

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 62

May 1978

Contents

THE PRESENT YIELD FOR CHRIST

READINESS FOR CHANGE

THE EIGHTH DAY AND ONWARDS

THE CHILDREN'S FAITH

THE PRESENT YIELD FOR CHRIST

Ephesians 5: 25-27; 2 Corinthians 8: 16-24; John 17: 9, 10

C.R.B. One of the great services of the Spirit of God is to help us in relation to all that is yielding for Christ at the present time. The Father's decree has ensured that what is for the glory of Christ is going to be displayed very soon, but one of the greatest matters is what is for the glory of Christ now. It was by the determinate counsel of God that Christ was given up, taken by lawless hands, but it is by the same determinate counsel of God that what is for the glory of Christ is being strengthened, enriched and extended. In the very scene where once He was publicly rejected and scorned, the Spirit of God is acting so that there may be the glorifying of Christ. Christ Himself is wonderfully active in this; His Spirit is working within us to alert us to what Christ personally is doing. It is not yet the time for Christ's activities in relation to the putting of things right in the world; at the moment He is working in relation to the assembly, and saints are being deepened in the understanding of the wonder of the love of the Christ. It says where we have read in Ephesians 5, He "also loved the assembly, and has delivered ... himself up for it". So there is what is in view as to the whole assembly being secured in relation to the glory of Christ. The working out of it comes into the scripture in Corinthians; it is not limited to the universal thought of the assembly but is related to the working out of it in local assemblies which come under the touch of Christ in this way. The verses read in John would remind us of how, as the saints move in the liberty and dignity of sonship, there is fulfilled what Christ says: "I am glorified in them". It is a wonderful matter to affect us that in the hearts of those who love Jesus He is glorified.

As we think of the assembly, we would always be caused to wonder at the love of Christ, that He loved the assembly and has delivered Himself up for it. It is not here the giving up by the determinate counsel of God or the betrayal by one of the twelve, but this is Christ's own matter; He has delivered Himself up for it. All of us come into this personally, as it says at the beginning of the

chapter, "even as the Christ loved us and delivered himself up for us" (v 2). This would strengthen us to understand the wonder of the love of Christ in all its depth and fulness and inscrutability, that He loved the assembly and has delivered Himself up for it. It is a great appeal to our hearts that we might be in keeping with what Christ has so loved and loves in a constant unchanging way.

G.D.W. Do we need to have a deep sense of the grandeur and greatness of this large thought of the assembly before we can really understand how it applies to the local side?

C.R.B. That is important. These thoughts are so vast and wonderful that we need the Spirit's touch to help us to grasp the way that Christ is operating with a view to the assembly universally. In one sense there is only one assembly, and we need to see that before we can see glory working out in the assemblies.

G.D.W. I was thinking of Mr Darby's apprehension of this at the outset of the recovery, as we speak of it; I think we tend to lose sight of the greatness of this.

C.R.B. It is comforting and assuring to think of the time of display when the assembly will be seen as the holy city. It will not be local assemblies that will come out of heaven, it will be the assembly, but the glory of that is to hold our affections and lives.

C.F.D. The fact that it is presented here in such a way is to focus our attention at this moment exclusively on the assembly - "has delivered himself up for it" - as if the apostle is using leverage on our hearts to understand that in this setting the thought of Christ delivering Himself up was for 'it' as the object. Would this help us to understand how important and great the assembly is in the mind of Christ?

C.R.B. And to govern our interest and our prayers in relation to what is of supreme interest to Christ, which is the "present truth". When Peter speaks of Paul's ministry he says it is "the present truth" (2 Peter 1: 12), that is, the truth as to Christ and the assembly.

G.D.W. Why does it say 'it' - "Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it"? The feminine pronoun is used in Revelation but here it seems to be the quality of the assembly that is in mind.

C.R.B. It is a great vessel of glory, and Christ's love is seen in His delivering Himself up for it. His activities currently in relation to it are with a view to presenting the assembly as a vessel of glory to Himself. It comes into our experience essentially at the Supper when we are abstracted from all that is related to breakdown, and have the impression that Christ is just delighted to present the assembly to Himself glorious, but it is the fruit of His love that led Him to deliver Himself up for it.

E.E.H. You spoke of the determinate counsel. I was wondering if Abraham's desire to find a wife for Isaac would come into this thought. In Genesis 24 we have the Trinity in type - the Father and the Spirit, and then the bride for Christ is looked for.

C.R.B. That is very interesting. Behind all these things we discern the supremacy of the Father. Christ was operating in relation to that. We receive some impression of the delight of the Father in the operations of Christ in the way that the bringing of the assembly into being is related to the power of God when He wrought in the Christ in raising Him from among the dead. In the resurrection of Christ, as far as God was concerned, the assembly was raised and was complete. In our experience the gathering in of persons such as ourselves has continued, but the assembly was viewed by God as complete in relation to the surpassing greatness of His own power.

G.H. You quoted that verse, "That he might present the assembly to himself glorious"; in the word "present" there is a certain dignity, and also in "has delivered himself up".

C.R.B. Yes, a certain dignity and a certain complacency in the delight of Christ in what has been secured for His own heart. It is brought out here in relation to His own wonderful activities which are proceeding all the time, and yet it would be related too to the adorning service of the blessed Spirit, for the Spirit serves in relation

to the merging of individuals into this glorious thought of the assembly for Christ.

C.F.D. This thought of the assembly being complete is something that we need to have revived in our minds and in our affections. Do you think that the breaking of bread, the Supper, every week would serve to help us in this regard as viewing the loaf to see that while we are in days of brokenness there is the side that divine Persons are viewing the assembly as complete and it is all there! Just to get a fresh impress of this lifts us above these thoughts that so often occupy us as to the breakdown and the scattering.

C.R.B. We would increasingly feel what it means to God that public breakdown has come in in such a wide way; our own hearts' sorrows and experiences enter into that and that would continue. It is something like Paul's yearning after the people of Israel that they might come into blessing. We would be held rightly in relation to that. But then do not let us fall below the glory of God's own thoughts, what God is securing Himself. The enemy would seek to persuade us that every thing has gone, but if that were so it would be an affront to the Person of the Spirit. The Spirit is here to maintain in power what is for the glory of Christ. Our hearts are thrilled as we think of the time of display; the Spirit and the bride saying "Come" is in relation to the public appearing of Christ. But what is there for the heart of Christ at the present time? Those who are in the light of the assembly would hold all the saints in their hearts, but God has the whole assembly always before Him. God is able to view everything completed as soon as He begins with something.

C.G. In verse 2 of Ephesians 5 it says, "even as the Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour". In verse 25 it says, "even as the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it in order that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present the assembly to himself glorious". Here we have 'presenting the assembly to Himself' and in verse 2 the offering and sacrifice are linked with a sweetsmelling savour to God. What would you say in relation to that?

C.R.B. The offering was to God. God is always in view in the operations of Christ, and yet it was for us. He loved us and delivered Himself for us, but the offering is to God. In the very work and the sacrifice of Jesus there was going up to God Himself what was a sweet-smelling savour. We understand the love of the Christ that had us in view in the working out of that and we come into the gain of it, but the offering was to God. What is in view in all this is God "all in all", 1 Cor 15: 28.

E.E.H. The assembly eventually is to come down from God.

C.R.B. "Coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God", Rev 21: 10. That confirms what we were saying as to the assembly being a vessel of glory. "Having the glory of God" is something very substantial; it is not that the glory of God has shone upon it, gloriously true as that is, but the assembly is divinely constituted to have the glory of God. And that is the way in which Christ is going to administer in the world to come, so that what is for God is maintained through a thousand years.

J.A.P. Your reference in prayer to the "Saviour of the body" (v 23), and then "even as the assembly is subjected to the Christ " (v 24), would all bring in a moral line underlying this, husbands loving their wives. So that we are not speaking of something abstract but something that is working.

