view of a house, a dwelling for God. Think of what God has invested, if I can use the word again, in this time of reviving. He is going to carry it through to a finish, a glorious finish, a finish glorifying Christ, a finish yielding much by way of praise and response to Himself, but He would say to us are you ready to come into the finish, to take matters up, to perform the necessary labour? There was still a great deal for Solomon to do, the materials largely were there and the pattern had been disclosed to David and David had in turn disclosed it to Solomon, but there was still an immense amount to do. That appears to me to be very like the situation today. A pattern is known, God has disclosed through those that He loves the pattern of things, and now the question is to bring it all to fruition; and David says "my God, will be with thee; he will not leave thee, neither forsake thee". The experience, as the history shows, proved that this was indeed the case until we reach the point where Solomon himself, at the end of chapter 6 of the second Book of

Chronicles, can say 'my God' and invite Him to come into His resting-place ; he says "thou and the ark of thy strength" (v 41). That is the God, dear brethren, whom we are called to have to do with, we are called to serve, we are called to labour for in full committal as Solomon did in the early part of his path, anyway. So what a moment of challenge this is, and yet we have the assurance that the God that has gone before in the histories of those that have gone before us, the same blessed God will go with us to the conclusion in view; as he says, "until all the work for the service of the house of Jehovah is finished". There is the view of the house which we need to take account of which involves the building going on and reaching completion, and that is the view that I would seek to engage us with, that we may be standing committed to the work of the house of Jehovah until it be finished; and God will be in that and God will be with His people even as He has shown Himself manifestly and gloriously to be with those that have gone on before. You cast your mind back to some that God has used even in this time of revival and you say to yourself, God was with that man; you see another and you say, God was with that man. God is still in this time of reviving, dear brethren, and He would have those that would follow in the steps of those that have gone before as knowing the same blessed God, and having the same resource, not only the sense of resource but the proof of the resource, in that what He has done bears the mark of what is of God Himself.

Paul knew this well. I touch lightly for a moment in closing on this expression of Paul's: "but my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus". I suppose by the very use of the designation 'my God' he would have in mind to call attention to the greatness of the God who had sustained him, and what a sustaining it had been when you think of the history of the beloved apostle from the very moment when he was struck down on the Damascus road and of all that was compressed into that history. We can only say as to the God he knew, what a God He is! If that leaves with any of us, beloved brethren, a sense of resource, I should be thankful. We need

resource to go forward, we need strength, we need to have God to turn to in the knowledge of Himself, something in the steps of these men that have gone before that we may move on to completion.

Paul says "my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus"; that is, the position is set out in a glorious Man up there exalted of God, filling that glorious place in heaven. The glory of everything from God towards man is set out in that Person and He would engage us with that Person as the One from whom all must derive, "according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus". The measure of what is in the heart of God for us is set out in Christ where He is; glory is there. The great centre of attraction for every true heart is there in Jesus, but the great point of supply, and that in glory, is known in that same Person. And so we shall go through as we have Him before us. Paul can say, even in prison circumstances in Rome as we understand, "according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus". How Paul had proved God! How he had proved the wealth of what is in the Father, what is known in the Son, is experienced in power in the Spirit; he traces it all back to God and says "my God shall abundantly supply all your need". So we have such a God, beloved brethren, with whom to have to do, such a God to sustain and see us through in view of the soon approaching end and He looks to us for that place in our hearts, that regard by all of us, that shall give us in some sense to take on this precious thought of 'my God'; that is, that we have a God that we know, and we can say as we assemble together, Our God; and we say it not because of any position or of any place into which the Lord may have called us but because we stand together in the experience of such a God as this who is carrying through His testimony and His service of praise till the Lord come. May we be in these things and sustained in them as having God known in our hearts, for His Name's sake.

CROYDON

25 September 1976

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

G.W.Brown

Isaiah 40: 10,11; 46: 4; 2 John 1,2,4; Philemon 8,9

Did you sing the hymn? Do you remember what you sang? Do you believe what you sang? We began the hymn with a reference to Jesus:

The mighty God who dwelt in light
Unreached by mortal eye,
As Man came forth the foe to fight,
And won the victory.

