

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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NEARNESS

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It is in mind to seek help from the Lord to say something as to nearness. God is operating to secure men in nearness to Himself. In God's dealings with man at the beginning, after He had created the animals and created man, He brought the animals to Man to see what names he would give to them, conveying clearly that God was alongside Man as he did it, and as He took account of the names, they were approved and they remained. Then alas distance came in, so that instead of Man listening to God he began to listen to someone else. When Jehovah Elohim walked in the garden in the cool of the day, what distance had come in! Man and his wife hid from God in the midst of the very trees that God had placed there for their blessing. How God felt it, and immediately spoke in that great prophetic utterance which pointed forward to how the seed of the woman was coming in so that the distance might be eternally removed. The time came when men could say "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us", John 1: 14. What nearness there was! - not the final removal of distance but God coming I'm to remove distance. Distance had to come in at the cross that nearness might be known by you and me. God alone can measure the distance at the cross in the forsaking of Jesus, or what it means when it speaks of Jesus going "into the lower parts of the earth", Eph 4: 9. What distance there was when the One who knew not sin was made sin that you and I today and eternally might know what it is to be rest fully in nearness to God!

We have read of Moses as a man who knew nearness as no one else did in his time. It says "And there arose no prophet since... whom Jehovah had known face to face". What privileges Moses had. In Exodus 33, when breakdown had come into the camp, it did not overthrow the experience that Moses had had in the mountain with God. The mountain was unchanged and God was unchanged.

Moses did not remain inside the camp but resorted to God outside the camp and took the tent there, the Tent of meeting. It says "And Jehovah spoke with Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend" (v 11). How wonderfully Moses spoke and wrote five books as a result of his experiences with God. Moses was not there when the happenings of the book of Genesis took place, but God instructed him as to what happened and Moses wrote accurately. Then what instructions there were that came directly from the mouth of Jehovah so that Moses could say as he does in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, "And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying". Then in the book of Deuteronomy the man Moses wrote from his experience with God and as to his own yearnings over the people. You get touches of the feelings of Moses as when he speaks of the numbers that there were and desires that Jehovah would make them "a thousand times so many more", Deut 1: 11. The man Moses with feelings formed by having spoken with God face to face was being prepared for the time when he was going to be called forward on to the mount of transfiguration along with Elijah. It was not then Jehovah speaking with Moses face to face but Moses and Elias along with Peter and James and John gazing on Jesus with His face shining as the sun and His garments which became white as the light. What an experience that was and that is, beloved brethren, what you and I can have. There was no prophet in the Old Testament times like Moses for it was distinctive and special to Moses, but in this present dispensation every one of us can see Jesus and see Him crowned with glory and honour. We have not actually seen Him, we are going to see Him face to face so very soon, but although not having seen Him in that way we already love Him, and we have the experience by the Spirit of what it is to see Him where He is and to be near Him. How often we prove the power of the word, "but there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother", Prov 8: 24. What a Friend Jesus is!

What Moses experienced was very great in his time, but it is the privilege of every one of the saints at the present time, through divine work and grace, to draw near to Jesus, and go in to God in the holiest. In the time of the tabernacle going in to the holy of holies was confined and restricted but it is now open to every one of us. As

a result of the work of Christ and His recent place in glory every one of us can know this nearness in intimacy with Jesus and what it is to speak to Him and be conscious that He is speaking to us. We can speak to the Spirit and be conscious of the Spirit speaking to us. In the power of the Spirit through Christ we are able to draw near into the very presence of the Father. We do not worship afar off but in nearness in the presence of God. May the Spirit give us some fresh appreciation of the wonder of what we have been called into, that we know this place of nearness to divine Persons Themselves. We are going to be near God eternally but at the present time, while still in the scene where there are sorrows and difficulties and testings, and conflict maybe in some measure, we have the privilege of being near divine Persons and of having direct guidance from Them; not having to be restrained by bit and bridle but being instructed as to the will of God and given counsel as to how to move in the little matters and in the big matters. Let us be near divine Persons so that what we do has divine approval because it has the power of divine instruction behind it.

