

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 59

February 1978

Contents

GOD'S FOUNDATION (i)

PAULINE FEELINGS

THE CHILDREN'S FORGIVENESS

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Psalm 87: 1-3 ; Isaiah 28: 16; 1 Peter 2: 1-10

E.P. One feels that we shall need peculiar grace and help to speak of Christ, especially in relation to this great and essential matter of holiness. Holiness is the area in which all is worked out to provide for God a foundation upon which He would rest, what is available to Him now in response and will be eternally, that area marked by the intrinsic character of what is holy, and provided in the Person and in the work of Jesus. I was thinking of the cross, where these foundations were provided; in Isaiah what they are, as it says, "a sure foundation"; then in Peter, the emphasis is on the Person in His own sphere, as being the One upon whom everything rests and of whom it says, "with God chosen, precious", that Living Stone - not the cross but the glory.

I wondered whether, if we sought the Spirit's help, we might get a fresh impression as to what was involved in providing for God such a foundation, His foundation - 'what He has founded', as the note to Psalm 87 says. It is most interesting that whilst the headings of the psalms are the occasion rather than the substance of the psalms yet they are there, and their aptness is irrefutable as being suited to those who are mentioned in the headings, whether it be David or these sons of Korah. I wondered whether the fact that this one is 'Of the sons of Korah', who no doubt would appreciatively enter into their vocal response in praise to God (for it is 'A Psalm. A Song'), would help us freshly to appreciate how it is that God is able to speak of His foundation, that it might lend tone and depth to the responses God has for Himself in the assembly.

G.W.E. Would this Psalm 87 flow out from Psalm 48? It speaks there of "the hill of his holiness" (v 1), and now this is the mountain. I wondered whether we would be getting to these heights and away from the plain.

E.P. I think that, because there is a holy elevation morally in all that was transacted by God with Christ at the cross, and resolved there

too. God was glorified in it, and the result is that this wonderful foundation is provided both in righteousness and in holiness. It is calculated to touch the heart of every believer, and Psalm 22 gives us some insight, that we may regard with holy feelings what entered into the soul of Jesus at such a time.

D.J.H. That psalm is addressed to the chief Musician, which links with 'A Psalm. A Song' here.

E.P. Quite so. what impresses me in that, as we find our own place on this foundation through infinite grace and God's sovereign mercy, we are free, in a depth of feeling wrought by the Spirit, to respond together to God in the service of praise under the hand of the chief Musician. Were you going to say more?

D.J.H. We ever keep before us the outlook, the end in view in all this, what is for God Himself, and in infinite grace our part in that.

E.P. This foundation is characteristically of tremendous depth. The figure used by God to help us to understand something of the direction of His own thinking would provide a sense of the depth that needs to be entered into if what God has in mind to rest upon it is actually to come into view. In man's world they go down and down for a foundation for a building, and the figure that the Lord uses for a man who hears His word and does it is that he "dug and went deep" (Luke 6: 48); but these are unfathomable depths as far as we are concerned, known alone to God and to Christ.

D.J.H. Would this enter into the doxology at the end of Romans 11: "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" and then the allusions there to His ways and His judgments?

E.P. That doxology is called forth by the manner in which God was able to bring together what naturally speaking was irreconcilable. He put them on a common platform of unbelief in order that on this foundation He might exercise His mercy; and the apostle breaks out: "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways! ... For of him, and through him, and for him are all things; to him be glory for ever. Amen". It is beautiful, is it not? I wondered too whether

springing from this would be the doxology in Ephesians 3, which takes the soul upon wholly spiritual ground, so that there is "glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages". But I think we would enlist the help of our brethren in regard to this holy matter, so that our souls may be impressed afresh as to what has been involved. There is something here that can be spoken of as His foundation.

A.T. Is there something for us to learn from what the Psalmist says: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God"? I was thinking of what you said as to Ephesians, and there is other ministry such as John's. Glorious things have been spoken about this city; the Spirit has spoken them to us through these vessels right down the ages, has He not?

E.P. Yes; are you thinking of what is said in Revelation, for example, as to the city?

A.T. Yes, and of what we were saying just now as to the doxology in Ephesians.

E.P. "O city of God"; the focus is really on what is 'of God'. We were instructed, and helped too, this past week in the ministry meeting as to viewing what is for God and what centres in Christ, and to have that pre-eminently before our minds and hearts. Blest indeed we are, and deeply thankful to be so. But I wondered whether the Spirit might detain us, and the experience of the dear brethren might be called into tribute, to provide on this occasion some impressions as to this foundation that is in the mountains of holiness.

C.R.B. Had you in mind that the reference to the mountains would show how cast we are upon the Spirit of truth to think rightly as to all that was involved in the cross and in the tomb?

E.P. That is just it; it is a tremendous matter, and by the Spirit's service we can appreciate something of it. Some of the details as to what was entered into, as viewed from our side, we can know of because of our need as sinners, but what happened in that transaction, viewed from the divine side, God alone can fully know.

C.R.B. Do you think that whilst the Spirit of God would deepen us in the sense of God's feelings as to sin, the great matter really that shines out at the cross is that God is love?

E.P. Hence the reference to holiness, because God's love is necessarily a holy love.

E.M.W. You could never think of any foundation for God if every moral issue were not resolved. All would need to be in accord with His attributes and His nature.

E.P. How important that is; if it were otherwise no one could ever be sure, but because it is not otherwise the issues that relate both to His righteousness and His holiness have been gone into in detail by God with Christ and resolved there on the cross.