I do not think it is always remembered that Jesus who is preached in the glad tidings was and is and ever will be "over all, God blessed for ever", Rom 9: 5. That is the testimony to men from God that the Saviour, Jesus, the Son of God indeed in manhood, is the One who is "over all, God blessed for ever". What a serious thing it would be to miss, to neglect to pay attention to what comes to us in the preaching of the word of God, in the preaching of the glad tidings concerning Jesus. Think of who He is; remember who He is.

Receive, if you have never known before, the witness this afternoon as to who He is. We all may be well acquainted with the detail of the way that He went. Perhaps we all have some interest in reading the Scriptures, especially the gospels. Those of us who were brought up in the privilege of a Christian home can remember that as children we were interested in what are sometimes called the stories of the gospels. Do you remember some of the stories in the gospels of the doings of Jesus? Do you remember that Luke the evangelist writes of a ruler of the synagogue who had an only daughter who was dying, and that he sent for Jesus? Little did he know that the One he sent for who as Man had come forth the foe to fight was the mighty God who dwelt in light unreached by mortal eye; that is who it was.

When He arrived at the house the child was dead; she was twelve years old. We live in a world where death abounds and continues, and its claims do not cease, do not diminish; no one is exempted

from the claim. Doctors may do what they can to remedy sickness, sometimes they do; it is but for a while. Sometimes they are unable to, and children are taken as well as persons of middle age and old men and women. The mighty God as Man came into the world as Man. Death reigned until then. He took the hand of this dead girl of twelve years of age and said "Child, arise" and she sat up and began to speak. He gave her to her parents. How wonderful that is. How wonderful the grace: the Spirit of God says "he commanded something to eat to be given to her". Luke the evangelist was a physician; he would appreciate that grace that thought of a child who had just been awakened out of death. Luke tells us too that He was about to enter a city called Nain and there was a procession going to the grave, a young man being carried out, "the only son of his mother, and she a widow" (Luke 7: 12), and that He touched the bier and said to the dead "Youth, I say to thee, Wake up. And the dead sat up... and he gave him to his mother". What He must have brought to that desolate-hearted widow! What joy He must have brought into her heart! Has Jesus brought any joy into your heart? He has into mine. It may be that you do not know Him, and that is in God's mind in your being here this afternoon. Whatever the circumstances may be that have led you to come, if there should be one here, one young person, or one old person who does not know the Saviour, God is thinking of you, He is caring for you, He is concerned that you might know the Saviour, and that is the principal reason why you are here this afternoon.

Jesus, as you know, went on to the cross. The apostle Peter says of Him on the cross, "himself bore our sins in his body on the tree", 1 Pet 2: 24. He says that to his fellow Christians. How many there are. I wonder if there is anyone here who is not amongst them. If it be so I am assured that God is thinking of you this afternoon at this very moment, thinking of you for blessing that you might come to know the Saviour, that you might be able to say with the apostle Peter, "himself bore our sins". Peter would be able to say, Bore my sins; and I am able to say too that He bore my sins in His body on the tree. He bore God's judgment, He bore the penalty, He bore the

wrath of a holy sin-hating God, He bore and carried away the burden of all my sins. His precious blood was shed as hanging dead upon the cross. You remember that a soldier with a spear pierced His side. And His Father was looking on, the body of His Beloved dead hanging upon a cross; the soldier in callousness drew a spear and pierced His side and immediately, it might have read, he was struck by God from heaven. But no, it does not read like that; it says "immediately there came out blood and water", John 19: 34.

Precious, precious blood of Jesus. Nothing else, no other blood, nought else; as the beloved hymn writer says :

No act of power could e'er atone,
No wonder-working word
Could, from the brightness of the throne,
Make love's sweet voice be heard.