Those men, that came from the east when they understood that there had been born One who was the king of the Jews, came as with divine instruction. Perhaps they should have gone to Bethlehem but they went to Jerusalem and God's hand was over that for all Jerusalem became troubled as a result. As the danger came in, after they had seen the little Child and His mother, it says they were "divinely instructed", and the word 'signifies an answer after consultation' (see note to Matt 2: 12). As we find ourselves in need of guidance or direction we can draw near to God and be instructed to go another way. The matter of being face to face brings in a sense of nearness between each one of us and divine Persons which the Spirit of God would help us to be formed in so that we seek to make time to be near to divine Persons increasingly. Both when we are in our closets and in our homes, and when we are together assembly-wise, let us preserve the sense of being near divine Persons so that we always move as under divine direction.

Now where we read in Ezekiel is the bringing together of persons. The experience here of the prophet was when conditions seemed to be beyond recall. There was a valley full of bones and they were very dry, but as the prophetic word comes in "there was a noise, and behold a rustling" - not 'listen to a rustling' but "behold a rustling". Priestly ears would detect a rustling like this. They would distinguish it from "a sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry-trees" (2 Sam 5: 24) when God had gone before to overthrow the Philistines. This was a rustling in life, with one coming to its bone; not "face to face" but "bone to its bone", and no bone out of place, every bone coming into place with its bone. What a wonderful scene this was! - dispensationally pointing forward to the resurrection of Israel when the nation will be recovered as the Deliverer will come out of Zion. Life will come in again into what appears so hopeless according to man, but the spiritual bearing of it is to have an effect upon us, bone coming to its bone. Then there is the full development of life and there appears an exceeding great army; not a large number of warriors but an exceeding great army, the feature of unity beginning to come to light. It is not a number of individuals who know God but individuals who have been formed in body feelings for one another, bone coming to its bone. And then stick coming to stick and becoming one stick; the feature of oneness coming to light. So that the saints are not only preserved in nearness individually, they take on these body feelings in relation to the saints locally and universally and begin to find the reality of one body underlying assembly activity. What an experience it is when we are together for a reading meeting! You are conscious that underlying what brethren are saying there is the working of the body; it is each bone having found its place in connection with every other bone. It is not prominence for man, it is the operation of the body in love and skill, affecting the brothers as they speak, and the sisters as in their spirits they contribute to the occasion, so that what proceeds gathers power. You can say "behold a rustling"; not the marching in the mulberry trees - that has its place of course - but on occasions of temple character I believe we often behold the rustling in the feature of oneness which comes to light. So you are conscious in your spirit

not only of being freshly bound to your brethren with whom you have the privilege of breaking bread, but of your links with the saints universally in one body.

That is to find outlet in expression as we have in Isaiah, Where it is a matter of seeing "eye to eye". These are the watchmen, "the voice of thy watchmen" in Zion. It is not now Moses by himself but watchmen. This has in view that each of us has the privilege of being one of the watchmen in Zion. They would be evangelical watchmen who take character from the watchman earlier in the book of Isaiah to whom the enquiry comes, "Watchman, what of the night?" The watchmen with one accord would say "The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire; return, come", chap 21: 11, 12. O, what scope there is for watchmen in Zion at the present time! How many persons there are who ought to be enquiring and are not enquiring; they are waiting at home for some revelation from God when God has already given all that they need. O that there were such a power of evangelical watchmanship amongst us that we might discern people who are ready to move in that way, persons who are saying 'what of the night?' Our mission is not to speak of the night, our mission is to speak of the morning. There are persons who think everything is fading away: "Watchman, what of the night?" Do not let us be persons like that, although there is the warning, "also the night", but the main burden of a watchman is that the morning is coming, "if ye will inquire, inquire; return, come". Then they would be praying watchmen; they would be men who know the danger of the enemy attacking and have taken to heart the words of the Lord Jesus, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation", Mark 4: 38.

And they would be priestly watchmen. What need there is for priestly watchmen in Zion! What a priestly watchman was Paul! He spoke of the crowd of cares pressing on him daily, the burden of all the assemblies. We might enquire, how did he know? He was in priestly intercession and activity about the burdens of all the assemblies. He was not taking on their responsibilities - the Spirit of God guards that the word that Paul uses - he was taking on priestly

concern. Paul was distinctive in his place but he had those who laboured with him, he had fellow-bondmen, fellow-workmen, fellow-soldiers, fellow-prisoners, and he had at least one true yokefellow.