R.E.T. Has that to be linked up in our souls with the foundation so that there is in the soul a state where this holiness and righteousness is able to go forward? Has it not been said that if you do not know Romans you will never know Ephesians?

E.P. I am sure that this foundation does enter into the soul, and is appreciated as being received on the principle of faith; it is appreciated and realised more by the service of the Spirit, and that is what we are seeking to get at, that this foundation that is so altogether suitable and adequate for the greatness of God's thoughts to rest on might be laid hold of by us.

C.R.B. This foundation is primarily for God, is it not?

E.P. I thought that. Would you enlarge that for us.

C.R.B. Mercy brings us into the gain of it, but the setting here is what is for God: "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion". I think there are depths about the work of Christ which we need peculiar help on, perhaps from John's gospel, to see how it is for God. The greatest thoughts are related to what is for God Himself, are they not?

E.P. So in the verse in Isaiah God says that He lays the foundation; and then in Peter it is on that foundation that there is a spiritual house, a living structure, in which God can be served in a way that is

acceptable to Him. But that structure is consistent with the foundation upon which it rests.

S.D.K.R. It says in Psalm 22 "And thou art holy" (v 3). The One who spoke that, applying it to the Lord, would have an infinite knowledge of the holiness of God, and so it would be met.

E.P. I think it has been said that Jesus knew as crucified that the holiness of God required that He should be there. That really views that transaction entirely apart from us, which is a very solemn, holy, and blessed thing; and this is the foundation that I believe God would bring to our attention today, and help us to see what He rests in. He will entrust everything for His pleasure to that foundation because it is a tried, a proved foundation.

A.A.B. Do you think what passed between Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 would have any bearing in a typical way upon what is in your mind?

E.P. Very much; I am glad that you have referred to that. Perhaps you would help us as to it.

A.A.B. The mountain that was shown to Abraham was in the land of Moriah, and that became the foundation of the house. It must have been one of the mountains of holiness. There are depths there involving the Person of Christ, all that He is and was to God in manhood, and the preciousness of that order of manhood. He was devoted in death, so that in the transaction He "descended into the lower parts of the earth" (Eph 4: 9), whatever that may mean.

E.P. Well, one thing it certainly means is that depth is connected with it. 'Deeper far than thought can reach' (hymn 298). How appropriate that is!

C.R.B. Would you connect this with what the Lord says in John 13: "God is glorified in him" (v 31)?

E.P. Do you mean that God was glorified in the Person of Christ at the cross?

C.R.B. Yes, it is connected with the Son of man involving God's widest thoughts as to man; but "God is glorified in him" is viewing the

whole of that tremendous matter as relating to God Himself, do you think?

E.P. Quite so; it is that side of the truth that one would like to emphasise, or at least I trust the Spirit would emphasise and use our conversation to deepen in our souls. When Jesus was crucified and said "It is finished" (John 19: 30) all was finished for God; all that was necessary in regard to that which raised its head against Him was met. But then it was necessary that He should go into death to meet the penalty that lay upon the creature, and this He did, and glorified God in doing it, so that conditions of life that would be answering to the living God might be found in those who took advantage of what was accomplished there.

F.N.S. And providing a basis upon which there could be praises in which He could dwell, a people with whom He could dwell, in complete harmony with what He is, in His own essential nature, for He is holy.

E.P. It is wholesome for us to bear that in mind all the time. I believe that the sense of it, and maybe some impression that the Spirit would leave upon our spirits today, would make us the more aware in every detail of our movements that God is holy.

E.C.M. Would you think there might be a connection between the prophetic reference in Jonah, "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains" (chap 2: 6), and the mountains of holiness here? I was thinking of what has been referred to, "the lower parts of the earth". Jonah refers to "the bars of the earth" and then to his prayer coming into the holy temple.

E.P. Quite so; but in the depths Jonah was heard in God's holy temple.

G.W.B. In stressing the holiness, and the depth of the foundation, are you thinking of the depth of suffering in Psalm 22, and in the end of the gospels?

E.P. That is an integral part of all that was involved, not only physical suffering but what He suffered in His spirit. Mr Darby speaks of that

'abyss of His sufferings' (see Synopsis Vol. 3, p. 189). These spiritually-minded men were able, by the Spirit's power, to frame words which convey to us something of the depths of the suffering into which Jesus entered, so that God might have this foundation that He claims as His own, His foundation.

J.W. Would the depths of the Lord's sufferings be seen in the fact that He Himself was holy in undergoing the suffering?

E.P. Yes, I think that intensifies the matter for us. What can we say about that word where it says, "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us", 2 Cor 5: 21? "Thy Holy One" is referred to in the Psalm (16: 10).

D.E.B. Does the Lord's precious blood enter into what you have in mind? I was thinking of what is for God, the foundation that God can build upon in relation to the blood on the lintel and also on the mercy-seat; it is what God took account of.

E.P. Yes, and the blood on the mercy-seat has particular reference to God speaking with the people. The blood on the lintel and the two doorposts would be provided to protect His people, those who took advantage of its shelter when the destroyer passed through. The blood was not only put on the mercyseat but was sprinkled before the mercy-seat so that, in virtue of that precious blood, God was able to meet and speak with the people; but from their side there was an approach to Him that was equal to the manner in which He moved out to them.

S.D.K.R. Is there an answer in Psalm 20: 6: "he answereth him from the heavens of his holiness, with the saving strength of his right hand"? Does the resurrection show that the mountain of His holiness has been established?

