

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

THE GLORY OF THE KINGDOM

"WHERE NO WOOD IS... "

THE CHILDREN SAFE AND SAVED

THE GLORY OF THE KINGDOM

Luke 9: 28-36; 2 Peter 1: 16-18; Romans 14: 17

E.C.B. I thought we might enquire about the glory of the kingdom. It is intended to be known morally now but as to its actuality it will be introduced following the appearing of Christ and the administrative dealing with things that oppose. We perhaps have some impression of the fulness of what the appearing will be, when the Lord Jesus Himself will be displayed in the glory of His administrative rule. We are somewhat accustomed to Mr Raven's description of the kingdom, that it is the moral sway of God in the soul. That bears on the present time, of course. I do not think that when we are actually in the kingdom when it is introduced we will be speaking about the moral sway of God in the soul; we shall be in a condition where, as to us, all things are of God; but as to the present time, that is the moral characteristic of the kingdom, the moral sway of God in the soul.

The first two scriptures read present to us not only the blessedness and greatness of Christ in administrative rule over things but peculiarly Christ as the object of the Father's love in that position; I think that that gives a very distinctive character to our understanding of the kingdom of God. When Jesus was here He said in Luke's gospel "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (chap 17: 21), but when He was here He was the object of the Father's love. In that gospel they go up to the mount of transfiguration, Jesus saying that there were some standing there who should not taste death until they had seen the kingdom of God, and on the mountain He is manifestly the object of the Father's love: "This is my beloved Son". Therefore I think that the kingdom of God as presented here is not a very different thought from the kingdom of the Son of His love which is presented to us in Colossians (see chap 1: 13). It is interesting too to connect other scriptures with this, for instance what the Lord offers to the overcomer: "to him will I give to sit with me in my throne" (Rev 3: 21) which would bear on the place that the overcomer peculiarly will have in the kingdom with Christ.

But both in Luke and in Peter's epistle the distinctive character of things that is brought out is Christ in glory as the object of the Father's love. I think that should enter into our understanding of the kingdom and by that means we would gather more an impression that it is for the benefit of man. Man is brought into the sphere where the Father's beloved Son is dominant over everything. John does not quite so much fill out the thought of the kingdom although, of course, the brethren know he refers to it, but I think it is implied in "the Father loves the Son and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35.

I have alluded to the scripture in Romans because it brings out that the character of the kingdom is, as we say, moral - "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit". I think that these three things will carry through in our experiences into the kingdom when it is actually established. They will all be characteristics that will be enjoyed throughout the world to come and they will make all the difference to the present order of things, that an order of things is set up in which righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit are established. There are many other things that might be said about the kingdom; there are many things said in the Scriptures, both implicitly in the Old Testament and directly in the New. For instance, it is eternal, it is everlasting, it is heavenly, it is not of this world - many other references would come to mind - but I have been impressed with how fundamental the teaching of the kingdom in its glory is to our apprehending the fulness of the present day. The bearing of the kingdom morally is fundamental too, but the bearing of the kingdom in glory is fundamental to what we enjoy in the present time.

J.H. Why is the mount of transfiguration introduced by the Lord taking Peter, James and John up into a mountain to *pray*?

E.C.B. In Luke the mount of transfiguration bears particularly on men. It says "two men" talked with Him and Jesus goes up as a dependent Man. In praying we are acknowledging that the power is elsewhere than in ourselves, and that power is really in this great system of glory where the Father loves the Son and has not only

given everything to be in His hand but has made Him the centre of a world of glory into which men will enter. In Mark, after the transfiguration, they saw no one but Jesus alone with themselves, and I think that impression has to remain with us, that in this sphere of glory there is a central place for Jesus. But then there is also a place for us and it is because He is there as Man.

J.R. Would Solomon be typical of the glory of the kingdom? David subjugated, he subdued. There will be a period when the Lord will subdue in view of what Solomon's glory typifies shining out.