C.R.B. Yes. One of the features of Christianity is that it is not worked out in some secluded compartment but it enters into the very moral fibre and experience of our lives. The glory of Christianity is to bring a dignity and power into every human relationship so that by the Spirit we are helped to move in these relationships according to God's original thought, because they all began with God, and yet we are not governed by what is natural. You referred to the moral power that is entering into these matters - we often use this word 'moral' and it is a very good word. A brother said recently that he thought the word 'moral' conveys the value of things as before God. That would help us to think rightly of moral values, what is of value before God, that character of thing.

J.A.P. That is very good. Adam, according to the light he had, greatly valued what God brought to him.

C.R.B. He could regard the woman as exclusively for himself. He named all the animals and, with the skill of headship, he named them all according to God's own thoughts, but the woman was for the man. That would enter into this reference here, "that he might sanctify it". This is not the detail of separation but the glory of the assembly as being sanctified, set apart exclusively for Christ as His own personal possession.

G.D.P. So the saints are marked by refinement. I was thinking about being without spot or wrinkle or any of such things. This process is going on, is it not?

C.R.B. Yes. We would think of the assembly itself in all its own perfection according to divine thoughts, but the individuals making up the assembly need this service of Christ of purifying by the washing of water by the word so that there may be no spot or wrinkle. There is to be nothing that is contaminated by the world because the assembly has no link with the world, but there is not to be any wrinkle either. Experience with God amongst the beloved brethren does not bring in wrinkles, it brings in power.

G.D.P. That is what we are constantly at, to get free of these worldly things and be in relation to our heavenly calling. Is that not so?

C.R.B. Yes. This is the great positive attraction to see what the heart of Christ is longing for, so that we would be yearning to be free of everything which might be related to an order of things which has nothing in accord with Christ in His perfect love.

C.S.E. Would you help us as to the appreciation of the assembly in our hearts, not so much the individual side, great as that is - "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me" (Gal 2: 20) - but "even as the Christ also loved the assembly",

C.R. B. All these things are wonderfully worked together. The more we enter into the sense of the personal love of Christ in all its greatness (and each of us perhaps can say today, "the Son of God,

who has loved me and given himself for me") the more that very love draws us nearer to Christ. And the nearer to Christ we are, the more we begin to realise that His interest at the present time is in relation to the assembly. He is going to deal with the nations in due time but all power in heaven and earth is being used by the Lord at the moment for the prosperity of the assembly.

C.S.E. I like to remember an expression which Mr Maynard loved to use: 'Nor what is next Thy heart can we forget' (hymn 160). It really helped me over the years to see how near the assembly is to the heart of Christ.

C.R.B. It is intimacy with Christ which will hold us in relation to the control of His headship; so that our interests increasingly are bound up with the prospering of the assembly universally. There is the working out of things locally and that proceeds in glory and in power as we hold in our hearts what God has universally for Christ.

G.H. You quoted that verse at the end of Matthew's gospel: "All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth", chap 28: 18. This is the assembly gospel. What the Lord says there as to power would be in relation to the assembly; is that the way you understand it?

C.R.B. Yes. That is what the Lord is doing at the present time by the Spirit. Matters amongst the nations throughout the world are not out of control, they are under the control of the Father. He is the Governor of the universe, everything is under the Father in the public setting. So we pray to God in our prayer meetings in relation to the public order of things. Christ is using His power in relation to the assembly. In the time to come He is going to use it in relation to the nations.

G.H. So that verse is in the assembly gospel.

C.R.B. Yes; and it is very interesting there that He does not say, Well, there are only eleven of you left. There were only eleven disciples there but the Lord is not occupied with that; He is occupied with the power that was going to carry things through to the completion of the age.

B.T. Satan has not committed his power to one man fully yet because of the power of the Spirit being here in the assembly.

C.R.B. Do you mean that the man of sin is going to be the final effort of the enemy to overthrow the greatness of Christ?

B.T. He will try that. What I meant was that Satan is restrained from giving his power to one man.

C.R.B. It is going to be one of the results of the Spirit and His restraining power being taken away that the enemy will move in an unrestrained way, in some sense, although God of course is still supreme. So far in history men have sought after supreme power but they have never arrived at it, but there will come a moment when the man of sin will be displayed, and immediately the Lord Jesus will annul him "by the appearing of his coming", 2 Thess 2: 8. But we can be thankful for the restraining power of the Spirit so that the saints can move in the light of the assembly in a universal way.

G.D.W. Do we not need to be so aligned with the Spirit that what you spoke of as moral would be true of us. A wrinkle, whether in a garment or in our faces or elsewhere, is the result of stress, something is out of balance. Do we not need to be balanced in being under the control of the Spirit so that other things do not come in to cause these things?

C.R.B. We need peculiarly the help of the Spirit to feel things rightly without being unduly burdened by them. Christ is able to delight in the assembly as available for Him in the Spirit's power. The Lord would occupy us with the purifying power of the way He operates by the washing of water by the word. It is a remarkable expression, "washing of water by the word", as though as the Lord brings in the word amongst us there is the washing of water which secures persons who are not marked by any spot or wrinkle; persons are more fresh than yesterday, more living, more quickened, more vital; and then the Spirit of God in an all embracing way says "or any of such things"; as though there is not to be anything which the mind of man can think of which is to be allowed to come in to mar the perfection of the assembly for Christ.

G.D.W. It is not just an improvement, the whole thing is vital; the word adjusts, gets everything lined up.

C.R.B. It is in accord with what will be seen when the assembly after a thousand years is seen adorned as a bride for her husband; there will not be any spot or wrinkle or any of such things; she will be in all her glorious freshness "as a bride adorned for her husband", Rev 21: 2.

C.G. In verse 26 we have purification linked with washing of water by the word. In 2 Timothy 2 purification is linked with separation: "It therefore one shall have purified himself from these, in separating himself from them, he shall be a vessel to honour sanctified, serviceable to the Master" (v 21). What is your thought regarding purification linked with washing of water by the word and with separation? There is an interesting note to the word 'purified' in 2 Timothy. The word for 'purified' is only found here and 1 Cor 5: 7, 'Purge out'. There it was to get rid of the old leaven out of the lump; here the one who names the name of the Lord has to purge himself from among the vessels. Hence we have an additional preposition which is rendered by 'separating from'. Lit. 'purified himself away from these'.

C.R.B. The action in 2 Timothy 2 is the result of our understanding of what the Lord in His love for the assembly is seeking to arrive at. He brings in the word and we are conscious in our own souls, whether we say anything to any one else or not, that the Lord is saying a word to us to purify us. As we receive the gain of that word and of the love of Jesus, immediately the urgent desire is wrought in our spirits to purify ourselves from anything that would be out of keeping with the name of the Lord. It is the Lord in His majesty and greatness that comes into 2 Timothy 2 in all His authority: the Lord, the Master, the Despot. Ephesians 5 is the holy intimacy of Christ in headship in relation to the assembly. But as we prove the holy effect of His headship, then we are more concerned as to the authority that is committed to that blessed Person in relation to what is public. The power to move in a public way flows in essentiality from this inward experience with Christ in affection.

E.E.H. There is the work of Christ in the purifying, which of course would be done by the ministry, but on the other hand there is the individual side. So he says in the first verse of the chapter, "Be ye therefore imitators of God". That would take account of us individually so that we are in consonance with what the Lord ministers to purify us, We would take it on, do you think?

C.R.B. And this would help us to realise the value that God places on every beloved brother and sister. There is no distinction in this setting, it is "the assembly" and "us". Every brother and sister is of great value because the infinite love of Christ in giving Himself for us relates to every brother and sister. So not only would all of us feel our vital part and privilege in this great thought of the assembly but this would help us in our love for one another.

C.F.D. While we would not and cannot limit the Lord as to how He would proceed in our own private histories, would not washing of water by the word lay emphasis on what is collective, when the brethren are together? It seems to be a time when the Spirit operates to a greater extent and where the Lord is free to move; so in the collective setting the most help is available. Therefore do you not think that we should value in a greater way the assemblings of the saints?