E.P. Yes it does. The resurrection of Christ is the witness that what Jesus entered into death to do is done. That is very strengthening; it will never need to be done again. The foundation for God is established, and established for ever. I wondered whether you would say more as to the meeting of God's attributes for us in this transaction.

E.M.W. I was thinking of His righteousness and His majesty which had to be met, and God glorified in it; and holiness links with His nature too, does it not? Jesus was equal to that, Himself being absolutely and infinitely righteous and holy. Being who He was He was able to maintain everything in righteousness and holiness for God's glory.

E.P. And you would say that if God were to have what His purpose designed He would need to rest on such a foundation, where every element of unrighteousness and unholiness had been met and conclusively dealt with by One competent to do it.

E.M.W. Hence it is not something established by arbitrary power but on a moral foundation. I suppose there will be witness to that in the universe.

E.P. So as we seek by the Spirit's help to lay hold of these things, to apprehend them (we can never comprehend them) it fortifies the soul to stand in the truth in the presence of any and every kind of opposition. Mr Taylor said that we would welcome anyone who desired to look into the legality, that is the rightness, of what believers are committed to. (See Vol. 47 p. 443: Vol. 41 p. 458). So it must be right and consistent with God's nature.

E.M.W. Do you think that may be one reason that the following verse says "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob"? The gates of Zion would be established, as you have said, legally, the rightness of them would be clear.

E.P. Someone once said that on the day of Pentecost Peter stood in the gates of Zion; that is, that in Christ risen and glorified there was established a basis on which he could announce the disposition of God at that time.

E.M.W. Was that the burden of the Lord's desire in John 17? He addresses Him firstly as "Holy Father", and then as "Righteous Father", that we may be kept in these conditions whilst He was away.

E.P. We certainly would desire to be kept in those conditions. Occupation with the Person of the Lord and, as far as we are able,

with what was involved in His work, will have that effect. It is not done by determination of mind or by knowing what is in the Bible; it is done by a link in communion with the Person. Of course we must ever remember that there was that which entered into this transaction that was inscrutable. Genesis 22 was referred to: they left the young men behind; Abraham said they would "come again", but "they went both of them together" (v 6). We are let into something of the tender and reciprocal feelings of love that entered into that relationship, in the conversation that the Spirit records, but there is something that goes beyond the ken of man in what transpired at the cross. But it is there, and the foundation is there, thank God.

E.H.W. Although it is inscrutable in Genesis 22, God says to Abraham, "on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (v 2). Would He open this kind of thing out to us now?

E.P. I think that, and Mr Bellamy has reminded us that that mountain was where the foundation of the house was.

C.R.B. Do you think the mountain of transfiguration would enter into this? The disciples were being prepared for what the Lord was about to do, and they received an impression of the Father's delight in that Man. He was the only One who could take on that work, the One in whom the Father's delight rested. Then when Peter refers to it in his letter he says it was "the holy mountain", and that they were "with him", 2 Pet 1: 18. Do you think we are brought into that holy area where we can be with Christ in the presence of God as conscious that everything has been done for the delight of the Father?

E.P. That is exceedingly blessed; and I think we need help, maybe in secret, to dwell and to rest our affections and our thoughts as controlled upon this holy subject, because it has an effect upon us. It is subduing, and it has the effect of setting aside any natural thought as to ourselves and magnifying the Person of Christ to our hearts. These are practical things that result; we want to prove them more.

A.A.B. Peter and those for whom he spoke in John 6 were not caught in the ebb tide, were they? I was thinking of his words to the

Lord: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal; and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God" (vv 68, 69). Therein lay the secret of Peter and those with him being held at that juncture - the apprehension of Christ as "the holy one of God".

E.P. Quite so. Do you think it distinguishes for us the blessedness of His work and the glory of the Person who did the work. Those two things are intimately linked but they are to be distinguished.

F.C.M. It is interesting in that connection that in Genesis 22, referred to earlier, firstly it is, "Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh", 'Jehovah will provide'; then it adds, "as it is said at the present day, On the mount of Jehovah will be provided". Is that not like what we have just had before us as to the holy mount, the present contemplation of the Person who did the work as supreme on the mountain of divine provision?

E.P. Quite so, and He is supreme among us now. Let our hearts open like the flowers open to the sunshine, let our hearts open to Him; He is supreme among us now because of who He is.

J.B. Would the understanding in some sense of holiness help us to maintain the standard? There is a tendency to lower the standard universally, but the understanding of holiness would help us to maintain the standard of what is due to God.

E.P. I am sure it would. We would say very definitely that there was no lowering of the standard at the cross. That word in John has often touched my heart, when the Lord said "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?"; there is a question mark behind that. Then, "Father, save me from this hour" (chap 12: 27); there is no question mark behind that. He does not say, Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? but "Father, save me from this hour". All that entered into His holy soul in anticipation of what He was about to endure. Then He says "Father, glorify thy name".

H.C.H. Does that give meaning to what He says to Philadelphia, "These things saith the holy, the true", Rev 3: 7?

E.P. Yes, He is the Holy One of God; and everybody who has a link with Him is to be consistent with that holiness. It is an inexhaustible theme, but in Isaiah 28 God says, in the presence of what is scornful in the nation and in the presence of arrogance and pride, that there are those who say "We have made a covenant with death" (v 15). What presumption and futile pride that is! But God says "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I lay for foundation in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that trusteth shall not make haste". How Peter must have delighted to take up these words, and to know where the foundation is, and its character. Where the foundation is was established in the mountains of holiness, but the Stone was laid in Zion, and the character of it is that it is a sure foundation. God will trust everything, and has done, to this foundation. Our Lord Jesus Christ is both the foundation and the completion of all that God has.