E.C.B. Yes, I think so. The glory of the establishment of the kingdom and of its manifestation is in a way shared in the Old Testament between David and Solomon. It is as if one man could not set out the fulness of what is established in Christ, but David in his subduing energies paves the way for the introduction of the kingdom where there is neither adversary nor evil event (see 1 Kings 5: 4) and that will be a characteristic of the kingdom in glory.

J.R. I was thinking of your reference to righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. There will be a righteous basis for the peaceful reign of Christ as the true Solomon.

E.C.B. Yes, and that Christ will not be disqualified from the glory of the kingdom because He has been a Man of war. In righteousness He will make war, but David was disqualified because he had been a man of war and had shed much blood. It is, amongst other things, on account of the glory of what Christ does judicially that He is able to take up the kingdom in authority.

D.R. Do you think that everything for man, rightly, stems from the fact that God is satisfied first? I wondered if that would be the point you are making as to the delight of the Father in the Son.

E.C.B. That is right and it gives us some greater impression of God being satisfied; He is satisfied in relation to the way in which everything has been dealt with morally and righteously. But the Father's delight is in His Son, and I just have the impression, from the way the mount is presented in the transfiguration in the three gospels, that we are to understand that one main characteristic of

the kingdom is the love of the Father for the Son and that we thus come into a sphere where we are not in a system of cold administrative rule but in one in which the rule is love. Really it is the nature of God that pervades the kingdom of God. Do you think that is right?

D.R. What you have said has appealed to my heart, that in the world to come, while evil will be dealt with, the whole setting forward of the matter is to meet God's heart, and from that standpoint everything else will be met.

E.C.B. What you are calling attention to is important, that the first thing in regard to all God's operations is that He Himself has been satisfied and it is because He is satisfied that He is able to introduce a system of unmixed blessing for man. He draws us into this sphere, and Peter and James and John are a sample of those who may enter into it, but the thing that is disclosed is not rule exactly but love. I think we are drawn into the sphere where the Father loves the Son.

J.A.G. Twice Daniel is referred to as a man greatly beloved. The kingdom shines out morally in that book in a broken day. Does that bear on what you are saying?

E.C.B. Yes; hence it is important for us to understand the way in which any present experience of the kingdom is to be related to our partaking of the divine nature. Peter, as has often been said, is a kingdom man, but he is the man who tells us about being partakers of the divine nature, and I wonder whether, if we had some impression of the kingdom as the sphere in which divine love is able to administer everything, we would have some impression of the blessedness of what divine administration is. Is that right?

J.A.G. Yes. I am looking for help but I find it very attractive that the whole thing is subsisting, you might say, in the love of God.

E.C.B. Exactly, that is a very good expression, and the central object of the love of God is the Son whom the Father loves: "my beloved Son". But then Peter, James and John were drawn into that. They are brought into the sphere where the Father can speak freely about His love for the Son, but they would understand that

they were included in that sphere. You almost have some sense of "the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them", John 17: 26.

J.S. Do you think this impression of the Father's love would extend to the nations as in Matthew 25: "Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom" (v 34)? Would the Lord impart some sense of that?

E.C.B. I think that is right; the Father's love extends in relation to every family. There you have the family of the righteous nations and it refers, as you say, to "the kingdom prepared for you from the world's foundation". It is as if the Father had long had in view a system of things into which He could bring everyone whom He drew into blessing. It extends our view of the Father's operations in love, that He draws all the families into that great sphere of things. We sometimes attach the kingdom to ideas that are too cold, but the kingdom is a system that is embraced in the manifestation of God.

J.S. It is the King there and He is speaking about "my Father". He was in the enjoyment of that Himself and He would give others to feel the same thing.

E.C.B. I think that is so, and one reason why they are given that privileged place is that they are righteous. You can see a sample of that in Cornelius. He was a man whose righteousness was known in heaven and he is drawn by divine operations, and to the surprise of Peter, into the new system of things which was really the kingdom of God. He is a sample of a righteous nation entering into the kingdom, I think.