The love of God was told out as the blood of Jesus flowed on the cross; the God who, as one says, "so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal", John 3: 16. And that is why the gospel is being preached today. Thank God for every true preaching of the gospel. Wherever He sends His word in the sovereignty of His mercy we pray that it will not return to Him void but it will accomplish that whereunto He sends it. We would pray particularly for His word in this place this afternoon that it may not return void. God is speaking to us every one.

Let no one exempt himself or herself. It makes no difference if you are very young and very wilful, if you are very old and very pious, and I am not despising that; but God would speak to every one of us from the youngest who is able to understand what is being said and to the oldest, in His word God addresses Himself to us.

That is what 'the word of God' means, that He is speaking to us. That is what we have prayed for, and I believe God has heard our prayers and will answer them, and that His word will come to us here this afternoon. God grant that it may be listened to by us, that it may be listened to in faith, that it may be believed because it is God who is speaking. It may be poor vessels that actually preach the word

but God Himself is behind what is said in His mercy and in His grace and in His love.

And so that love was told out, as our hymn says, that we might be cleansed. Think of God wanting to cleanse a sinner like you. Is that offensive to you? Whether it be so or not I beg you to think about it, that God should want to cleanse a sinner like you and like me. What it has cost Him to do so! It cost the life blood of His beloved Son, His only One. He will have many sons by adoption.

Thank God for that. He has already many sons by adoption, but He gave up, He spared not His own, His only-begotten; and His precious blood was shed that God 's holy majesty might be satisfied in respect of the offence of sin and sins, and that God might cleanse the sinner who believes. Now is there a sinner here this afternoon who does not believe? God knows. I am not charging anyone. God is not charging anyone, He is not imputing offences. Offences there are in plenty in your life and in my life, and if God were to mark iniquity, as one saint says in the Scriptures, who should stand? (see Ps 130: 3). Who in this room would stand if God would mark iniquity? But He is not, blessed be His name! At such great cost the precious blood of His own beloved Son has been shed that His glory might be satisfied and the love of His heart be set free and that He might cleanse the sinner.

You may say, Thank God I have known the joy of that; but you may say, I find myself in a very sorry plight because one day I am in the joy of it and the next day I am discovering what a wretched person I am, how wicked my heart is. And if you have never found it I pray God you may find it soon, because He has the answer, and the answer to that was in the burial of Jesus. Paul says in writing to certain, "I delivered to you... what also I had received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and that he was buried", 1 Cor 15: 3.4. I am very thankful for that because it has taught me that the kind of man I belong to by nature never could please God. I have found it out again and again, I became disgusted with myself until I found rest in the consciousness that God has put that man out of sight in the grave of Jesus. "He was buried; and that

he was raised the third day, according to the scriptures". I wonder if you know the Scriptures. I wonder if you could find it. If you wanted to answer the challenge of Paul's word you would be confined to the Old Testament Scriptures because the New were not written. Can you find in the Old Testament where Christ "died for our sins, according to the scriptures"? Could you find it? "And that he was buried; and that he was raised the third day, according to the scriptures". There is a profitable scripture study for those that are younger, because the older believers would all know where to find it I suppose. "He was raised the third day, according to the scriptures".

Thank God for the resurrection of Jesus. I spoke to a young woman who was in my employ at one time; her course was very wrong, and she said boldly, You know I go to church. I would not have thought it. She knew that I would not have thought it. I thought perhaps there was something to link on with, but she said, I do not believe in resurrection. Do you believe in resurrection? Do you believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus? Do you believe that all the dead will be raised? "The dead in Christ shall rise first", 1 Thess 4: 16. Being changed, what eternal blessing! What a tabernacle they will have! What a home! As one says, waiting to put on our house from heaven (see 2 Cor 5: 2). What a house that will be! We who believe may put on our house from heaven any moment now; not very long at the most. But the rest of the dead will not be raised at that time, not for a long time after, as we measure things, and then they will be raised, not for a house from heaven but for judgment. No, judgment is not part of the gospel. As one servant of Christ said, It is the dark background against the bright light of the gospel for those who refuse God's mercy in His grace. "He was raised the third day, according to the scriptures" and He was taken up into heaven; He ascended. Both are true. He is glorified, He is sitting on the Father's throne. Soon He will take His own throne and reign on earth as well as in heaven. Soon He is coming for His own that they may be with Him in His glory. What a prospect we have who believe on Him! As soon as He appears we shall be like Him, we shall see Him as He is. We shall never be any more as we were. We shall be ever with the Lord and be like Him. It is worthwhile being a Christian, is it not? As