D.E.B. Would you say something about the use of the words "in Zion", how exactly Zion stands related to that. It reads as though Zion existed before the foundation stone.

E.P. Do you not think that it would stand in relation to God's sovereignty in regard of the nation, because it says in the psalm that He waked out of sleep and dealt with the enemies and He "chose... the mount Zion which He loved" (Ps 78: 68); that is, it was His sovereignty in doing it; and then He chose David. So the area in which God was working these things out was sovereignly chosen by God, and the person was sovereignly chosen by God. But I wondered if by way of application Zion would represent for us the intervention of God in sovereign mercy that He might secure for Himself what His heart desired, a moral and spiritual area of things. Of course, He has intervened in Christ, and there He has put this stone and it is still available.

E.C.M. I wondered how you would bring Ephesians into this. We are "chosen... in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love", chap 1: 4. That could not be possible apart from the foundation having been laid.

E.P. No; the actual bringing of that to pass needed the foundation but the fact of it lay in the purpose of God.

C.R.B. Is this in Isaiah really a reference to the High Priest, the One by whom the purposes of God are brought into fulfilment? Peter gives us the whole priestly system but this is really the High Priest Himself, is it not? The thought of holiness is peculiarly linked with the garments of Aaron, the high priest. Do you think this precious corner stone, a sure foundation, is a reference to Christ in all His distinctiveness, as setting on the whole service of God as purposed by God Himself?

E P. That is most helpful because it forms a direct link with Peter calling this scripture into tribute to encourage those saints of the dispersion. They would understand that kind of reference.

H.W. It is noticeable that it speaks of a foundation well-founded; it is something to get hold of.

E.P. Are you satisfied with it?

H.W. I do not want any other. I was thinking of the holy mount when the Father intervened: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight : hear him", Matt 17: 5. There is no other we want to hear, is there?

E.P. Quite so. I am glad you refer to 'well-founded', because to my mind that conveys that no detail of what was required was overlooked. Every detail that any intelligence could ever raise was gone into and settled, and every requirement that God ever needed was gone into. It was well-founded, so well-founded that it will remain for eternity.

A.T. Does that link on with a tried stone? How He was tried in everything, sin apart, but He came through absolutely perfect, His holiness not marred in one detail in bearing the whole sin of the world.

E.P. Yes. When things are tested they are tested to show the worth of what is there, not to show the defects. In men's things the defects

may show up under test, but when God puts anything under test, firstly it is to show the worth of what is there.

A T. There were no defects ever in that Man.

E.P. No, but how the worth of that glorious Person came out, satisfying to God! Therefore He is a foundation well-founded. Reference was made to what is in the soul of the believer, and until a foundation of righteousness is established in the soul he knows nothing of the love of God to enjoy it in its liberty. Righteousness has to be there, but it can be had on the principle of faith, and the faith is in this Person.

E.C.M. How does holiness come out in us? I am thinking of the passage, "Holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord", Heb 12: 14.

E.P. I thought that holiness was promoted by the present service of the Spirit. Righteousness is established on the principle of faith but holiness is promoted by the present service of the Spirit, and that service relates to occupation with Christ. What do you say?

E.C.M. I entirely go with that. There is no such thing as holiness by faith; it is by the Spirit that we are formed in the divine nature.

E.P. It is most important to say that, and to stand by it together, because it is the truth.

D.J.H. Does the Supper help us to keep it freshly before us? I was thinking of a man proving himself, and it speaks there of the solemn fact of being guilty concerning the body and the blood of the Lord (see 1 Cor 11: 27). I wondered whether practically the Supper would help us as having Him before us, and presenting Himself to us living, and yet the One who has died.

E.P. Yes I think that. Proving oneself would be antecedent to the partaking of the Supper. The proving might not only mean a searching out of anything I may have allowed that was inconsistent with the death of Christ (I might have allowed something for which He had to die in order to set it aside, and if I allow it, it really is an affront to God), but there is also the proving of oneself in the sense

of what God has done in the provision of such an One; and such a sacrifice, both the blood and the water linked with the death of Jesus, the blood remaining there in all its efficacy, never to be re-applied, but the water available, that is His death, to bring it in power into my soul by the Spirit to terminate the thing that is offensive.

D.J.H. I wondered if the proving is not like the trying here, bringing forth the worth of what is there, but in us it can only be on the basis of the depths to which He has been in laying the foundation.

E.P. Quite so. It does not say in that scripture, 'Prove himself and then let him eat'. It says "and thus eat"; that is, attention is drawn to the moral state of the person who eats, not the time.

C.R.B. In our experience as the Lord is in the midst following the partaking of the loaf and the cup, do we come into the gain of what He says, "I sanctify myself for them", John 17: 19?

E.P. That scripture goes on, "that they also may be sanctified by truth". Will you say some more.

C.R.B. It is a very penetrating matter, to be conscious that we have a glorious Person in the midst who is infinitely holy and is in the presence of the Father that we might be maintained in sanctification. The very experience of that is to help us to be strengthened in holy feelings as to every matter that may come up after the Supper.

E.P. As He manifests Himself in the midst it helps us to understand how that it is "through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father", Eph 2: 18. That scripture is often used but I sometimes say to myself, I wonder if I really appreciate the import of that word.

C.R.B. So the actual experience, by the Spirit, of the Lord being in the midst is to govern us in every detail of our lives, that Christ must have the first place and everything must be arranged in relation to Him, do you think?

E.P. I am sure that it is right. The test is in its application. Do you think that the contemplation of these mountains of holiness would help us to accord to Him what is absolutely right and consistent?