C.R.B. I think so. If we are righteously detained from being present when the saints are assembled, then God will help us to get gain for example from written ministry; but there is nothing quite like the privilege of being assembled with the saints and experiencing the inward quickening power of the Spirit and the purifying power of the word of the Lord. The privilege of being assembled is increasingly valued by the brethren so that they are overcoming difficulties and distances to be together more and more. It is so much the more as the day approaches (see Heb 10: 25).

B.T. Would the nourishing and cherishing be experienced in the same way collectively? It is a matter that is currently going on and we want to be conscious of it.

C.R.B. Nourishing would relate to the sound words, the building up of the assembly in relation to this positive line of the love of Christ; cherishing would be that we are conscious of the love of Christ and nestle down into it.

L.MacF. In verse 32 of Ephesians 5 it says "This mystery is great", but then there ought to be some intelligence with us, do you think?

C.R.B. We are increasingly thankful for the sovereign love that has brought us into some understanding of this mystery as to Christ and as to the assembly. It is not to be a mystery to those who are in the joy of it; it is to be a wonderful experience of what is being yielded for the heart of Christ.

A.R.S. Would the apostle's desire to secure the assembly "a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor 11: 2) be that there should be an answer to this great love of Christ?

C.R.B. That is very helpful. I was thinking of that in relation to what we read in 2 Corinthians 8, that behind the ministrations and the activities in love of the beloved apostle there was his own heart exercise in relation to securing the chaste virgin for Christ in each local assembly. When he was writing to the saints in Ephesus he was bringing before them not only the privilege they had locally but the assembly universally. But when he thinks of the assemblies, I think he thought of the chaste virgin in relation to each assembly. So where we read in 2 Corinthians 8 is a remarkable section because it refers to the "assemblies" four times. It does not say how many brethren there were in each place but it is each place in which there was an assembly functioning – the "assemblies".

G.D.W. What do you think of the qualification of the brother that is referred to in verse 18?

C.R.B. It is very interesting that Titus is named; then we have the brother "whose praise is in the glad tidings", and then "our brother whom we have often proved to be of diligent zeal". The second and third are not named. It helps us to be clear of personalities. We all tend to be marked by prejudice or favour as we think of certain brothers, but Paul puts that all on one side and brings out the moral

and spiritual qualities of these men who are devoting their lives to the prospering of the work of God in each local assembly.

G.D.W. Would not these brothers be those who would carry the exercises in their own localities? They would not be interfering brothers but brothers who would be acting in the light of the assembly as we have in Ephesians 5.

C.R.B. Their prime occupation would be to preserve the home front in their own locality. But they carried in their affections the prospering of what was for the heart of Christ and for Christ's glory in each local assembly.

J.A.P. That is very important because Titus was not interfering in Corinth; he was there because God sent him there; and it says he was "full of zeal". I was very thankful you read this passage because it confirms what you read in Ephesians; there must be zeal with the brethren, not only for my own locality but for all the assemblies, at least in my affections if I cannot get there.

C.R.B. And the governing point in that is this reference in verse 23 to "Christ's glory". We might wonder whether it refers to the messengers or to the assemblies, but Mr Taylor said both (see Vol 40, p.296), and we understand that. The local assemblies are to take on this character of being "Christ's glory". This particular section is in relation to the special collection and giving generally. It is a great privilege that every local assembly has, of having a special collection and being thus linked with the saints universally. The glory of Christ comes out; there is perhaps only one brother and one sister, but they have the privilege of being related to Christ's glory and being connected with this great service of giving. But this goes beyond that; the bearing of this is to colour all administration in relation to the assembly, because he refers to abundance. And the whole general bearing of administration is the line of dispensation of blessing. So that this line of "Christ's glory" is to bring in a touch of dignity and power in relation to everything that is done in every local assembly, and everything that is done by individual brothers or sisters in relation to every local assembly. They are all, the

assemblies and the brothers and sisters, to move as being related to Christ's glory.

G.D.W. Putting it on the basis of giving is a very high level.

J.A.P. What you are saying is very instructive. This scripture I think is not very well understood amongst us: "deputed messengers of assemblies, Christ's glory". If a brother cares for even the smallest service on behalf of the brethren he is doing that in the light of Christ's glory, and he is promoting that, not in any partisan way but in relation to what you read in Ephesians.

C.R.B. And it extends to every service that we are privileged to take part in; it may be deacon service, as we call it, or it may be preparing a meal for the brethren; all the details that enter into the lives of the saints are to have this dignifying touch of being related to Christ's glory; that is, what is for the glory of Christ is to be reflected and enhanced by the very way in which each local assembly does anything, and by the way each brother or sister does anything in relation to the assembly.

A.S.H. Would love promote zeal? I was struck with verse 22, a brother often proved to be of diligent zeal in many things. Then in verse 24 it speaks of the proof of your love.

C.R.B. If love is not the source of zeal, it becomes human energy and that is very dangerous. Christ's glory is connected with administration in every local assembly, wherever it is, however small or large, but the working out of that must be as we are governed in the Spirit by the spirit of love; that is, love for Christ, love for God and love for the brethren.

C.S.E. Paul in writing to Philemon said, "For we have great thankfulness and encouragement through thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother" (v 7). It would just give a sense of the fragrance that we take around with us and what we disseminate among the brethren. All this would help to enhance the glory of the Head of the assembly, do you think?

C.R.B. Yes. It was "Paul the aged" writing to Philemon in a very sensitive way. He could have directed or commanded, but the way of love was to draw him willingly into this great matter. We are brought into assembly services by way of the attraction of love. It is the glory of Christ that affects every person who loves Jesus. Instinctively we think that, if this is related to the glory of Christ, everything else must take second place, everything in my life must be subordinated to the prospering of what is for Christ's glory and the local assembly. It governs where I work, what I do, where I live; the details of our lives in the working out of piety are all governed, not by rules or regulations which are only too easy to follow and are only too easy to break, but by the love of Christ which is very intimate and very delicate.

G.D.W. It is notable that Paul does not interrogate Philemon as to what he had done to make Onesimus run away; he just works as a brother in relation to the brother.

C.R.B. And brings out that not only is he loved by Paul but he is to be loved by Philemon. Onesimus was to be a link between the apostle Paul in prison in Rome and the saints in Colosse. It is very interesting that God in His ordering had seen to it that one of the Colossian brethren, Epaphras, was in prison with Paul in Rome; he was a man who was a long distance away from his local assembly but he was still combating in prayer for its prosperity.

C.G. The word zeal brings to mind Psalm 69: 9; "For the zeal of thy house hath devoured me, and the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me". The word zeal used here would suggest spiritual energy, but what would you say about "the zeal of thy house"?

C.R.B. It is interesting in John, chapter 2, when the Spirit of God brings that in as being remembered by the disciples, it says "it is written, The zeal of thy house devours me" (v 17). It is not 'has devoured me', which was the experience of the psalmist, but this is really a touch of the glory of the life of Jesus here that at every moment He could say "the zeal of thy house devours me". We

worship as we think of the life of Jesus. The Spirit of God would say, What Jesus did as a Man was a model for you. Can we say "The zeal of thy house devours me"? It is a test, because other things come in and perhaps we miss some of the meetings as a result. But if "the zeal of thy house" were constantly a devouring matter, we should find that everything else takes second place to what is for the heart of Christ.

C.G. Be wholly in it.

C.R.B. Yes just so; young men particularly; older men by experience are held in it, but younger men and younger women need to be wholly in these things that their profiting may appear to all.

J.A.P. Transparency is very instructive in this passage, coming down to piety. It says in verse 21 "for we provide for things honest, not only before the Lord, but also before men". Any brother that is handling money matters on behalf of the saints, and holding them for the saints, must provide things honest before all men. It is a principle with God, is it not?

C.R.B. So that it is good on the principle of witness that two brothers are involved in money matters.

J.A.P. Yes; and if I have funds on behalf of the saints I am accountable to the saints for that.

C.R.B. Yes, and you bring another brother into the matter.

G.D.P. What you say about love is very important because love does not act in an unseemly way; it knows how to act in every circumstance.