W.L. In the end of Acts Paul preached the kingdom of God and taught the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Did he recognise that it was bound up with the Person?

E.C.B. It is very interesting how much the kingdom is characteristic of the ministry in the Acts; it is fundamental and initial, paving the way for persons coming into the great gain of the assembly. In Acts 20 Paul puts it peculiarly affectionately when he says "and now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone about preaching

the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more" (v 25), as if the preaching of the kingdom had bound him to these persons in a peculiar affection. It is in the context of the kingdom that he brings out his grief that they would see his face no more. It suggests to me that the kingdom is a sphere where divine love is peculiarly known.

Ques. Is that borne out in the fact that on the mountain they talked with Him; there is conversation and intimacy there, even in the place of Christ's glory?

E.C.B. Yes. Mr Darby says 'Mark how thin a veil there is between us and what is heavenly!' (see Synopsis, Vol.3, p.248). The time for Peter, James and John actually to enter into this had not yet arrived, but they were as near to it as they could be, and so are we. We are as near to its actuality as we can be, and it is the Spirit that makes it real to us. What the Spirit does is to promote the glory of Christ.

J.R. According to Matthew's account of the transfiguration, His face shone as the sun. That is not cold; it is warm and benign.

E.C.B. Do you not think that comment is just, that we think of the kingdom in too cold a way? Hence in past history there has almost been a desire to impose the kingdom on people and it has been used as a matter of compelling authority. It has authority in it but the kingdom is a sphere where the Father's love for the Son glorifies every thing.

E.C.M. I was thinking of what Paul says: "The Lord... shall preserve me for his heavenly kingdom", 2 Tim 4: 18. Do you think the character of the kingdom in Luke 9 would be heavenly?

E.C.B. Yes, each of the first three gospels really has that character because the mountain is in them all, and we understand that there are different aspects of the mount of transfiguration as it is presented. When Paul says "The Lord... shall preserve me for his heavenly kingdom" it is clear that he knew that he was not yet in the actuality of it; but the present experience of it was so substantial in Paul that, as Mr Lamont says, he preached it, taught it and communicated it to people, because he was as near to it as he could be in the Spirit.

A.A.B. It is said of the man who was healed at the gate called Beautiful that "he held Peter and John", Acts 3: 11. Does that fit your thought as to the combination of the firmness of divine principles with the side of the Father's affection for Christ?

E.C.B. I think it does, because actually we have to understand that every case of healing in the Scriptures, whether in the gospels or in the Acts, is really a demonstration of the kingdom, and it is in the power of the kingdom here, whether in Christ or apostolically, that persons are healed. Then as you say, he held Peter and John. We must never forget that the kingdom speaks of divine authority and divine principles but held in love and worked through in the Man in whom the Father has perfect confidence. That scripture in John 8 (v 29) is beautifully attractive, is it not?

A.A.B. Yes, it is. So there would be extraordinary significance in the way the Lord set those two servants Peter and John, together, and how they are seen moving together in testimony.

E.C.B. Yes exactly; and though in John 21, in a certain sense, a different path for each is foreseen, yet the very fact that they are both taken up in that chapter indicates that the Lord is not going to let those two men be apart from one another. What you say is right and needs to be honoured, that divine principles are held in the power of divine love. That is quite simple, but that is Christ's administration.

A.C.C. Did it come out later that even in the Solomonic kingdom there had been oppression? I like what you say as to how things are held and principles applied. We know the evils of democracy, they are all around us, but then even what is autocratic might take on an oppressive character. I was thinking about the stone cut out without hands in Daniel. It struck the great image and the gold, silver, brass and iron were all swept away. There have to be new principles existing and love lying behind them, do you think?