C.R.B. It is only as we are inwardly spiritually strengthened as to what is right that we shall have power by the Spirit to do anything that is practically right.

C.C.I. In the first reference to Zion in the Scriptures it says that David took the stronghold and called it the city of David: and then it says, "David built round about from the Millo and inward", 2 Sam 5: 9. Is that what the Lord is doing, building inwardly what is in accord with the foundation?

E.P. Are you thinking that that 'inwardly' would be in the individual, and also in the saints as seeking to walk in the light of the assembly?

C.C.I. Yes, because holiness is not by faith; it is to do with the Lord's active, personal work by the Spirit in the souls of the saints, both collectively and in unity with one another.

E.P. Yes. Now Peter speaks of living stones, showing that we are linked on personally with Christ, but together with Him in relation to what is for God. There is what is laid aside as well as what is appropriated, and then it says, "To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". Now that is a together idea, as the identity of each spiritually is established.

E.C.M. Would you say something more about the spiritual house and the spiritual sacrifices.

E.P. It stands over against everything that is material, and it is quite revealing to one's own heart as to the power and the place that what is material has. I think the experience of smallness in various localities has helped us away from the idea of what is material, and helped us into the value of what is spiritual. So the spiritual house would be over against the material idea, and the spiritual sacrifices over against what was provided in a previous economy. After all, Peter is writing to the sojourners of the dispersion who would understand these things. What do you say?

E.C.M. I am sure what you say is right. "To whom coming", that is the Person; He is outside of everything here.

E.P. This spiritual house takes shape, it seems, on the principle of attraction to Christ; it is not exactly that we do any building, or that we do anything by way of spiritual exercise in relation to the moral side of things; it is that we come: "To whom coming". The power of attraction in Him, the Living Stone, finds an answer in those in whom God has wrought, which appears in this spiritual house. If God has provided this sure foundation, He has done it for Himself. That helps us to see the greatness and the grandeur of what has been effected in the death of Christ.

W.T.A. Does it mean that God has secured this, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, and He has produced a holy temple in the Lord, and there is a habitation for Him, "a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph 2: 22) where He can dwell? All is in relation to Him and His glory and His counsels and purposes, what He will bring in for His pleasure.

E.P. It is; and what is in this spiritual house is suitable to God, and the character of what is there is living and therefore suitable to the living God.

P.M. I was thinking of that scripture just quoted: "in whom all the building" (Eph 2: 21), and of what is fitted together: "the whole body, fitted together", Eph 4: 16. You were saying earlier as to Christ having the central place in our affections: do we not find that in God's house He has the central place? God has centred everything around Him, the Man of His choice.

E.P. Quite so. It is interesting that this verse 6 is quoted from the scripture in Isaiah we referred to: "Behold, I lay in Zion a corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be put to shame". Now the corner stone is the stone from which everything else takes its line and perspective - what a word that is for us! This is what God has done and we would like to take our line and perspective from the corner stone that God Himself has put in Zion. It makes a tremendous difference to people's practical lives.

A.T. Is there a way into this given here? In the first verse we get away from one line of things, and then we "desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word" - "if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good". If we have tasted we get inward sustenance and power to come into these things. Once we have tasted that the Lord is good, all these other things as to the world and materialism fall into their place.

E.P. And the positive side of that is "To whom coming"; that is, coming all the time. If you are coming to a person you have that person in focus.

A.T. And are you eating all the time? It says 'tasted'; you keep tasting, you come and get something more to refresh your appetite.

E.P. Spiritual food is part of the provision of the administration of the city.

F.N.S. Immediately after the expression "To whom coming" it is "a living stone", and then later "as living stones". Is not that a wonderful thing, that there is an affinity between those of us who come and the One to whom we come? And there is not only the idea of a house but a priesthood which functions in the house, the same persons, a holy priesthood.

E.P. Yes, it is a wonderful affinity. Could you tell us where that affinity lies?

F.N.S. Does it spring out of His death and resurrection?

E.P. Yes, I suppose that must be right. Do you think it might lie also in the appreciation of who the Person is? I was thinking for example of the revelation that Peter had, when the Lord Jesus said to Him "flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens. And... I say unto thee that thou art Peter", Matt 16: 17,18. Peter means 'a stone', he was a living stone. The rock referred to there is what was laid in the soul of Peter in relation to the Person of Christ. We spoke earlier about what was in the souls of people. That was in the soul of Peter, an appreciation of who was there, revealed to him by the Father.

B.W.W. Is that confirmed by verse 7: "To you therefore who believe is the preciousness"? That is, He is peculiarly and uniquely precious to God, but to those of us who believe He is precious as well, and that is part of God's objective.

E.P. I think that. How delightful it must be to the Father to find that what He values as precious is valued as precious by the saints! And it is such a contrast; it speaks about "cast away indeed as worthless" in verse 4, and then in verse 7, "the stone which the builders cast away as worthless". Why should it say that twice, taking up space in the holy writings? It is an indictment against man, that he has in a calculated manner viewed the Person of the Lord Jesus and said virtually, He will not do for our system. He has no place in that Babylonish system; but He is precious, and the preciousness is there in the saints.

E.H.W. I was thinking of what was suggested earlier from John 6: 68, "Lord, to whom shall we go?". Peter was one of those who came to Him, but in effect he says, I am not going away.

E.P. It has tremendous repercussions in people's lives. There is the word to God's people to come out of Babylon "that ye have not fellowship in her sins", Rev 18: 4. That is a very solemn thing - partnership with them, Are we going to have partnership with people who regard the Person of Christ and say that He will not do?