C.R.B. We are tested in these things as to whether we are in the gain of headship so that we are doing things in a way which shows that it is Christ's glory that is in view. What is seemly and comely and right, all these other things would have their own part in it for righteousness must always be the leader, but if it is Christ's glory that is governing us, then we are held in the attraction of love in what is exceedingly glorious and infinitely great.

G.D.W. You have spoken about what governs us; what is the aspect of "chosen by the assemblies"?

C.R.B. It brings in the whole question of confidence. It says in verse 22 that this beloved brother had often proved to be of diligent zeal in many things - that was good - but then the apostle adds thankfully, "and now more diligently zealous through the great confidence he has as to you". And it is a question of confidence when brothers take on a matter on behalf of the brethren. Brethren commit a matter to a brother or to two brothers and they leave it to them, they have confidence in them. Confidence is the result of love and needs to be prospered amongst us. One of the ways in which we can use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit is to seek to be kept on this line of doing things which will increase the confidence of the brethren.

G.D.W. Is that why Peter who had great zeal naturally was asked three times, Art thou attached to me? And certain things were given him to do, following each question.

C.R.B. He had thrice denied the Lord, and the Lord searched him. He did not bring out what He felt as to the denying but He brought out His own love for Peter, The result of it was that Peter was to be found following the Lord.

G.D.W. A brother who is attached to Christ would promote confidence because we are all joined to the same Man.

C.R.B. And providing for things honest is not limited to matters of money. It has a general bearing, that we seek grace that all that we do is obviously right. If we make way for the Spirit we shall do things in a transparent, honest way so that the confidence of the brethren in us is increased.

G.D.W. This would free us from what is political or just trying to gain power, because Christ is the One that we must call attention to.

C.R.B. We do not need to waste time in talking about all these other influences which we know only too well the enemy would seek to

bring in; if we are occupied with Christ's glory it necessarily removes every other influence that would come in to divert us.

G.H. I was thinking of Saul on the way to Damascus; there was a voice to him and he said "Who art thou Lord? " And the Lord said "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest", Acts 9: 5. It was the wonderful attractive features of Jesus in the saints.

C.R.B. "Why dost thou persecute me?" That is Christ's glory.

G.H. He did not say, I am the Lord, but "I am Jesus" - wonderful!

C.R.B. We were saying on Thursday that we need to be very careful to keep every feature of the truth connected with Jesus personally. Our brother Mr Linton referred to the scripture, "I am... the truth", John 14: 6. If we are not held as keeping every feature of the truth related to Jesus personally we shall find we are embarking on a course of philosophy which will not help us and will not help the brethren. Every feature of the truth that we can ever speak about is all related to what has come to us in the incarnation - "I am... the truth". "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1: 1), and everything that we shall ever know of God is all related to what shines out in Jesus. That would link with what we read in John 17. The Lord is speaking to the Father as to those that the Father has given Him. Then He says "I am glorified in them". He said earlier in the chapter "I have glorified thee on the earth" (v 4). What a matter that is for our contemplation as to the way in which the Father had been glorified by Jesus! Not only did He complete the work, but "I have glorified thee on the earth", which would relate to the joy that the Father had in every footstep of Jesus. But then the Lord says "I am glorified in them"; that would relate no doubt to the work of the Spirit in the saints so that they are preserved in relation to the Father as moving in the dignity and power of sonship, and the features that were seen in Christ personally are found for the glory of Christ and for the pleasure of the Father formed in the saints. Would that be as you understand it?

E.E.H. I am sure. Christ is the standard for everything, His love, "as the Christ also loved the assembly". His love affects us and there is

a response in our hearts in relation to that.

C.R.B. Just so. And this brings a certain stable purpose into our lives. So we are not going about as beating the air. We are seeking by the Spirit's power to be moving here in whatever we are occupied with in a way so that Christ can say "I am glorified in them".

E.E.H. That is, His features are manifested in them, shining out in them.

C.R.B. Very good.

B.T. Joseph set five of his brethren before Pharaoh; would that link with this? They would represent him, would they not?

C.R.B. That is interesting because they were instructed to be careful that when they were asked what their occupation was, to make it quite clear they were shepherds. And that was really one of the great glories that attached to Joseph; he was a great administrator, but really what he was doing in his administration was the action of a shepherd. He was gathering the people together, gathering even the Egyptians into cities. The purpose of his whole activity was to gather Jacob and all the brethren together around himself in relation to the prospering of what was for God.

B.T. And it was at a point when something had been arrived at spiritually just shortly before.

C.R.B. Yes, and involving the feature of patience. Because Joseph had come to his position of power some nine years before he sent for Jacob. He could have sent for him as soon as he was brought out of the dungeon but he waited for seven years of plenty and then two more years. In the patience of a shepherd he waited until the time came and then he sent for them.

J.A.P. "I demand concerning them; I do not demand concerning the world": Joseph's special concern secretly would be his brethren. I was interested in what you said before, that the Father is supreme in this world today, there is nothing moving without Him; but the Lord is concerned about the assembly and the Spirit.

C.R.B. In Ephesians 4 there are the three circles, the Spirit as operating in relation to what is inside and the Lord in relation to the dignity and authority of the fellowship; but then, as to other things, we think of one God and Father of all, who is over all as supreme. He has committed all things into the hands of the Son, but the Son is using that power in relation to the assembly. And it is the Lord and the Spirit who are operating so that the Father delights in persons in whom Christ is glorified.

C.G. In verse 5 it says "and now glorify *me, thou* Father, along with thyself, with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was". The note says, 'Along with, as to presence and place'. He was here on earth but He was to be glorified with the glory He had along with the Father before the world was. What would you say about that?

C.R.B. As we have been instructed, the glory in verse 5 is the inscrutability of deity, which we have no part in and are not even privileged to see. We understand there is an inscrutability in glory in love between the Father and the Son and the Spirit and we rejoice in that. That is what no doubt the Lord is referring to there. But then He refers in verse 22 to "the glory which thou hast given me". That is the glory of sonship which the Father had given to Christ in manhood - not in eternity but in manhood - "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them". That is the love of Christ in bringing the saints into the glory that He had in sonship. "I am glorified in them" I think stands related to what He says: "the glory... I have given them"; and that is extending on beyond the apostles to all those that believe through their word, but it is the glory of Christ in sonship. The third glory, in verse 24, is the distinctive glory of Christ, loved before the foundation of the world, that is the glory that we behold and adore but never share in.

C.G. Verse 22 would be a shared glory, would it not?

C.R.B. Yes, that is what the Lord has brought us into, in sonship.

NEW YORK

19 November 1977

Key to initials

C.R.B.- C.R.Byng, London; C.F.D.- C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; C.S.E.-
C.S.Elliott, New York; A.S.H.- A.S.Hinkson, New York; E.E.H. -
E.E.Hoyte, New York; G.H.- G.Hesterman, Plainfield; C.G.-
C.Greenidge, Plainfield; L.MacF.- L.MacFarlane, New York; G.D.P. -
G.D.Pfingst, New York; J.A.P.- J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; A.R.S.-
A.R.Stevens, New York; B.T.- B.Taylor, New York; G.D.W.-
G.D.Ware, New York

READINESS FOR CHANGE

C.R.Byng

Luke 9: 28-36; 13: 10-13, 16, 17; Philippians 3: 20, 21

These scriptures relate to our being ready to be changed. We all naturally tend to settle down, but we would understand that God is always active to bring in change, that is change for the better. What we sang about was what comes into our experiences as to how we sometimes change and that is not always for the better. But God is always acting to bring about change for the better. All that God does at the present time is related to the final transformation of which we read in Philippians 3. What a matter that will be, beloved brethren; when we leave this scene of change for ever we are going to be with the Lord always. God in His wonderful grace and goodness is constantly bringing in matters which help us to be more prepared for the final change. We may sometimes find in the goodness of God in our circumstances that things have arrived at a point where we would like them to remain as they are. Then perhaps to our surprise suddenly God brings in some change. We are to be steadied in the abiding assurance that any change that God brings in is for the better, for it is always related to some enlarged appreciation of the greatness of Christ.