E.C.B. Yes. What you are drawing attention to has considerable current importance because we want to beware lest what is democratic creeps into the assembly. The idea of everyone having

their say is not an assembly principle and we want to beware of that but similarly we want to beware of autocracy which in divine things takes the form of clericalism. Yet we also want to understand that there is authority in the assembly. So we need to understand the way these things are held together. Compare the Lord in John 2 with the whip of small cords and in chapter 4 sitting at Sychar's well and there you have the two elements that Mr Bellamy is drawing attention to. Do you think that?

A.A.B. Yes, I feel we need much help in this, involving the substantial work of the Spirit in the saints. We should be, not only acquainted in knowledge, but formed in these actual substantial features in our links together.

E.C.B. Yes; do you not feel that if we more consciously made room for the Spirit 's service - "He shall glorify me", John 16: 14 - we would come into these things more easily? Because the Spirit would always promote Christ, and in any matter that came up the Spirit would give you the impression of the Lord standing glorified among you. I do not want to be imaginative but you would work things out in the sense that all administration is in His hands; but He is the Son of the Father 's love.

A.A.B. In the incident to which you refer He moved, in making the scourge of small cords, in the consciousness of His own relations with the Father: "my Father's house", John 2: 16.

E.C.B. Exactly, and what He goes on to speak about there is most profound. He even uses that incident of severity of judgment to go on to say "and in three days I will raise it up... But he spoke of the temple of his body" (vv 19, 21). It shows how much the Lord would draw out even from the severity of what He has to do administratively.

J.M. Is that side brought out peculiarly in Joseph? "The Father loves the Son and has given all things to be in his hand" (John 3: 35) is the clear setting out of His administrative glory. The official side may cause a coldness in our minds. Alongside that He is the subject of the Father's love and His administration is characterised by that.

E.C.B. That is right. There is one point when Joseph spoke roughly to his brethren, and that was needed in the circumstances. The thing that develops in the latter part of Joseph's history is not his place in Egypt but his love for his father. At the end of Genesis, where the process of refinement in Jacob is going on, the thing that comes out is how much Joseph's affections are bound up with his father. Think of the way he speaks: "Is your father well - the old man of whom ye spoke? Is he yet alive?" chap 43: 27. All Joseph's affections are related to his father, just as Christ's affections, as the centre of administration for God, are related to His Father.

J.M. As a result, if you take the two types of Pharaoh and Jacob together, there is a whole area of things which is under His influence for God's pleasure.

E.C.B. Exactly, and that is the purpose and object of it all.

J.N. Is this thought as to the kingdom on the principle of attraction? I was thinking of how Paul presents it in Colossians - what we have been delivered from but what we have been brought into, the kingdom of the Son of His love (see chap 1: 13).

E.C.B. Yes, I think that. There is of course only one kingdom; the kingdom of the heavens, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Son of His love, are all one thing, but if we get some impression of the kingdom of God as related to the place Christ has in the affections of the Father as the centre of it, then we shall see that the kingdom of God is to us characteristically the kingdom of the Son of His love and we are brought out of darkness into this marvellous light. And what is that light? It is a light in which His raiment became white and effulgent.

J.N. I thought it was very affecting that it says He takes them up. The Lord has taken us up, has He not?

E.C.B. Quite so, and He has not only taken us up in the sense that He has sovereignly selected us out of humanity generally, but He has also taken us up to a higher level where we learn what the Father thinks of the Son and then we learn what the kingdom is.

H.McF. "The fashion of his countenance became different": how do you understand that?

E.C.B. The Lord was in a condition here in which ultimately it is said of Him prophetically that His face was "marred more than any man" (Isa 52: 14), but in the condition in which they saw Him on the mountain His face was different. It bore no marks of sorrow or burdens, weariness, care, anything of that. He was able to expand in a sphere where there was neither evil nor adversary but just the Father's love and men with Him in the area of the Father's love, and the glory of God would be in the Lord's face, I think.

H.McF. It is quite delightful; "his countenance" is a dignified word.