E H.W. Those that did go away and no more walked with Him in John 6 regarded Him in that sense as worthless as far as they were concerned.

E.P. It is persons who ostensibly would build up something. It says "the stone which the builders cast away", persons who would build up something; but the Person who is precious to God is not suitable for their construction. This has a most sanctifying effect upon those who love Him.

A.A.B. That helps us to sustain the public reproach. The word "yourselves also" follows the word "precious". It would seem to apply to the saints. In the Lamentations the sons of Zion are referred to as "so precious", chap 4: 2. They were depreciated in Jeremiah's

time, but the idea of preciousness is in those that were born in her, is it not?

E.P. Quite so. Do you think that in that Psalm (87) "this man was born there" (v 4) might be some reference to Christ?

A.A.B. I suppose it is primarily. But I wondered too if the order of manhood is not extended to the saints, and the liberty which is known is that of those who are free born.

D.E.B. It says in verse 5 of that Psalm, "This one and that one".

E.P. Yes, that is right. All the other cities referred to in that Psalm bring themselves forward but they do not compare with Zion.

C.R.B. Is the working out of it put very simply here? To be in accord with the Corner Stone, it says "he that believes on him". The note to that is 'reliance on; confidence in; the mind looking to another with trust'. We ought to be very simple about these things, for it is just as believing in Him by the Spirit that we are kept in accord with Him.

E.P. That is beautiful. On that principle the believer, whatever the capacity, is embraced in the greatest things.

R.A. Why does Peter mention the service of God in this section? It reads: "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". Then in verse 9: "a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, that ye might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness. " What is the difference?

E.P. You probably have some impression yourself.

R.A. I was thinking that in being built up we are every one in our place under the direction of the Minister of the sanctuary in relation to the service. We are called into that service in living conditions as priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices, in that first section. Do you think so?

E.P. I do. The service of God is under the direction of Christ all the time; we take from Him the impulse for what may be accorded to God. I wondered whether this dual reference is that the first is

essentially what is ministered to God, the spiritual sacrifices, and the latter, "But ye are a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession", would be what the saints are as rightly representing God. So it says "that ye might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light". They are persons who have found mercy; and behind God's mercy, as the apostle Paul teaches us, is His love: "God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith he loved us", Eph 2: 4.

The second reference would be the way that the saints are to represent God. How He delights in them, "a people for a possession"! They are His possession. What do you think?

R.A. It is good to think of it that way. The setting forth of the excellencies of Him who has called us out : it is lovely to think that we are in that position, as in the service. We would desire to bring out something of the excellency of the Person to set Him forth, do you think?

E.P. Yes, I am sure that is right.

REDBRIDGE

3 June 1977

Key to initials

R.A. - R.Adams, Toronto; W.T.A. - W.T.Abbott, London; A.A.B. – A.A.Bellamy, Buckhurst Hill; C.R.B. - C. R. Byng, London; D.E.B. - D.E.Burr, Redbridge; G.W.B. - G.W.Brown, Barnet; J.B. - J.Bell, Sydney; G.W.E. - G.W.Easton, Redbridge; D.J.H. - D.J.Hutson, London; H.C.H. - H.C.Hatcher, Kingston; C.C.I. - C.C.Ikin, Southend; E.C.M. - E.C.Muggleton, Croydon; F.C.M. - F.C.Mutton, Redbridge; P.M. - P.Martin, Colchester; E.P. - E.Palmer, London; S.D.K.R. - S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon; F.N.S. - F.N.Stickland, Redbridge; A.T. - A.Thomas. Gillingham; R.E.T. - R.E.Turner, St Albans; B.W.W. - B.W.Ward, London E.H.W. - E.H.Wakefield, Sunbury; E.M.W. -

E.M.Walkinshaw, Gillingham; H.W. - H.Wilkinson, Manchester; J.W. -
J.Wright, Redbridge.

PAULINE FEELINGS

A.J.E.Welch

Acts 20: 25; Philippians 2: 19-22; 1 Timothy 6: 20, 21

The Pauline ministry is full of deep and holy feelings, richly expressive of the Spirit of Christ in the minister, but there are certain passages in the writings of Paul which are specially expressive of feeling, showing how deeply the beloved writer is engaged with Christ and the things of Christ. Specially deep are his feelings that stand related to the continuing in faithfulness and at its height of the testimony, so precious, in which he himself stood. I wanted from these scriptures, which engage us with particularly feeling times in Pauline service, to raise the question of continuing and how the testimony shall go on, and how any one of us - yea, every one of us - is to be occupied in it.

These dear brethren from Ephesus, called over to receive this remarkable address from Paul, must have known him, as was said in one of the readings, with peculiar intimacy. According to what he says, he had been in every house - "publicly and in every house". How well Paul would be known in Ephesus among believers! They had come under the appeal of what Paul was and what he presented to them. Now the time has come when he has to say that they would see his face no more, a feeling reference because he does not just say that they would not see him again; he says that they "shall see my face no more". How expressive the face of Paul would be! What feelings would be conveyed in the way in which Paul was among them, "publicly", as he says, "and in every house". They would have seen the remarkable measure of this beloved servant and been affected by it; but it would never happen thus again. So, what is the answer to be? Is the testimony in Ephesus to be laid down? Is the testimony in any place to be laid down? Is the testimony in London or Edinburgh to be laid down? Is it in any sense to be brought below the heavenly level which the Spirit has helped us to see to belong to this precious testimony of the Christ? That is the challenge in every