well as the appeal to your heart by such a God who spared not His only Son, who "so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal", what things God offers in the gospel. Did you ever hear the like of that which God offers freely, freely to be taken. All that He looked for was in Him. How easy it should be to any of us to say how unworthy I am of such blessing. He is coming soon, coming for His own:

The mighty God who dwelt in light
Unreached by mortal eye.

He is coming soon as Man, as Saviour, as Lord. Do you know Him? Are you ready for Him? Do you love Him? The wonder is that we do not love Him much more. Is there anyone here who does not love Him? He is appealing to you this afternoon that you might become one of His own, that you might repent and receive the glad tidings.

We read these two verses in the prophet Isaiah, "the Lord Jehovah, will come with might". Well, He has come. "He will feed his flock like a shepherd: he will gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom". What a Saviour, the Lord Jehovah! Jesus, the Saviour of whom you have heard so often; the Saviour whom you love, I hope, and if not until now that from now onwards you will love Him. He will carry the lambs, it says, in His bosom, that is the young ones. He will include you among them. You may say, I know nothing; I am not very old, I know nothing. He would think of you this afternoon, you are one of those He would carry in His bosom. That is why I read from the epistle by John. He writes to a sister whom he calls "the elect lady", and he speaks about her children, and he speaks about the joy he had that some of her children were walking in truth. How came it that they were? They were not born like that, you know. No one is born like that. I think the Lord Jehovah, the blessed Saviour Jesus had gathered them in His arms and carried them in His bosom, and now they are found walking in the truth. That is the mind of God for every young person here. He would include you in the lambs that He gathers with His arms and carries in His bosom. And the old ones? Well, the prophet

has a word to the old ones: "Even to old age, I am HE" - that is a name of God, the Saviour - "and unto hoary hairs I will carry you: It is I that have made, and I will bear, and I will carry, and will deliver". In writing to Philemon, Paul calls himself "Paul the aged, and now also prisoner of Jesus Christ". An old man writing a letter from prison. What is it: a cry of anguish? No. An appeal for help? No. A request that someone will come and visit him in his misery? No. Paul the aged is being borne, he is being carried by the Saviour. In his plight he is a good soldier even in his old age, he is a good soldier of Jesus Christ. That is why he can write to a young man and exhort him to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Old man as he was he was active in testimony and in service and in response to God, and He is resting his all on the Mighty One who says, "I am HE, and unto hoary hairs I will carry you". God grant that we may prove it, every one, young or old, for His glory and our blessing, for His Name's sake.

CULLEN

28 September 1975

GROWING

P.Martin

1 Samuel 2: 26; Colossians 1: 9,10

These passages refer to growth. While we are here spiritual growth is to take place. It is not as in natural things where we cease to grow when we reach maturity. It is not intended to be so spiritually: Paul says "until we all arrive... at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ", Eph 4: 13. Growth is silent and often unseen; we know that in our families. Mother gets last year's coat out and it does not fit this year; no one knew it would not fit - growth has taken place. It is often said, I did not realise he had grown that much. It shows how growth goes on quietly and silently; and it does so spiritually too. It does not come all at once. We had reference in the reading to keeping the word of His patience (see Rev 3: 10). Sometimes we become impatient and discouraged

because we find that growth has not come all at once; but it never comes all at once, at least I do not think so. I think it comes gradually and it comes from our links with divine Persons; it is the divine mind that growth should continue and that it should continue steadily, continue quietly.