What a privilege to be called by Paul a "true yokefellow". He called upon that true yokefellow (it may have been Epaphroditus but it is left open, so it could include each of us) because he discerned that there was a little danger at Philippi of brethren not fully seeing eye to eye. There were happy conditions characteristically at Philippi but he saw the need to exhort them to think the same thing, to be joined in soul, to think one thing. A priestly watchman would especially look for that and would labour instinctively and skilfully if there were any danger of them not seeing eye to eye. As Paul interceded with God as he wrote that epistle to the Philippians, exhorting them to stand fast in the Lord, in his priestly discernment he understood there was a danger of two sisters not being of the same mind in the Lord, so he immediately exhorts them. He says "I exhort Euodia, and exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord", chap 4: 2. How powerful had been the apostle's word earlier in the epistle: "For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus", chap 2: 5. Then he goes on and he says to these two beloved sisters, "I exhort Euodia, and exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord". Then he says "yea, I ask thee also, true yoke fellow, assist them"; that is, he calls upon that priestly watchman, the true yokefellow, to assist those two. He exhorts the two sisters, then he asks for assistance. He does not ask for assistance for one, he asks this true yokefellow as a priestly person to assist them both. Let us carry this forward into our own time. Where do we fit in? Would we in the presence of God have to say, Yes, I am just like Euodia? Or would we have to say, Yes, I am just like Syntyche? Or would we be able to qualify to be the true yokefellow? When difficulties come in, whether it is between brothers or sisters, or even more sorrowfully between local assemblies, it is rare that both are absolutely right.

There is no suggestion here that Euodia was right and Syntyche was wrong. How easily we conclude if one is wrong the other one must be right, but Paul does not say that. He was a priest and he exhorts them both. He is not saying they were both absolutely

wrong; they were both still breaking bread, both still in fellowship, both there no doubt when the letter was read. He discerned there was something in which Euodia needed adjustment and something in which Syntyche needed adjustment, and so he exhorts them both to be of the same mind in the Lord. He counts on this true yokefellow, as taking on the privileges of a priestly watchman, of assisting them. That yokefellow would take on the spirit of Paul. He would not have drawn near to Euodia and said, You were absolutely right in that, you stand firm. I think he would have said, You know you need to accept adjustment as to so and so. And I think his approach to Syntyche would have been somewhat similar. He would not have dwelt on where they were right (God took account of that), he would have sought to assist them so that they might adjust what needed to be adjusted and that they might become of the same mind in the Lord and see eye to eye. What a matter it is to see eye to eye, not as agreeing according to the flesh but as being of the same mind in the Lord!

The normal condition in Zion is that the watchmen are seeing eye to eye, and they lift up the voice and sing aloud together in the service of God. We are thankful for these watchmen who have special skill in singing, brethren who can start just the right tune when it is needed, but then all of us are brought into this service of singing aloud together. When the greatness of Christ is recognised in every local assembly in all His distinctiveness and glory, and when His rights are fully made way for, we shall be able to sing aloud together, "for they shall see eye to eye, when Jehovah shall bring again Zion", There would have been a result from Paul's epistle to the Philippians, I am assured. The Lord is active amongst us at the present time to help in any matter that needs to be adjusted so that it is adjusted rightly in a priestly way with a view to all of us truly seeing eye to eye for the glory of God in Zion. The rights of God in mercy, as seen in Zion, are the basis for adjustment coming in. As we get before God we do not dwell on the things where we have been right but on the things where we are beginning to understand that we need adjustment. We are caused to cry to God for mercy afresh and

we get a fresh sense of the sovereignty of God's mercy in Zion and we begin to see eye to eye. Reconciliation would enter into this whichever scripture we may refer to.