place and for every one of us. One thinks of the Pauline labours and the manner of them. What Paul had in his heart - the glory of the Person who had spoken to him on the Damascus road and reached deep into his conscience and his affections, the Christ who had become so deeply precious to that beloved man. But then, as he was helped to see, there was the precious vessel that answers to Christ's heart, the assembly. He received by revelation an understanding of the mystery, involving the preciousness of the vessel, a creature vessel withal, but a vessel so precious to Christ and uniquely necessary for the satisfaction of His affections, according to the Father's thoughts for Him. It was a vessel in which the testimony would be set in its course down here until the Lord should come and take up the testimony in its glory as He appears. All this was in the heart of Paul, that in every place in which he served there would be something that answered to Christ in the assembly. Have we any lesser level of objective than that, beloved brethren? We rightly have Christ enshrined in our hearts in glory that is uniquely His own, being who He is and being what He is in the glory of manhood. We have that Person enshrined in our hearts and seek, as grace is given us, to serve in undividedness of purpose for Him; and there is what is within our immediate reach in our several local companies in which that service can find expression. That is how Paul would have gone into Ephesus; he would see that Christ had something there that answered to Himself, and he would seek to further that, to strengthen it, to bring to light the true glory of it, to see that no-one missed their way in relation to the characteristic point of this wonderful time of the Spirit, the assembly secured for Christ. How untiringly he laboured! As he says, "serving the Lord with all lowliness, and tears, and temptations" (v 19), serving "night and day" (v 31). What a standard! And yet these men would see his face no more. What would this mean to them? How would they continue from this point on? They had received a precious trust under the hand of Paul, the precious testimony into which God had called them, and they would stand and continue in it; that was the intention. But they would needfully go forward without Paul. How he must have felt it, as to those that were so well known to him and in whom, thank God, the

truth had come into such rich and definite expression, that he would not see them again. That is why I speak of this as a most feeling moment in the course of the Pauline service. So that things change. I am seeking to bring out from this that we cannot expect just to go on relying upon others or relying upon support that has been proved in the past. You young men cannot expect to go on indefinitely just depending on those who are older. We thank God for the fathers. I trust you thank God for the fathers, from whom you learn so much in the grace of Christ in the expression of the truth; but the time will arrive, if the Lord does not first come, when you will be necessary for the testimony in the fullest and most definite sense, to bear responsibility. This is in mind in these men, these elders from Ephesus; they would stand in the bearing of responsibility in the assembly. Paul is committing a precious charge to them in view of his departure, and I believe the Lord would awaken us to the need of readiness to accept responsibility in interests so peculiarly precious. Let us each ask ourselves as we sit here to-day, Is the testimony in the locality to which I belong in any sense to fail? Is the level of it to be reduced? Is there to be any loss of the true lustre that belongs to a heavenly testimony, relating to a heavenly Christ and a vessel that is heavenly in origin and destiny? Is that to be weakened or reduced in level one bit? - that is the challenge. Hearts faithful to Christ would respond immediately. That is not to be. And, therefore, you young men and young women are needed, greatly needed, not as spectators of what is happening, for which others stand responsible, but as being yourselves responsible in respect of the divine interests in the place where God has set you. That is the appeal and the challenge of the moment. They would not see Paul again, and yet the testimony in Ephesus was to continue. Alas, we know that there was a failing, a falling from first love, but this does not in any way diminish the point of the Pauline service and feelings, and the answer that was intended to be secured from the Pauline labours. Those labours, in the spirit and character of them, have entered, thank God, into this time of revival in which we are, and as we enjoy so much together in Edinburgh in these present days, under God's loving hand, we owe a great deal to those who have gone on before

us. But the time had to come when one by one those who have helped us in the course of the truth have gone to be with the Lord Jesus, and there have been those left upon whom the responsibility has devolved of maintaining the testimony of God until the Lord comes. Let none of us fail in this! It is an immediate challenge, not a deferred challenge but an immediate one, which I seek to bring out of this scripture to-day.

As he wrote to the Philippians, Paul was pained in heart. He well knew the saints in Philippi. Not only had he laboured amongst them, but God had used his labours to set up the company in Philippi, and he is free to unburden his heart to these dear Philippian brethren. One would covet to be amongst those to whom Paul would unburden his heart, those to whom Paul could entrust something of his own feelings; but he has to say at this point, "I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on". What an affecting reference: "I have no one likeminded". Think of all those that Paul had companied with; yet it seems that at this time, whatever the circumstances were in which he wrote, he was painfully conscious that, save for Timothy, he had no-one like-minded. Is Paul to be without anyone likeminded in any local company represented here? Is any one of us going to allow to pass such a reference as this? Am I not like-minded with Paul? Do I cherish objectives less than Paul cherished? Do I not know the same Christ, the same glorious Person on high? Have I not some appreciation of the same assembly that Paul so loved to serve? Are we like-minded with Paul? This is something in which the sisters have a very rich part, because it was a sister who was largely instrumental at first in making Paul welcome at Philippi. You can understand how Lydia would be like-minded with Paul characteristically. I do not know where Lydia was at the time in which he wrote this letter to the Philippian saints, but I have little doubt that Paul would think of Lydia and the reception he had gained there and the way that the Lord had opened her heart to attend to the things that he spoke. Is there any locality in which Paul would have to say that he has no one like-minded? Love for Christ, faithfulness to the Lord and to the truth would say, I must be like-