So where we have read in Luke 9 the Lord had spoken, about eight days before, of the coming of the Son of man in His glory and that there were going to be some who were to see the kingdom of God. Then He selects three. The sovereignty of divine selection always tests us. We might say, Why Peter, John and James? That was the Lord's sovereign matter. There is nothing national in that nor anything affecting a particular meeting, it is divine sovereignty. He goes up into a mountain to pray. There is not the immediate display of His glory, He goes up as a dependent Man to pray. But then as He prayed it says "the fashion of his countenance became different". The Spirit of God in Matthew and Mark tells us He was transfigured; here the Spirit in His wisdom uses a different word,

"became different". They saw what appeared to be a change. It was not of course that Jesus Himself changed; they saw a fresh glory. One of the divine titles is "the Same"; "he that draws near to God must believe that he is", Heb 11: 6. Jesus always is the great I AM. But in the Spirit's own gracious working we have fresh impressions of the glory that is there, some fresh understanding of a particular glory, whether it is official or personal or moral glory, some change that comes, not in Jesus, but some change that comes in us. So as the fashion of His countenance became different and His raiment white and effulgent, what an effect it should have had on these three men. What an effect some fresh appreciation of the glory of Jesus is intended to have upon us so that we become more in accord with the particular glory which shines out in Jesus on any particular occasion - "transformed according to the same image from glory to glory", 2 Cor 3: 18. What a word that is in Corinthians: "looking on the glory of the Lord".

That is what these three men were intended to do. They were sleepy to start with, not far removed from the experience of many of us, but then "having fully awoke up they saw his glory". This was a remarkable occasion: when the glory of Jesus personally shone out. It was divine selection in bringing up Peter, James and John, and also in causing Moses and Elias to appear in glory. We might perhaps wonder why it was not Abraham and David; Moses and Elias were selected. If divine selection chooses someone for a particular service, in the ways of God that servant is morally formed for that particular occasion. Divine sovereignty is always justified in what it does. And so Moses and Elias had been qualified for this privilege of appearing in glory on this mountain. What men they were in their generation we may say representing the law and the prophets. Moses was a man who was "very meek, above all men", Num 12: 3. It was a meek man that qualified for this experience of being with Jesus. And both had had prolonged experience in relation to the mountain of God. This was really the mountain of God, where Jesus was. Moses had had at least two periods of forty days and forty nights on the mountain with God. "Come up" says

God "to me into the mountain, and be there" (Exod 24: 12) and there he was for forty days and forty nights, and did not eat or drink. What an experience! but he had been prepared for such an experience. And then breakdown came in in the camp. Was everything over? The mountain of God remained unchanged despite the sorrow in the camp, and the man Moses went back for a further period of forty days and forty nights. That was part of his preparation for this mountain experience. Elijah had a journey of forty days and forty nights to the mount of God (see 1 Kings 19: 8). You might say he went to resign his commission, but when he came to the mount it was the voice of God that spoke to him. They were men whose departure stands out as being remarkable. Of no other man, as far as I recall, was it said that Jehovah buried him, except Moses (see Deut 34: 6). He was told to go up into a mountain and die. Earlier he had been told to come up into the mountain and be there, but then later in God's inscrutable timing the word was "Go up into this mountain... and die", Deut. 32: 48,49. But then what a privilege! Jehovah buried him and entrusted that secret to no man. No man to this day knows where Moses was buried. But then think of the departure of Elijah, he "went up by a whirlwind into the heavens", 2 Kings 2: 11. These were moral experiences in qualification for the appearing in glory of these two men on the mountain. God had a long way ahead in mind in preparing these two men for this experience.

He was preparing Peter and John and James too. And if we have an experience with Jesus on the mountain top and receive some fresh impression of the glory of Jesus, it is to bring about a change in us so we are prepared for something the Lord may have in mind for us about which we know nothing as yet. As far as physical strength is concerned, we receive the strength we need just one day at a time. If we are still here, we shall need strength for tomorrow physically; we do not have that strength today, we receive the strength for tomorrow on the morrow. But we are prepared spiritually beforehand, sometimes a long way before. God may prepare a brother or sister days or maybe years before the need arises which

God had in mind. Every impression we receive of the glory of Jesus is preparing us for something.

What a preparation this was for the three disciples! How quickly the need for change came in! Peter's suggestion of three tabernacles really signified that he did not think that things were under divine control. It was as these two men were departing that he suggested they would provide two tabernacles for them so they could stay. But the divine time had come when Jesus was to be found alone, when the appearing of those men in glory had fulfilled its purpose. Peter had not got the point that those two representatives of Old Testament experience were there to bring out the pre-eminence and supremacy of Jesus. What a suggestion it was to make three tabernacles; one for Jesus, that was surely right; it is always right to prepare a dwelling place for Jesus whether in the local assembly, or in our households, or in our own hearts. But we would not place Moses and Elias alongside as though they were about the same. An enlarged appreciation of Jesus will preserve us from making too much of any man. Thank God for the vessels that God has used and the vessels that God may be using at the present time, but no servant is ever to be compared with the perfection and beauty of Jesus. Jesus stands in all His own supremacy. How often we need change on this matter! How often we are governed adversely or favourably by some other person! Jesus stands in His own supremacy, and we become changed into accord with that. Jesus went up to pray. Let us be found as those who make more time to pray. Our judgments about matters are to be fluid. We may have some impression or judgment about a brother or sister, which may be favourable or adverse; let us see if we are thinking as Jesus thinks. He may confirm our judgment or He may adjust us. If there is a basis for our being concerned as to some one's spiritual enlargement and help, then let us start praying and interceding urgently for greater signs of vitality and life to come to light, so that we can say, "What hath God wrought", Num 23: 23. I may have the impression that I am absolutely right and this is the right thing to say or do. The more sure I am, the more need to see whether the Lord's

judgment is what I have arrived at or whether He is viewing the thing in the grace and love of His heart in a different way. He does not regard things as fixed; He is working to bring about transformation. And how do we come into that? By going to the mountain top to pray. The Father's voice was heard. Divine timing comes in here. Let us always be ready for the inscrutability and perfection of divine timing. It says in verse 33, "And it came to pass as they departed from him"; and Peter did not discern the accuracy of timing. In verse 34 it says, "But as he was saying these things, there came a cloud". That was the perfection of the timing of the Father. What a word this was! "This is my beloved Son: hear him". The Spirit of God says it was a voice.

We may say it was the Father's voice because He refers to "my beloved Son", but we would say it must have been the Father's voice because no one else could speak in this way. It is a little like John 21; when the disciple whom Jesus loved saw that great catch of fish in the net he said "It is the Lord". He had an impression that no one else except the Lord could do a thing like that. And that is what a priestly person will always be on the lookout to discern - the things which the Father would do, or the Lord would do, or the Spirit would do. We learn to understand the ways in which the Father and the Son and the Spirit are pleased to move, so we discern that something must be the Father's voice. There was no word of rebuke here. The Father draws attention to the greatness of Jesus. And that is the basis on which change for God comes about; the Spirit of God is pleased to give us some greater impression of Christ as the Head of the assembly and of His headship functioning in every local assembly. On the mountain top we have some understanding of what the Lord is doing, and what the Father is doing, and we begin to be affected. Who of us can say what impact this had on James? It would be seen in the fact that the Lord saw that he was one who could be taken early out of the testimony. What a privilege it is to die in fellowship, to die in the Lord! Oh let us pray, beloved brethren, urgently for persons who at the moment are not in the joy of fellowship, that they may come back into fellowship. What a sorrow,

to die out of fellowship! We need sovereign grace and mercy to be kept in fellowship and if the time comes to die, to die in fellowship. James was prepared to depart.