E.C.B. Yes it is, but this was the way the children of Israel were to be blessed in the wilderness: "Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace", Num. 6: 26.

A.C.C-m. Mr Taylor pointed out that as the Lord prayed the glory that was within Him came out (see Vol 85, p.61). When we pray we take on the glory objectively in Christ.

E.C.B. That is very interesting; and it is in this gospel, is it not, that He increased in favour with God and men? Now that was not something external; it was something in Him increasingly coming out for the pleasure of God. As Jesus grew up there was more and more there for the pleasure of God; and as He went into the presence of God, as you say, what was in Him for God's pleasure would shine for God's pleasure. It is not like Moses, a glory acquired, but it is a glory that comes out, the glory of manhood in dependence, recognising that the power was not in Him but in God and in that sphere.

W.D. Does the fact that the administration in the kingdom is mediatorially in the assembly bring in a formation in sonship during the present dispensation for the expression of these features that find such a place in the Ephesian epistle?

E.C.B. That is right. Had you more to say about that?

W.D. I was thinking that in Matthew, when the matter of the tribute money came up, the Lord raised the question as to the kings of the earth, and what He brought out with Peter was that sonship was the great background to that administration.

E.C.B. That is a very interesting reference because in a sense the Lord is putting the kings of the earth in contrast in Peter's mind to another kingdom of which Peter had just seen the glory on the mountain; but He does not say, Then are the sons of the kingdom free. He says "Then are the sons free", and for "me and thee", Matt 17: 26,27. I think what you suggest is helpful to us, that the way this may come out is closely allied to the glory of sonship. When the kingdom is established, according to Romans 8 it will be the glory of sonship.

W.D. So that brings out the benign side, because that is the glory of sonship, that you are formed in the benign affections of the Father.

E.C.B. Yes and you have the Father's characteristics. I think that the characteristic of the kingdom is firmness of rule in Christ. We can never reduce that. Rule will always be firm and according to God but it is carried on in the light of the Father's love for the Son. That works through everything that He does. God has fixed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness by the man that He has appointed: what a thing it will be to live on the earth in that day!

J.H. It is remarkable that only in Matthew's account of the transfiguration do we have the words added "in whom I have found my delight". Would that point to the distinctive place of the assembly as coming into the Father's appreciation of the Son?

E.C.B. I think it would extend to that. As you say, those words are added there in order to underline the delight the Father has in Christ and thus the delight He will have in the assembly as associated with Him, as Mr Dickson also was suggesting; but in any case you get "This is my beloved Son". John's gospel is about the way divine love has come into manifestation in a Man who was in perfect relationships with the Father. "My beloved son" does not occur in John's gospel but eight times in the other three gospels.

W L. At the end of John 3 the reason is given: "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand" (v 35). It is from the stand point of His affections that He does it

E.C.B. Yes; and what is the first thing He does when once that has been said? He associates Himself with what I might call that Father and Son ground seen in Jacob and Joseph. He goes and sits at the well and deals with the woman, and you can see that the way He deals with her is in the light of the fact that the Father loves the Son. That is what is working through His hands; so that the Lord does not spend an extended time telling the woman how terrible a thing adultery is; the Lord deals with that in two sentences, but what He is concerned about is that He has found a person to whom He can speak about what is nearest to His own heart, which is the worship of the Father and of God.

H.B. John says in Revelation, "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father", chap 1: 5,6. Could something be said as to priests to His God and Father kingdom-wise?

E.C.B. I think that scripture is in a sense anti-typical of the place Israel stood in in the Old Testament. They were redeemed and Moses was king amongst an upright people, so that the principle of the kingdom was known in Israel. And the glory of a kingdom for God was here in testimony but the fulness of that kingdom was to be in response to God as Father. Hence what is looked for when Israel is restored is the union again of the king and the priest. Now these thoughts are carried through to us, these things happened as types of us, and it is not only in the subdued state that the kingdom brings about but in the state of enjoyment of the Father's love that we serve the Father in that priestly way. Is that right?