mindful with Paul; I am not content to let this Pauline course of things in the truth be diminished in the vigour and devotedness in which it shall be maintained. It is open to every one of us to come out in the proof of being like-minded with Paul; I believe that is a crucial matter in every place at the present time, brothers and sisters who are like-minded with Paul. How he felt the situation, feeling man as Paul was, a faithful labourer who had laboured long and hard to secure that which would richly answer to the heart of Christ. He has to say, "I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on". Notice the emphasis on *genuine feeling*. The saints are to be in our affections and held in our affections at the proper level of a heavenly people, and we are to labour at whatever may be necessary in that connection. He says, "For all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ". What a feeling comment! It should affect every heart here. One feels the need of the full effect of such a verse being found in one's own soul: "all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ". Are there any things which we are seeking outside of things that are Christ's? It is a very challenging word, for there are many things which we might seek, things that have a certain legitimacy about them, and yet they stand in the way of the things of Jesus Christ. Dear brethren, how precious are the things of Jesus Christ! I believe these days together would help us to have some fresh and right estimate of their preciousness. But Paul has a Timothy: "But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child a father, he has served with me in the work of the glad tidings. Him therefore I hope to send immediately". He has a Timothy. Is there a Timothy here to afford comfort to a Pauline heart? Is there a Timothy in every locality represented here who is concerned for the continuance of what is precious to Christ, ready to learn as a child with a father and to carry forward what has been carried already as a precious trust? Timothy was ready: "as a child a father, he has served with me in the work of the glad tidings". What it must have been to serve with Paul - an exercise that would not be without its searching, because Paul was, in a right sense, irrepressible. He would move on with the spirit of a man who at every point is deeply affected by that which he is there to be the exponent of, "the work of

the glad tidings". How vigorously Paul would take it up! Are we ready to move in vigour and definiteness, in purpose of heart? Are we going to hang back? Is anything in our localities to be left undone which needs to be done? The kind of person that the young man Timothy was would not allow such a challenge to pass by. He had feelings like-minded with his beloved father, Paul. It is one of the most moving features of the epistles and of New Testament scriptures to see the father and son relationship working out between Paul and Timothy - his true child, as he called him in one letter, and his beloved child, as he called him in the other letter. We thank God that in the localities that we know and love, there are fathers; very generally this is true, the fathers are there. The need at the present time may be for sons to come to light and to prove themselves; "Ye know", he says, "the proof of him". The proofs will come as the testimony continues.

I believe the Lord through this occasion would bring Timothy to light, and hence the enjoiner in the last scripture I read: "O, Timotheus, keep the entrusted deposit, avoiding profane, vain babblings". This is a direct appeal from a father to his son in the Lord; "O, Timotheus", he says - an exclamation of feeling, beseeching his beloved child in the Lord. This reaches right down in the Spirit to us. Am I going to be in any sense a child of Paul, to prove myself? He says, "O, Timotheus, keep the entrusted deposit". What is the entrusted deposit? The great extent of truth that has come out through the labours of Paul and the other apostles under the touch of a glorified Christ; the great extent of divine truth maintained in the Spirit and sustained at its true character. What a trust! No greater trust could there be than this. He says in another place, "Keep, by the Holy Spirit... the good deposit entrusted", 2 Tim 1: 14. Do we see what a trust enters into these days together? If we have enjoyed the truth, enjoyed the divine affections, enjoyed some sense of experience of heavenly things, how do we keep the good deposit entrusted? This is yours as a precious trust; it is mine as a precious trust. We have the full weight of Pauline appeal in the Spirit brought to bear upon us as we sit here this afternoon: "Keep the

entrusted deposit, avoiding profane, vain babblings, and oppositions of false-named knowledge" - of which, dear brethren, from various quarters there are plenty to be heard. The word is, "... of which some having made profession, have missed the faith". What a warning!

"Grace be with thee". The Lord would leave that word with us, that there may be grace from Him to work out what is Pauline in character under the touch of Christ and of the Spirit in every local company. It is that fruit for God might abound, even as it has abounded in Pauline times; it is yet to abound in these times so close to the end. May God bless the word, for His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

18 June 1977

THE CHILDREN'S FORGIVENESS

The apostle John when a very aged man wrote his first epistle to all believers, old and young, addressing them endearingly as "children". He was thankful that their sins were forgiven them for the sake of the name of Jesus. He also wrote particularly to the "little children" because they had known the Father. We ourselves too have learned, usually through our parents and elders, that our heavenly Father provides for all our needs and is the source of all our blessings. Quickly we realise that he looks for an answer in our full confidence and growing interest in the things that please Him.

Our greatest blessing and the spring of true joy is to dwell in the Father's affections and to respond thereto. The enjoyment is however lost if we disobey or displease Him, but repentance and forgiveness restore this and reveal a depth of love never before known. One glory of the glad tidings is that God can righteously forgive because of the completed work of Jesus whose blood shed at Golgotha is a perfect 'atonement' or covering. The words of Scripture written long before were then fulfilled, "then I restored that which I took not away".

An ancient game played in England and especially in a part of London now called Moorfields was to shoot a number of arrows, usually ten, through a hoop placed at some distance. If an archer missed with one arrow he was called a 'sinner' for missing the mark; if he missed with two or three or even with all ten he was still called just the same – a 'sinner'. Thus by one act of disobedience Adam became a sinner and needed salvation. The same Saviour who bore his sins is the One who was able to say of a certain repentant woman, "her many sins are forgiven". Her name is not given so that we can thankfully put our own name in: and we do not listen to persons who try to explain away the guilt of sin. Have you heard the comforting words from the Lord Jesus, as He said to another, "Child, thy sins are forgiven thee"?

J.C.Evershed