Samuel was a boy here; we often read about Samuel and the coats that his mother made and brought to him. It says Samuel grew. In the next chapter we find that he grew and Jehovah let none of his words fall to the ground. He was with God. Before it even speaks of his mother making a coat it says of Samuel that he wore a linen ephod. I think that is the secret of his growth, that he was there before God. You may say that the ephod related to his public service. I think it related to the fact that he was before God. He wore a linen ephod and that characterised him, whatever else he wore, I think. He was before God and served as before God. Those of us who are younger may say we cannot serve; we often feel like that anyway; but there is always something that each of us can do, and can do as serving before God. However young we are we can pray. That is something that children can do, pray to God, pray to the Lord Jesus, He who has died for us, shed His blood for us, lives on high for us - pray to Him. I think Samuel typifies somebody who was constantly in the presence of the Lord Jesus. We need to be that, however young or old. In one sense we are never outside the presence of divine Persons; it is a sobering and yet an encouraging thing. Not that we should want to be, as one could say, "If thy presence do not go, bring us not up hence", Exod 33: 15. The reassurance of the divine presence was what was required. What would it have been to Moses if God's presence had not gone with them? Well, we might say the same today, dear brethren, if the divine presence is not realised by us what will our path be? There have been many who have had their part in fellowship to whom now the divine presence means very little. I speak carefully and humbly; those whom we once walked with are now finding their part in the world around us, the divine presence in one sense meaning very little to them. "If thy presence do not go, bring us not up hence".

Samuel was a boy whose mother was concerned that he should be maintained in the presence of God. We can thank God for any desire that there has been, whether it be on the part of a parent or any other godly person, that we should be maintained as in the presence of God. Thank God for that. You may say, I often desire to get away from it, often desire that the exercises of godly persons were not so pressing. Thank God for the exercises of godly persons in regard of your own soul. I say it carefully, but I say it with reality, because if anyone has prayed for you, as indeed others have, thank God for it. How terrible it would be if no one had concern for you in regard of your soul and your present welfare in regard of the things of God. How sad that would be! But thank God that there have been persons who have prayed for you and are praying for you still.

So Samuel had a God-fearing mother; she wanted a child who could be serviceable to Jehovah. What must precede and underlie any public service to God is our part as before Him privately, what we are to God. I would say to the young people, pray; pray to God; pray to God for the brethren. I remember my father telling me, when I once grumbled about some brethren, to speak to the Lord about the brethren and to speak to the brethren about the Lord. You find you cannot grumble to Him about the brethren; it does not work. Speak to God about the brethren; however young we are we can do that. It will create growth in the soul to be in exercise before God in regard of those with whom we are set.

So this boy served, and as I say, he had a linen ephod. You may say, That is a priestly garment. Yes, but priestliness is considering for what is for God. We can do that however young we are or however old; we can do that in our local assemblies, consider for what is for God. Sisters can do it, sisters do do it; thank God for that. Many local assemblies have been maintained in vitality for Christ through the prayers of sisters, but we may all have our part in it, dear brethren, as considering for what is for God. It is not a matter which is just left to the care meeting; it is a daily matter. Paul says "for three years, night and day, I ceased not admonishing each one of you with tears", Acts 20: 31. What was in view in that?

Presenting them to God. So Samuel grew, and it says he grew on. Growth did not take place for a while and then stop; he grew on. Sometimes we have bright periods and they stop (I speak from experience) but Samuel grew on; he was maintained in his place before God. The greatest place that you or I have is our place before God. You may say, I treasure my place amongst the brethren. Treasure it indeed; there is no place, in one sense, like it; but the greatest place that you have is your place before God, and if there is to be vitality maintained in your soul, it must be as you treasure your place as before God. How wonderful that God has taken us into favour in Christ, in no other Man! He has not taken us into favour in ourselves but has taken us into favour in Christ, the exalted Man, the Man whom He has delighted to glorify. How wonderful these things are, dear brethren! They relate to our place before God but we are to take it up vitally so that there may be growth and that growth may continue. So Samuel grew on; I would like that for myself, soul progress, so that we might grow on. Paul says to Timothy, "Occupy thyself with these things; be wholly in them, that thy progress may be manifest to all", 1 Tim 4: 15. You may say, I feel what little progress I make. Timothy's progress was to be manifest to all. Is mine? I raise the challenge with myself: Is my progress manifest? Not that we want what is of ourselves to be manifest but what is of Christ, because if there is growth in regard of the work of God it is Christ being developed in the soul, Christ being formed in the affections of the saints. Timothy's progress was to be manifest to all. How the Lord would love that our progress was manifest, that we prospered, prospered spiritually. We prosper materially; in general the Lord has blessed us materially, but that may not always be to our spiritual advantage; we may become independent because of natural prosperity. May we always be kept in humility and dependence upon God. He who gives material prosperity can withdraw it at any moment. John could say to Gaius, "I desire that in all things thou shouldest prosper... even as thy soul prospers", 3 John 2. That was to be the standard, even as his soul prospered. O, dear brethren, let us see to it that what is vital relates