What an impression John had; he has hardly begun his gospel under the direction of the Spirit when he says "we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father", chap 1: 14. No doubt there would be a direct touch of his own experience on this mountain top. Peter, when he preaches, preaches Christ glorified. What an impression in his soul! He does not bring out a reference to this mountain of God in his preachings, but lying behind them you can see that he speaks of Christ glorified with a sense in his soul of the supremacy of Jesus. When he writes his first epistle to the brethren in dispersion he brings out the solidity of what God was doing, the great rock on which the assembly was being built by Christ; then in his second epistle, as he realises he is about to depart, his burden is to leave the beloved brethren with the stabilising impression of the experience he had on the mountain top, so he speaks of the majesty of Jesus and of the voice being uttered by the excellent glory "Such a voice", he says, as though the impression had increased with him through the days of the years of his life. He had this abiding impression that what the saints must lay hold of, and he had to use diligence to see that they did lay hold of it, was the supremacy of Christ in relation to every matter. He does not refer to the word "Hear him", as though he has the impression that if he brings that view of the glory of Jesus before the brethren, they will hear Him. But he had to have this word: "Hear him". How fully these three men would have been changed and brought into line in their measure by the Spirit of the living God, with what they saw in Jesus! As we resort to the mountain top increasingly, we shall have grace indeed to know what it is to live there with Jesus. How many problems would never arise. Another has said that nine tenths of the problems that worry us never disturb Jesus at all. But if there is something that concerns Jesus, we are to be concerned about that. And if there is something which the Lord is not concerned about, we can leave it. How easily we become obsessed with something,

whether it is related to the past or the future, and the Lord is not concerned about it at all. We are to leave these things and be concerned with what the Lord is doing in His own skill and His own perfection in timing, and what the Father is doing in relation to the extension of the interests of Christ.

When we come to Luke 13, this is not on the mountain top; this is in one of the synagogues. This is down on the plain, in a religious atmosphere. A woman was there who had a spirit of infirmity. I think the Spirit of God was peculiarly affected as He caused Luke to write about this woman. He uses an expression which I believe He only uses in Scripture in this particular section, "a spirit of infirmity" - not exactly an infirmity but "a spirit of infirmity", "and she was bent together and wholly unable to lift her head up". Are there not many like this? Some of our brethren (they are our brethren) are still in religious systems of one sort or another, still gathered in relation to some particular man or other and having a spirit of infirmity. They are not able to lift up their heads freely to God and have part in liberated praise and worship, and yet desiring after what is right. They are not wandering away in the wilderness but in the synagogue seeking what is right, and yet bound for eighteen years. There may be some, the Lord would know, even in this city who have been bound for eighteen years, or may be bound for eighteen months. The Lord had His eye upon this woman. In verse 11 the Spirit's comment is "lo". But then the Lord says Himself in verse 16, "lo, these eighteen years". Both the Spirit and the Lord draw attention to the fact as though we are to consider this woman marked by the spirit of infirmity. But then the Lord takes account of her, calls to her, speaks to her, lays His hands upon her and immediately she is made straight. What a spirit of infirmity can mark some persons, and perhaps in some measure most of us know at times what it is to be marked by it. We become a little bit depressed and then the Lord comes in and brings in this touch of strengthening. It corresponds with the word in Colossians, "strengthened with all power according to the might of his glory" (chap 1: 11) - another unique expression. I believe "the might of his glory" is the divine answer to the "spirit of

infirmity". It is the might of the glory of Christ shining in that brings in the power and the strength; not the glory exactly nor the riches of His glory, but the "might of his glory", As occupied with Jesus in all His greatness, we are assured there is a might there which is able to overcome every obstacle and difficulty. We are to be alert in expectation of what the Lord is doing in the might of His glory. We speak of one locality and we pray about another locality, and things seem to go on in numerical weakness week after week. The Lord brings in change and a beloved sister is taken and a brother is left alone with one old sister. But then the Lord begins to act, He shows the might of His glory, and persons begin to be recovered to the truth. Do not let us be overwhelmed by a spirit of infirmity but be helped to look for the change in persons that comes in as the might of His glory shines out. And what strength there comes in then! The kingdom of the Son of His love is in view, in spiritual experience. The might of His glory is with a view to sustaining us in a scene of adversity, that is the setting in Colossians. Preservation from philosophy is one of the things in view; the might of His glory would preserve us from all these things that so easily move us this way or that way. But all these experiences of transformation are with a view to the final transformation. What a transformation it is going to be as we read in Philippians. It is not exactly the same word but the same thought as the mountain of transfiguration, when the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour is going to come from heaven. We are waiting and it may be even today. What stability there is in the meantime! The Spirit of God says, "for our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens". That is a stabilising fact. It is not a commonwealth that can be overwhelmed or shaken by the force of events in the world; great commonwealths may come and go, empires may rise and fall, but our commonwealth has its abiding existence in the heavens. But then "we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory". What a final change that is going to be! How many of the beloved brethren have frailty in their bodies, pain and weakness physically, all connected with the body of humiliation, but there is no weakness and no frailty in the body of glory of Jesus. What an experience the

disciples had for forty days when Jesus was here a glorious, risen Man! What impressions they must have had of a Man who was out of death! But then we are awaiting that same glorious Person, the Man with whom we can find counsel and guidance and direction on the mountain top. He is coming down from heaven beloved, He is coming down Himself. He is not going to send an angel. Coming with archangel's voice, surely, but He is not going to send an archangel, He is going to come Himself, and He has power to transform the body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory. It may be today. Do not let us say we are going to do this, or that, tomorrow; we cannot be sure. We say, If the Lord will. Let us mean it more and more. Let us be expecting today the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. We worship Him as the Saviour through whom we have received the forgiveness of sins, but this is the Saviour to take us finally from the scene of trials and adversity, of experience and difficulties. This is the final transformation when we are going to experience His saving power, when He is going to transform our bodies according to the working of the power which He has. How infinitely perfect the blessed Spirit is in the words He chooses! It is not according to the power that He will have when that moment comes, it is the power that He has now "even to subdue all things to himself". As we expect the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour for this final transformation, let us have increasing confidence that He has today power to subdue all things even to Himself. The saints as in the light of the truth of the assembly are peculiarly qualified to see what the Lord is doing in this way, because the word in Ephesians 5 is the assembly "subjected to the Christ" (v 24). As we are individually and collectively increasingly subject to Christ, the Spirit of God would give us priestly discernment to see those whom the Lord is subduing to bring them more into accord with His own will and secure them for the service of God whilst He leaves us here.

Let our hearts be alerted, beloved, for this final change, the great transformation when we are going to see Jesus our Saviour face to face. The One whom we have loved, the One who has been so close to us in all His saving grace and wonderful power for each

day of our lives, we are going to see that glorious Man face to face, and we are going to be with Him in the presence of God through all generations of the age of ages. At the moment we are being prepared for departure to be with Jesus. May the Lord bless the word.

NEW YORK

19 November 1977

THE EIGHTH DAY AND ONWARDS

D.E.Burr

Ezekiel 43: 1-7 (first half), 11, 12, 25-27; 44: 1-3

It is in mind to say a word as to this expression that comes in verse 27, "the eighth day and onwards", I believe that it is a unique expression, reserved for Ezekiel, in relation to the place where God can dwell with His people. What a wonderful expression that is, beloved brethren, a timeless expression, starting with the eighth day, the eighth day and onwards! I believe we touch it; we touch it as together even at a time like this, that God has what is to be un-concluded, we might say, because it goes on, but it starts with the eighth day, "the eighth day and onwards", and He says "I will accept you". What a thing that is to be accepted by God for eternity, to be in His presence, to be sustained there, to be preserved there, to be in the enjoyment of His presence in the acceptance that He alone in His righteousness and holiness is able to sustain. He has a basis upon which men can be there eternally, happily, in the acceptance of all the requirements of God because He has found His satisfaction in Jesus.