H.B. I think that is good; I accept that heartily.

E.C.B. Well, these things we just need to explore.

J.A.G. I think it is very interesting at the close of 2 Samuel 8 that David sets up his government, and his sons are chief rulers; then he is bent on giving expression to the kindness of God and he secures

Mephibosheth and brings him to Jerusalem, and he sits at the king's table as one of the king's sons. Mr Taylor referred to him as an Ephesian saint (see Vol.10, p.26).

E.C.B. I think that is right and it bears on the way the kingdom comes to light here. Yet David still had authority; he could still say to Solomon, This is not going to be dealt with yet but you will deal with it. The principle of authority and the execution of authority was there, but David's administrations as they come out towards Mephibosheth are in the whole spirit of a sphere of divine affection that has been known by the one who sets it on and is thus communicated to those who come into the gain of it.

D.R. It is obvious when we come to Peter that this has really got into his affections - "not... cleverly imagined fables". It is something very real and precious to Peter, do you not think?

E.C.B. I do, and I think Peter writes as becoming the beneficiary of it. Peter is not writing academically in giving us a treatise on what the kingdom means but is writing out of his heart. The base from which Peter writes is the mount of transfiguration, not the Sea of Galilee, what he had enjoyed with Christ when he heard the Father's voice uttered from heaven. That is what enters into the kingdom even now; it is the sphere where a voice uttered from heaven is heard. Revelation 1 refers back, in type, to the Old Testament, but one of the first things God says is "Ye have seen that I have spoken with you from the heavens", Exod 20: 22.

J.R. At the mount of transfiguration Moses and Elias seem to be at home in the kingdom glory. Peter and those with him are not, but Peter is when he writes his second epistle. I was wondering if the presence of the Spirit is essential for the kingdom of God in present form.

E.C.B. It is, and while there is more to be said on the verse in Romans, you would understand from that verse that the kingdom of God is in the Holy Spirit; that is where it is now. The kingdom is in the Spirit where it is known and entered into and explored. No doubt the incoming of the Spirit had given Peter to understand that what he

had seen with Jesus in on the mountain now had the blessed characteristics that he refers to in his epistle and he is clearly touching something he is enjoying.

J.R. I was wondering if it is by the Spirit that we increase in our appreciation of the Lord Jesus and of the Father's love for Him too; not only our love for Him or His love for us, but the glory of Christ in the Father's realm, we in the Father's affections.

E.C.B. Yes; I do not think we have sufficiently explored that verse in John 16: "He shall glorify me". There is much in that; I think we are inclined to limit it to the sense that the Spirit will give us impressions about Christ at the Supper. It is a very hindering thing, brethren, how much we limit the purport of scriptures. We just get an impression at some time and we think that is finality on that scripture, but the scripture is full - just open the door and you get more than you can contain of any scripture. "He shall glorify me" is that He will glorify Him in relation to the whole place of glory that Jesus has.

And one prime place is what He has in the Father's affections. I came across some verses once and I am sorry I have never been able to find them again (if someone found them I would be glad): 'The saints' appraisal of the Son, learned from the Father's thoughts'. Now that is the way to learn about the glory of Christ - go and ask the Father.

R.S. Speaking to Peter Cornelius says "Four days ago I had been fasting unto this hour, and the ninth I was praying in my house, and lo, a man stood before me in bright clothing", Acts 10: 30. Is there a connection with the clothing here on the mountain?

E.C.B. It would certainly give an impression to Peter, it would recollect something to him. Say some more about that.

R.S. It seems as if the Spirit there is directing his thoughts to the Man in the glory.

E.C.B. I think that is right, and it was because Jesus was glorified that Cornelius and then the nations were to be brought into blessing. Peter did not say, Who was it? He said, I could not hinder this. God was doing something. If the Father has a kingdom or if God has a

kingdom, then it cannot be confined to Israel but must stretch to embrace all the families that the Father is going to take up in Christ.