to soul prosperity, relates to the place that we have as before God and the place that we give to Christ.

Samuel would no doubt have had to do with, and seen, death constantly in the place in which he was; and constantly, in type, the death of Jesus would have been in his mind; that would have been the area, if one could speak carefully, upon which Samuel would have fed. Think of those offerings that were constantly to be presented, and Samuel would have had his part in seeing, if not actively engaged in, the sacrifices that were being offered to God, all pointing on to the perfect offering of Jesus. One thing that I feel the need of myself is to keep near to the death of Jesus, the One who offered Himself without spot to God. Think of the glory of the Man who went into death! Feed upon it, dear brethren; I speak to those of us who are younger, myself included: let us feed upon the death of Jesus. You will find that it becomes meat to the soul, meat to build up, meat to cause growth. So let us feed upon the death of Jesus, the One who went that way for God, that in Him every thought of God should be secured by His going into death and coming out of it victorious. As coming out of death everything was centred in Him.

Think of the One who was raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father. What glory was there! All the glory of God was secured, centred in Christ, a Man out of death. Dear brethren, how wonderful these things are, but let us feed upon them, because food is required for growth.

In Colossians Paul is encouraging the brethren to grow by the true knowledge of God. He says he had heard of their faith and love; there was that which had preceded. There is that, dear brethren, which we can be thankful for; others have laboured and we have entered into their labours. Think of what the Lord has done through this dispensation. Think of what He has brought down to the day in which we are. There has been constantly a fresh supply of grace from our glorious Head in heaven. How wonderful that is! Never at any point has the history of the testimony been left to continue on its own, it has always had divine supply - a wonderful thing to lay hold of. There are often times when we feel our weakness and smallness

in the place in which the Lord has set us but never at any time has the testimony been left to continue on its own; it has always had divine supply. It is a wonderful supply, limitless in its character but powerful too, able to sustain for God here upon earth what would speak to Him of Jesus and which is soon to be translated to be with Him eternally. Well, Paul prays "that ye may be filled with the full knowledge of his will". I do not know what one can say about these things but let us be enlarged in the full knowledge of His will. It does not only relate to ourselves circumstantially and to the way God would enter into those matters; it goes far beyond that - "the full knowledge of his will". That would relate to what God has in view for us in the time in which we are left here. His will which is operating, together with His ways, both serve His purpose, and we are to be filled with the full knowledge of *His* will. Paul adds "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding". This does not relate to what we can supply, but we can be filled with all wisdom. There is no need for lack in Christianity; what a wonderful thing that is! "But if any one of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all freely", James 1: 5. The provision of God is so bountiful in order that we should be established here in the testimony in the full knowledge of what God is doing in the day in which we are, so that we are not aimless in our assembly lives. How needful that is, that we have an aim before us, and in that sense we know what God has in view for us so that we are filled with the full knowledge of His will. So Paul says "so as to walk worthily of the Lord" - to walk worthily of the Lord. Our walk reflects where our heart is; we are to *walk* worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing. Persons may look at us in the world; they know what we are, but do we walk worthily of the Lord? How sobering these things are – is Christ reflected in my walk here? Is He reflected or is something else being reflected? Christ is to be reflected. Then we have "bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the true knowledge of God". Growing - a continual process. Our walk will soon be completed; it is a privilege to be able to walk worthily of the Lord in the day in which we are. It will not always be so; our walk will soon finish.