This scene, in a sense, is an earthly one. It is a scene that bears directly upon God's dealings with His earthly people and, in its interpretation, relates to the earth. But I think we can see that it applies to us here as upon the earth at the present time, that we are to be brought into the enjoyment of the eighth day and onwards and to be accepted by Jehovah. The chapter delineates certain features that lead up to this. First of all, Ezekiel is a man that is subject and leadable, he moves as under direction; he has fulfilled his charge throughout this book, a charge that must have been very difficult and at times even objectionable to him, but he is a worthy man who fulfils what is laid upon him and sees that there is an answer. He comes through the whole of this experience, these forty-two chapters and their woes, their failures, their iniquities, but as fulfilling his responsibility to bring the prophetic word to the people of Israel. He

comes back to this point as led: "he brought me unto the gate". What is God not able to do as we are leadable? As we are able to be brought, not in the exercise of our own wills or thinking out for ourselves how things ought to work out (how we would like to see them work out! but in subjection to the will of God, we accept His sovereign operations for the moment, accept the breakdown, the failure, accept that there is an answer to it and being led.

Ezekiel says "he brought me" - "he brought me unto the gate, the gate which looked toward the east". Have we then, brethren, been brought this way, brought to the gate that looks toward the east? How often we occupy ourselves, or allow ourselves to be occupied, with the other gates - the north gate and the west gate, the suggestions of the chill cold winds and the tempest and the storms, and death itself; how these things tend oftentimes to engage us! But the movement of God as leading Ezekiel is unto "the gate which looked toward the east". Well, what do you see from the east? You see the glory of a Man as out of death, a Man that has been into death but has been raised in triumph by the Father's glory. What an outlook there is then! It gives the answer to every problem here, to every sorrow, the answer to the corruption of the world with its sin, the answer to all the failure with in myself, that there is a view, an outlook towards the east. This is the way that God would lead us - in the direction of the appreciation of Christ as being raised, a glorious Man who has gained the victory. He ever lives, lives as out of death. We need to get a continual, recurring view of what the east would suggest.

And what does he see then? "The glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east". What an appreciation that was, what a sight, what a view for Ezekiel! That glory that he had seen depart, that had gone he knew not for how long because of the breakdown and the sin of the people, that glory had departed; and we have seen something of that, we have seen and experienced the sense in our souls of what Ichabod means. But he is brought back to the east, the way of the rising of Jesus, and he gets this fresh view of the movements of the glory of the God of Israel. "The glory of the

God of Israel came from the way of the east; and his voice was like the voice of many waters; and the earth was lit up with his glory. And the appearance of the vision that I saw was according to the vision that I had seen when I came to destroy the city". There is no change in the glory of God; when we come back to the way God is moving, come back to the place where He lives and where He operates, the glory is just the same; the glory of God does not change, that wonderful glory shining in the face of Jesus. What a glory it is! And it is an unchanging, unchangeable glory that we will enjoy and experience and witness throughout all eternity.

But then this is at the present time. Ezekiel was here, a man upon the earth, a man such as ourselves, and he gets this view as he gazes towards the east, a view of the glory of the God of Israel that was according to the vision that he had seen at the first. Beloved brethren, think of those visions that you saw at the first. How often brethren go back in their minds, and even in their expressions, to days that we once enjoyed. Those that can go back to the twenties and the thirties, and saw the large gatherings of the people of God, speak about what it was then. But what is it now? That is the point. Have you a view today of that same glory, the glory that you knew as a child, the glory that you knew as a young person, the glory that you knew when those men that we loved, men of renown, men that have gone into the pages of the testimonial history addressed us? Is the glory that they conveyed gone? Brethren, the glory of the God of Israel is the same at this moment as it was at the first. And what language this is! The young people study English and are given the world's books to read (and we sympathise with them in these courses of instruction), but any trained, natural mind can appreciate the perfection of language that is presented in a chapter like this. Where can you find anything like it? Where can you find, even reading it as history, even reading it as a textbook, grander language than this? "And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and his voice was like the voice of many waters; and the earth was lit up with his glory. And the appearance of the vision that I saw was according to the

vision that I had seen when I came to destroy the city". What attractive language it is! What young person could write a precis of Ezekiel 43? It would be a good exercise just to try and write it down. The schools might ask you to write a precis of something, but you try compressing Ezekiel 43. Friend, it is a wonderful expression of the inditing of the Spirit that He can cause these words to words to be written.

Then it says that Ezekiel fell upon his face. "And the glory of Jehovah came into the house by the way of the gate whose front was toward the east"; that is, that God was filling the place, He was recognising it, gracing it with His presence. Here upon the earth was a place where the glory of God could dwell. Is that not so, beloved brethren, that there is a place now where the glory of God can dwell, where He can come in, come in by the way of the affections of His people, as they are occupied with this eastern aspect? And it says "the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of Jehovah filled the house". What an experience to be in an area where the glory of God is filling the house! "And I heard one speaking unto me out of the house". Have we heard that? Do we get it, week by week, as we are together in our local settings with the brethren, as we read the scriptures, as we hear the prophetic word? Is there the consciousness in our hearts that there is One speaking to me? Never mind who else is there, never mind applying the word to somebody else; Ezekiel says "I heard one speaking unto me out of the house". It is an exact correspondence, really, with the book of Leviticus, that God spoke to Moses out of the tent of meeting. Here is God addressing one man, Ezekiel, out of the house, out of the place of the dwelling of His glory. This is to be something known amongst us and it is as we attune our ears, give our minds, to these things that we will hear, hear "one speaking unto me out of the house; and a man was standing by me". What a blessed expression of the Trinity we have here! The Spirit lifted him up. What a power there is in the Spirit for elevation! The Spirit would lift you up, beloved brother and sister, and bring you in and set you down in the centre of this realm, And the Man standing by - a

touching allusion to the Person of the Lord Jesus. The Spirit and the Lord are operating together in view of some fresh experience of the glory of the Father. What a privilege to be in this company! What a thing to be in this place! to be led by the Spirit of God to this vision where the glory is coming back. I love to think of the glory coming back into the house.

Well, Ezekiel recognised it; he did not need anybody to tell him what it was; he recognised it. So I think we should recognise by the Spirit, by the grace of God, that these things are happening, that the glory of God is coming back. In one sense it has never departed, God has remained faithful to His people; but in our current experience we are to understand that the glory is filling the house. "And he said unto me, Son of man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever". Think of God committing Himself to dwelling with His people! Because of what has been divinely arranged, God has a dwelling place, a place where He can live, where He can find satisfaction, where, as it says, He can place His throne, where He can place the soles of His feet, "where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever". What a beautiful message that is! Beloved brethren, is not God committed to this? Is He not going to see His people through? Is He not going to remain faithful to His promise? Is He not going to give them the experience of His presence, a place where He can dwell? This is His side, what He has done, what is available to be enjoyed.

But then in verse 11 it says, "And if they be confounded at all that they have done, make known to them the form of the house, and its fashion, and its goings out, and its comings in, and all its forms, and all its statutes, yea, all the forms, thereof, and all the laws thereof". God is saying to Ezekiel, this is what will establish the people, this is what will bring them back and encourage and feed them, if they are confounded. If their circumstances, the outward pressures, their inward fears and failing faith, are such that they are confounded, what is the answer? Well, Scripture gives you the answer: "If they be confounded at all that they have done, make

known to them the form of the house". Do not labour at what they have done. Do not tell them that they should not have done this and, if only they had done that, how much better it would have been. "Make known to them the form of the house". What a wonderful solution, beloved brethren, to our problems! "Make known to them the form of the house" - the place where God dwells, the detail of what He can enjoy as in the company of His people, where He can rest, where He can feed, where He can be served. "Make known to them the form of the house, and its fashion, and its goings out, and its comings in". What a testimony there is to be! the going out and the coming in from this place; that is, I suppose, that from the experience on Lord's day there is a testimony carried out in our lives. We go out, we come in, we move in relation to the house of God. All our movements, all our daily course, stand related to the assembly, to the maintenance of what is due to God there, and this is the solution to the confounding. "Its goings out, and its comings in, and all its forms, and all its statutes, yea, all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof". Think of that. Does anyone object to the laws? God is saying here that if persons are confounded, one of the things that is going to establish them, to confirm them, to revive them, is the laws. God says these are the things that are the antidotes to confusion. We do not need to be afraid of the laws of the house; we need to establish them, to confirm them, to maintain them, and you will find that if there is a place where the fashion of the house is maintained, where its goings out and its comings in can be spoken about, where its statutes and its forms and its laws are maintained, where they are written down and are kept, the whole form is kept, nothing is allowed to fall away, nothing to drop out, nothing given up; "the whole form thereof", the fulness of what God has committed to His people in this present time of revival; you will find there the antidote to confusion.