When we come to John's epistle we have John's delight in having those with whom he can speak "mouth to mouth". He had to write because he was unavoidably at a distance, but he did not write more than he had to. What he had in mind was to speak mouth to mouth: "I hope soon to see thee, and we will speak mouth to mouth". That would be the normal enjoyment of nearness amongst us as brethren dwelling in unity. What a joy it is to have brethren you can be happily in fellowship with, in whom you have confidence, whom you love, with whom you are free to break bread and pray and gather for all the assemblings together, brethren with whom you can, at least in a large measure, see eye to eye and to whom you can speak mouth to mouth. What an experience it would have been to hear John speaking mouth to mouth to these persons, particularly to Gaius. Gaius would speak to John too, for this was not a one way matter. This would have been mutual conversation for mutual profit and for comfort. I do not think they would have spoken over-much about Diotrephes; divine power would have dealt with Diotrephes. John as a son of thunder would have dealt with Diotrephes; that would be quickly cleared and these men would have proceeded to speak in happy enjoyment of fellowship, mouth to mouth.

John speaks in his first epistle of the distinctiveness of the fellowship of the twelve, but we are brought into that fellowship, and through that into the fellowship of God's Son. It is not our fellowship, nor is it a fellowship connected with any of us. How sadly persons get astray when they begin to connect the fellowship with some man; it is the beginning of disaster. Let us be preserved in the enjoyment and experience of the fellowship into which God has called us, the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. We can speak mouth to mouth in relation to the great and glorious things that relate to God and to the prosperity of His interests. There are things to pray about and to weep about, but how much there is to rejoice about. How many births there are amongst the brethren at the moment, a matter

for rejoicing. These things are not just by the way; they cause the hearts of the saints to rejoice that if the Lord leaves us here there is a further strengthening of the younger generation.

Let us be encouraged to speak in a way which will promote the peace of Jerusalem, and then it will promote friendliness. John says "Peace be to thee". We always need to be strengthened in the enjoyment of peace. Diotrephes was still there, a man who was causing trouble, but Demetrius was there too, so there was cause for peace. There may be conflict in some measure right through to the end when we shall see Jesus face to face, but until then the word to each of us and to every local assembly would be "Peace be to thee". Then he says "The friends greet thee", that is, the friends where John was. He was writing as the elder and in happy fellowship with the friends where he was. Friends are friendly with one another. It speaks of the brethren of Joseph that they could not greet him with friendliness", Gen 37: 4. What a foreign state to the assembly! Never let that be found amongst us. Let us be found as those who are friends able to speak mouth to mouth because we see eye to eye. Then he says "Greet the friends by name". It is as though John would be so drawing on his own experience of nearness to Jesus as in His bosom that he desired that the beloved brethren might be increased in their experience of nearness to divine Persons and as a result be in nearness to one another. That is the way it works. The nearer we are to divine Persons the nearer we shall be to one another. We shall find our valuation of the friends is increasing and we shall be able to greet them by name. We may not always remember the natural names but the Spirit of God would give us increasing ability to be able to greet the friends by their spiritual names. There is a large measure of what is secret in relation to the surname that each of us has, but along with that there is priestly discernment amongst the brethren. As we are with God we begin to gather impressions of the surnames that have been given to one another, and we greet the friends by name as seeking to value them according to divine valuation.

As we are preserved in nearness we shall be waiting together for the final gathering when the Lord's voice is going to be heard and we will all go up together. We will not go up as local companies but with all the saints, all the dead in Christ, all those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. We shall see face to face the Man whom not having yet seen we already love because He has first loved us. For His Name's sake.