Enoch was a man upon whom we could write that he walked worthily of the Lord ; he "was not found, because God had translated him", Heb 11: 5. His walk was completed, but in the time in which he was here it was his privilege that Christ should be reflected. What revelations that man had in his walk here; he walked with God.

Think of a man like that in a day of smallness saying "the Lord has come amidst his holy myriads", Jude 14. Think of the glory that shone into Enoch's soul. There is nothing, dear brethren, that the Lord would keep from any one of us. He says "In my Father's house there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you: for I go to prepare you a place", John 14: 2. The Lord in that sense would not keep anything from us, and as we walk with Him there is room for divine disclosures. We are in a day when the Lord is providing divine disclosures. They are not to make us individualists; they belong in the place where the Lord treasures what is according to Himself. But He is making divine disclosures, and He would make them to you.

So Paul says "and growing by the true knowledge of God". It is a wonderful thing that the true knowledge of God is open to man. It has not always been so; it was not so in the same way in the past dispensation but it is so today. The greatest thing that we can have is the knowledge of God; let us lay hold of it. Those of us who are young may feel so small when we speak of the knowledge of God, and yet it is open to us. We know God in Jesus; how wonderful that is, that One who Himself is God came into manhood's condition to express God to man. "No one has seen God at any time; the onlybegotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him", John 1: 18. Why did the Son declare God? In order that God should be known and responded to by those who are accepted in Christ. Wonderful thing! In the same chapter we have "as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God... who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God" (vv 12,13). Born of God: let us lay hold of what God has done. What stability it brings into the soul. Trace back the work of God in your soul to what God has done; that will bring in stability which would cause us to grow in the true knowledge of God. He has begun the work and will complete it as we grow in

the knowledge of Him who has done it. May the Lord encourage us to give more place to the Spirit, to give more place to Christ, to feed upon the One who was here, who gave His life that the will of God and the purpose of God should be completely secured. May we feed upon Him, the One who went into death that we may come out like Him in the scene of testimony. May the Lord encourage us, for His name's sake.

MAIDSTONE

13 November 1976

THE CHILDREN'S WELFARE

God is the preserver of all mankind. The fact that He desires that all should be saved and know the truth shows how longingly He cares for our well-being. He is not willing that any should perish and today - the very day you are reading this - is the day of salvation. Most children have heard of the Niagara Falls where the mighty waters flow so fast over the rock-ledge that they leave a dry space underneath where people may walk. In those waters one winter a powerful eagle was feasting on a floating carcass, ready to fly off when danger should come. But, alas, its own feet had become frozen to the poor animal and it was too late to avoid perishing. Be warned therefore by the Proverb about a man "holden by the cords of his sin" and be sure of your eternal welfare now, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When God's earthly people Israel were about to enter the land of promise Moses bid them "take great heed to your souls". The children who had been in the desert were now growing up and were to be God's witnesses as well as enjoy His blessings. Therefore they had to be reminded of the words of truth which they had already heard. When we learn a language we try to think in it; in the same way we must learn to think in the language of the land of the living.

Only in this way can we "walk and please God". The Holy Spirit has been given to obedient believers for this very purpose.

Joseph - one of the young persons in Scripture who said "Here am I" - was sent to see after the welfare of his brethren. Actually it meant suffering for him but it was God's wise way of saving many persons alive. You will remember too that the sister of Moses when just a girl was a vital link in the life-chain of God's ways. She filled a part which no older person could fill in preserving the life of a babe so beautiful to God. David too when a youth was sent to his brethren to see how they were and God used him to deliver the whole of his fellow countrymen. These incidents prove how God is able to turn simple acts of care into great deeds for His own glory. Are you also ready for any little service?

J.C.Evershed