What a wonderful thing then to be in the testimony, to be privileged of God to be selected to have part in the maintenance of these things, "the form of the house... and its goings out, and its comings in... and all its statutes" and its laws. In Psalm 119 there

was a man who bursts out and says, "Oh how I love thy law! " (v 97). What a man that is that loves the divine authority and regulation! According to John's gospel it is the evidence of love for the Lord that you keep His commandments. They do not change, they do not need adjustment just because circumstances change around us, just because it might be easier to live and to pursue a course of things that is naturally attractive if certain little things are given up; the laws of the house, the forms and the statutes, do not change, they go on. It is these things, beloved brethren, that are the answer to confusion. When people are seeking a way out, as we trust more and more will, when persons are looking for a way out of the confusion, what are they going to find? What are they going to look for? What is going to satisfy them is a place where the form of the house and its laws and its statutes are maintained. This, beloved brethren, is the answer to confusion. How easy it is to drop into confusion, but the way out of it is the divinely appointed way, where the regulations of the house are respected and maintained.

So he says "This is the law of the house: Upon the top of the mountain all its border round about is most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house". He is reinforcing it, you see. This is the law of the house: there are certain divine requirements that have to stand, that whatever conditions may be, whatever changes the government may make and whatever their requirements, even if they bring in a closed shop or something of that nature, or if they attempt to interfere with our arrangements of service and gathering together, this is the law of the house. "Behold, this is the law of the house". There is what is unchangeable, what God has established which is immovable, and it is because "Upon the top of the mountain all its border round about is most holy". That is what has to be maintained, the place of the divine dwelling in all its holiness. This is shown to Ezekiel, this is spoken about to him; and he is a worthy man, a man that can appreciate these things, can set them down, preserve them for our day, for our instruction, and demonstrate in a living, attractive and powerful way that this is the answer to persons that are confounded.

Again we have this period of seven days within this system of things, the working of the temple: "Seven days shalt thou offer... a sin-offering; they shall also offer a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock without blemish. Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and purify it, and consecrate it". This period of seven days is when persons are occupied with what they have done, with what they are and God's answer to it - the sin-offering "seven days shalt thou offer daily". But then it says "when these days are ended". These times of engagement with what I am and what I have done, and introspection, right enough in its measure and in its place, these days are ended. "When these days are ended, it shall be that upon the eighth day and onwards" - what a thing to arrive at! We are arriving at eternal conditions where we can live together, be happy together, respond to God together and serve Him; this time not with sin-offerings; the eighth day and onwards is for the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings, the appreciation of what Christ is to God, the appreciation of the value of that sacrifice, that sweet savour that went up to fill His nostrils. What a savour that was! And it is what goes on, not one day, not seven days, but the eighth day and onwards is going to satisfy God eternally with the savour of Christ Himself, the perfection, the glories, the beauties, the work, the effects of what He has done. "And your peace-offerings" - how good it is to be able to come into the presence of God with peace-offerings, to know that all is well with your soul, to know that peace like a river is attending your way (hymn 238), to experience something of the peace for ever flowing from God's thoughts of His own Son (hymn 390), to rest in the enjoyment of the peace that comes into your soul, peace, knowing the judgment past. What blessing that is! - to be in the enjoyment of peace with God and to bring an offering in appreciation of it.

These things go on, they go on eternally, the eighth day and onwards. And God says "I will accept you". What a position to arrive at! How blessed to be in the presence of God, in the company of the Lord, knowing that there is no disparity, no disharmony, no conflicts, no discord, that all is at rest, all is at peace, you are there

having the best robe on, the wedding garment, entirely suited for the Father's presence. I will accept you on that eighth day and onwards because of the experience, typically at least, of the rest of the chapter, that you have been brought that way, to experience the coming in of the glory of God, to understand what is suited to His presence and to have part in the maintenance of what satisfies Him and to be drawn out of the confusion into the understanding of that holiness on the top of the mountain and round about. So we come this way to the eighth day and onwards. God is giving us these experiences of being restfully there, accepted, no hindrance, nothing to mar, nothing outstanding to deal with, but that God is satisfied, satisfied with the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings. On that basis He can be with His people, He can dwell with them, and they can dwell with Him, from the eighth day and onwards.

Then Ezekiel is brought back and he has another look. It says "the outer gate of the sanctuary which looked toward the east; and it was shut. And Jehovah said unto me, This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter in by it: for Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it; and it shall be shut". What a blessed suggestion that is, beloved brethren, of the abiding presence of God, that He cannot go out! He does not want to go out, but He cannot go out, if you will allow the word. God can do everything of course, but from this presentation God has allowed the gate to be shut "and it shall be shut". It has remained shut. God is there with His people. This book concludes with that word: "Jehovah is there", chap 48: 35. He is there and the gate is shut. How lovely that is, that God is there! He is not going out, He is not going to leave His people, He is not going to depart; no more sorrow, no more sighing, no more distress, no more sin to cause Him to move, but He is there in the place of His dwelling, He is there and the gate is shut. Is that not wonderful? It is the gate by which He came in, by which the glory is now, we might say, enclosed, the fulness of the presence of God. What a fulness it is that we are intended to enjoy! not God in His glory in any partial sense, but the fulness of it there, not able, not willing, not wanting to go out because the gate is shut. How

wonderful then to be sustained for ever in the presence of the glory of God! The Lord is there and the prince is going to eat bread before Jehovah. "He shall enter by the way of the porch of the gate". The Lord has glorious liberty in His movements and can go in and go out and He will eat bread before Jehovah. He is no longer alone - that glorious Man has known what it is to be alone - but now He has those with Him who are like Him, of His own order, those that He will sustain eternally in the presence of God because they are accepted in Him, taken "into favour in the Beloved", Eph 1: 6. Beloved brethren, these are very real, very precious things, that we are privileged to enter upon and enjoy. Let us do our part in maintaining circumstances in which God can dwell so that we may have the experience of being accepted and that God has the gate shut and is not going to leave it because He enjoys it. He is happy, He is restful, in the presence of His people that have been secured for His praise. May the Lord bless the word.

LONDON

19 November 1977

THE CHILDREN'S FAITH

The Lord Jesus spoke of one person as having "little faith". Strange to say this was Peter, the first of the apostles, when he had just walked on the sea to go to Jesus. He had begun to sink and we can

only suppose that his faith should have enabled him to walk even on rough water. However he found help through a little prayer of only three words - perhaps the shortest prayer in the Bible - "Lord, save me". As someone has said of it; the Lord at one end, Peter at the other and salvation all the way between.

Shortly after this the Lord said to a woman "thy faith is great". Surprisingly she was not even of Israel but was sure that in the heart of God there was blessing even for a stranger such as herself. Her faith actually grew stronger as Jesus proved her with searching words and questions. She too found strength in a prayer as short as Peter's and very much like it - "Lord, help me". Her daughter was made well by Jesus so no doubt there was now another dear child who believed on him.

Incidents like these make us realise that faith grows by being used. When the apostles asked the Lord to give them more faith, he told them to use what they had even if only like a seed-grain and it would have living power. So too when the disciples asked "Lord, teach us to pray" He said "When ye pray", meaning that the first thing was to be knowingly in the presence of a divine Person.

Many things, texts of scripture and urgent words may have led us to trust the Lord for salvation but our faith rests on His Person and His work. A man running into a city of refuge would be thankful for signposts to show him the way but he would not be safe, or feel so, until at the place appointed by God for the needy sinner. You will remember that the six cities of refuge were so situated that an Israelite was never more than about thirty-five miles from one. But the "word of faith" is not even an inch away from you - it is "in thy mouth", ready to be uttered. Have you with your mouth confessed Jesus as Lord and believed in your heart that God has raised Him from among the dead? This is eternal and present salvation.

J.C.Evershed