MAIDSTONE

24 March 1978

DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL SENSIBILITIES

A.B.Parker

Luke 24: 25; Hebrews 5: 13,14

I am thinking of spiritual sensibilities and the need for us to cultivate them. Experiences which we have gone through, and of which we may well be ashamed, tended to suppress the development of spiritual sensibilities. Because of a certain dominating influence little room was made for the voice of spiritual intuition. In John's first epistle we are told that we need not that anyone should teach us, that the unction will teach us (see chap 2: 27). We believe that relates to the Holy Spirit in unrestrained liberty in us. Our spiritual occasions depends upon the functioning of spiritual sensibilities. This can be seen in John 12 at Bethany, where the Lord Jesus had imparted a very wonderful impression of Himself as the resurrection and the life. It was in the enjoyment of that impression that they made Him a supper. Mary acted with spiritual intuition in honouring the Lord Jesus when she anointed His feet and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. But there was one there who lacked spiritual sensitivity and he exposed himself by saying "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" (v 5). He had no true sense of smell. The Holy Spirit immediately exposes him - "not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief". In the presence of spiritual senses are wrought upon by the Spirit if we habitually make room for Him. We are told that "the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit", Rom 8: 16. That is an indication of how the blessed Spirit of God is ready to impart impressions to us. The witness in that passage is that we are children of God. It is a great matter to accept the truth as to our place in God's family, but it is a greater matter to have the witness of it by the Spirit. This is a matter of experience; it is one of the ways in which the spiritual senses help us.

It has been said quite often in ministry that there should be greater sensitivity with us in the service of God, that we may move

more freely under the headship of Christ rather than merely follow a ritual, accurate though it may be and helpful as giving guidelines for the flow of praise; but freshness on such sensitivity evil is exposed. Judas had no spiritual sensibilities. John's gospel tells us quite considerably about the spiritual senses. The following examples and other passages treat of this: the sense of taste is mentioned in chap 2: 9; the sense of sight in chap 3: 3; the sense of hearing in chap 5: 25; the sense of touch in chap 9: 6, and the sense of smell in chapter 12. According to Hebrews 5: 14 "solid food belongs to full-grown men, who, on account of habit, have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil".

When the Lord Jesus, in speaking to the two on their way to Emmaus, said "O senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke 24: 25) I do not think He was just calling them foolish. I believe that He was implying that their dilemma was because their spiritual senses were not functioning. The things which they had told Him of the happenings that day were enough to stir up their spiritual sensibilities. Even though they had not understood that He would rise from the dead (this, of course, was not to their credit because the Lord had said on several occasions that He was to be crucified and that He would rise the third day), the very happenings to which they had referred had been sufficient to awaken spiritual sensibilities rather than being discouraged and giving up. The Lord Jesus therefore had to rebuke them - that they were slow of heart. But He graciously gave them a manifestation of Himself, which set their hearts in motion. I bring this incident forward as an example of how the Lord may indicate something to us by things that happen, to teach us, not according to chapter and verse, but by experiences which help us in the habit of exercising spiritual senses so that we discern things. It is thus that the Holy Spirit would teach us, enabling us to have a right outlook and a right judgment of things.

I believe that this exercise should help us in a positive way to have God's mind and to protect us from failure. We need protection even in our ordinary surroundings because we are prone to lean on

our own understanding; we need to have our spiritual senses functioning. Isaac was tested when Jacob came to him with the venison which he needed to stimulate him to bless Esau. He did not distinguish that the venison was actually two kids of the goats. It is an interesting passage (Gen 27: 6-27) because all five senses are involved. Isaac could not see; his taste for venison influenced him; his sense of hearing was acute but his sense of touch did not discern that the hands were the hands of Jacob, and the smell of Esau's garments could hardly be said to be the smell of a field which Jehovah had blessed. Nevertheless Jehovah was over the matter for He had purposed that Jacob should get the blessing, but that did not excuse Isaac. Our spiritual sensibilities are intended to protect us from having a wrong outlook. They protected Jacob later when, though his eyes were dim, he nevertheless discerned which of the sons of Joseph should receive the greater blessing.

As I mentioned, the spiritual senses are given for our protection as well as for discerning what is positive. Think of how far we are able to see, for instance. We should be able to see danger afar off. If I can see twenty thousand coming against me when I have only ten thousand, I know it is time to make peace. We can hear sounds at considerable distance and we have two ears to focus where the sound comes from and what its source is, dangerous or otherwise. If some damaging influence is near at hand the sense of smell and the sense of touch enable us to discern this, but should we be about to appropriate something harmful the sense of taste may, at the last moment so to speak, enable us to discern it and save ourselves from harm.

Perhaps the use of spiritual sensitiveness has its most valuable application to our part in the great privileges which are open to us in our collective settings. Scripture puts distinguishing good first: "for distinguishing both good and evil". And this enters into our participation in the Supper and the service of praise. We are to distinguish the body of the Lord (see 1 Cor 11: 29), and we need to distinguish the current movements of the Lord Jesus, if He is to function amongst us as Minister of the sanctuary, as Head of the

assembly. One is constantly rebuked by one's lack of capacity to do this, but it is one's outlook and I am sure it is the outlook of most of us, that we may discern the Lord's coming in amongst us, His holy and intimate movements and His leadership in the praises. Thus we may have a sense of touch with the Lord and not be out of touch with Him at any point during the entire meeting. We do not wish to have the Father say to us as Reuel did to his daughters, "Why then have ye left the man behind? " Exod 2: 20.

The development of spiritual senses is a very real matter. They relate to the inward man, the spiritual order of man which is to be clothed upon ere long with our house from heaven. They relate to the reality of Christian experience - the reality of spiritual life. We need, of course, to be preserved from mere natural sentiment, but the expression of feeling from hearts freshly pressed with a sense of being in line with the Lord in leading us and sustaining us in the service moves the heart of the God who dwells amidst "the praises of Israel". I believe that the Holy Spirit is set to help us in this. Let us be more sensitive to the promptings of our spiritual sensibilities, for His Name's sake.

BROOKLYN NY

12 May 1977

THE TESTIMONY

J.N.Grace

Matthew 1: 21-25; Revelation 1: 9; 22: 16,17

Paul, when referring to this character of meeting, assumed that we all had something. When you come together, he says, each has certain things (see 1 Cor 14: 26) - a psalm, or teaching, interpretation or revelation. We cannot assume too much, but perhaps at least we have had some experience in the ways of God. In His patience He takes different ways to teach us; the normal way is by ministry in the power of the Spirit, by prophecy. It may be that He has to take the way of discipline to teach us, but how persistent our God is in His ways of grace so that He can reach His mind with us. I think therefore that each of us at least can have a psalm. What I have to say may be more in the nature of that.

I am thinking of the testimony of God. Our brother has referred to the tent of meeting which was the tent of testimony. I am assured that everyone in this room, every brother and every sister, would have a very big interest in the testimony of God. In fact that should be the prime thing in our lives. If it is not, why are we here? If God has left us here it is that we should be fully identified with His testimony. Some of us may for a time miss our way, but the grace that follows us would bring us back, and I think the way that we are brought back involves the testimony of Jesus. The testimony of God is spoken of in different ways, different expressions are used. There is the testimony of Jesus, there is the testimony of our Lord, there is the testimony of the Christ. All these are well worth looking into as the Spirit of God would open them up to us; but I think that, in the day in which we are, John's reference to the testimony of Jesus indicates the way by which we arrive at the testimony of our Lord or the testimony of the Christ, because what will hold our souls in the day in which we live, when all that is official has broken down, and when there is a hundred and fifty years of history in the recovery to the truth, the only thing that will hold and recover us is our personal

links with Jesus. It is the personality of that blessed Man that will hold our souls, because God's testimony is bound up with one blessed Man, and if anything interferes, or beclouds the uniqueness of that Man, God will have to say to it and He will bring back our souls by way of our links with the person of Jesus.

So I think that the personality of Jesus shines in a day of recovery in our own hearts as it has never shone before, and the way that Matthew opens with a reference to Jesus would connect, I think, with what is said, that "the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus", Rev 19: 10. All that the prophets have written, all that they conveyed, was in relation to this one Man who has now appeared upon the scene, and "the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus". From one end to the other of the Scriptures, indited by the Spirit of God, it is all about this blessed Man. What I say is very simple but I think it is very fundamental. Beloved brethren, as one has found, one may have light; you may have an understanding in some measure of the truth that has been recovered to us, but the life and vitality connected with the testimony of God finds us out as to where we are in our links with this blessed Man. His name is Jesus. The official side is dropped, you will notice, at the end of the book of Revelation. When the Lord speaks He says "I Jesus" - as if personality first in Himself is becoming prominent in an increasing measure. But then I think it involves also that it is having its effect in the souls of His people and servants, and then it is that personality begins to shine in them, So I think we shall know one another personally, as we are found in the testimony of God, as we have not known each other before, and our links will be in life in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit of God at the close of this book is also presented in a personal way, not the Holy Spirit, not the Spirit of God, but the Spirit - "the Spirit and the bride say, Come". That is a fine answer, is it not? a fine answer in personality linked with the Spirit as the personality of the bride comes into evidence, as I believe it will. The assemblies go through; that is quite evident because the Lord is speaking to them here. He says "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies", so

they are there. It is for us to find where the expression of them is and to be identified with them, and the way into it I think is through our links with Jesus.

John therefore, as he begins this book of Revelation, says he was "in the island called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus". That is the only testimony worth being identified with because that is what is going through. We have our links with one another universally, and the testimony involves what is universal, but in the practical working of it out it just involves how we are set in the will of God, in the locality where God in His wisdom has set us. So John was set in the isle of Patmos; he was on his own there as far as we know. There he was, in relation to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus; and what has worked out from that, dear brethren, is the book that we have in our hands and the ministry that has come to us by way of the book of Revelation through the Spirit of God. It has come by one man being in that situation, not in relation to his own will, his own pleasure, but in relation to the word of God, the mind of God being conveyed. Paul opened it up at Corinth - in that locality - and now it is being carried through in one man, in John. He identified himself with the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. One can understand the way the testimony has gone through. Think of that beloved brother Bernard who wrote that hymn nine hundred years ago, that hymn about Jesus:

'Jesus! the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills the breast' (No. 279)

The very simplicity of what we have when we come together - a brother stands up to pray and concludes his prayer 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' - should thrill our hearts. It should bow our hearts when we hear the name of that blessed Man who gives character to things from the beginning to the end of our being together. So it is at the Supper; announcements are made 'in the name of the Lord Jesus'. There is a thrill connected with that! It is the way God has been pleased to put Himself in touch with humanity from our earliest days. Think of the Babe coming in according to Luke's gospel, the nations and the whole of humanity in view, but God putting Himself in

touch through a little Babe. His name was Jesus. Wonderful penetration enters into that name - Jah the Saviour. Who can tell the depth of the mystery that lies in that name? But it is a name that we have all learned from our earliest years, and I think in this closing day God would have it that the personality of his blessed Man should shine increasingly in our hearts, and that that should find an answer in the development of a variety of personality amongst us, working out just where we are in divine wisdom where the will of God has set us. I think that is the testimony of Jesus.

LONDON

14 March 1978

THE CHILDREN'S TRUST

The beauty of the language used by the Lord Jesus always arrests the mind of the believer. Thus from the five simple words "I will trust in him" we learn the restful way in which He trod the path of dependence upon God. Indeed, according to prophecy in one of the Psalms, He even took the ground that from His earliest infancy God had caused Him to trust. It moves us deeply to see how, in taking part in blood and flesh, He became identified even with little children.

We know that the early life of Jesus was of secret delight to the Father, yet many favoured persons must have seen with wonder the proofs of His constant trust in God. Scripture speaks of His being subject to His parents, so that in this He has left us a model, whether we be young children or older ones. Also we are told that as growing up He was filled with wisdom, God's grace being upon Him. This in its fulness could be said only of Jesus, but by walking in His steps we too may receive these divine favours.

It is good to ponder the first question and answer taught by some Scottish churchgoers to their children; 'What is the chief end of man?' - 'To glorify God and enjoy Him for ever'. How true! Nothing could be greater. Job, on the other hand, said about persons who forget Him and just trust in themselves, that what they rely on is merely a "spider's web". Although this marvel of creation may be stronger, weight for weight, than any rope or steel hawser, such a thing could never support the great issues of life and death to God's glory.

Our faith should be full and simple. Often we try to add to our trust in Christ some reliance on our own works or religious feelings. Over four hundred years ago, during the Reformation, a Christian prince sent ambassadors to a discussion about salvation. He said to them 'Be sure to bring back the little word 'alone'; do not dare to return without it'. Both parties to the discussion confessed that salvation was through Jesus Christ, but this prince and many other believers had learned gladly that it is through faith in Him 'alone'.

Do you believe these words of Scripture, "to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies he ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness"?

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