J.R. Peter can speak with appreciation of His majesty.

E.C.B. Yes; I thought it was helpful to go again to these verses of Peter's about the mountain because what he brings out, I think, are what he understands to be features of the kingdom. It is commonly known among us that Peter is a kingdom teacher but the things he brings out of the mount of transfiguration that relate to the kingdom are not things we would have brought out. We would have said that the characteristic of the kingdom is rule; Peter says that the characteristics of the kingdom are His majesty and a voice from heaven.

P.H.B. Peter refers to the fact that he was "partaker of the glory about to be revealed", 1 Pet 5: 1. Does it imply that that glory is really known now?

E.C.B. Yes; as Mr Renton was saying, it is the characteristic service of the Spirit that He is making these things good to us even in our present condition. If this is so, it ought to be manifested in our present condition. We cannot manifest the kingdom as a whole but we can manifest that we are subjects of it. You see people and say, There is an Englishman! there is a Scotsman! or there is an Arab! or whatever, for people have the characteristics of the kingdom to which they belong. Now that should be true of us, that the characteristics that belong to the sphere where the Father loves the Son are self-evident.

R.S.R. Do you think that this passage in 2 Peter would bring up the knowledge which comes of reflection (see Prov 8: 12)? The Spirit would help us in that because everything takes on a lustre as we reflect over it?

E.C.B. That is right, but there is a distinction between the knowledge that comes from reflection and the impressions that the Spirit would recall. The idea of the knowledge that comes of reflection is that you take what you have heard and roast what you have taken in hunting: you consider and weigh and so on. It is

different when you may have some large impression that the Spirit will bring out this and that from, and there present to you His reflection of the impression. It is the latter that we really want to get because there is a slight danger of our using that scripture in Proverbs to make too much way for our own intellects. Is that right?

R.S.R. I agree with that, but maybe we do not reflect sufficiently or contemplate sufficiently to get the full benefit of what the Spirit would do with us and in us.

E.C.B. That is right. I said a couple of years ago (and I still think it) that the saints characteristically do not think sufficiently about divine things. If we thought more we would be surprised how much more substance we had. There is a great deal among the saints that is not brought out because the ground is not tilled; if we gave ourselves more to the reflection you are speaking of I think we would find that there is very much more available by way of contributions.

R.S.R. Did not Mr Taylor exhort us to think in terms of Scripture?

E.C.B. Yes indeed, that is necessary. If we think apart from Scripture we shall go on the rocks. But there is need for *thought*, and it may be that Peter thought about the mount of transfiguration. He speaks of having ability to call things to mind; that bears on what you are saying, but I think that in this chapter the Spirit is bringing out what He intended should be learned on the mountain about the kingdom.

Rem. "To stir you up by putting you in remembrance" (2 Pet 1: 13): I was thinking of his stirring them up. In Luke 9 they "were oppressed with sleep: but having fully awoken they saw his glory".

E.C.B. Yes, I think Peter has in mind not only to stir the brethren up once but to keep them stirred up. That is one problem about three-day meetings, whether a month afterwards many of the brethren can remember what even the subject of the meetings was. That kind of question ought to test us all because we do get stirred up in all kinds of meetings but the object of stirring up is that we might be taken further along the road on which we are going.

J.A.G. Why does Peter miss out 'hear Him'? It comes in in the gospels but here it is "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight; and this voice we heard".

E.C.B. Because I think what Peter is concerned about now is not so much the speaking but the Person, and he is drawing attention to the fact that the Father's delight is in the Son. While in John 3 you get "The Father loves the Son", in John 14 you get that the man who loves Him will keep His word, which implies 'hear Him'; but there is first of all this impression to be retained: "This is my beloved Son". It reminds us again that the kingdom is the sphere in which the Father in His love for the Son has placed the Son at the centre of things and administration is in the hands of the One whom the Father loves. It comes down in constant blessedness: "My doctrine shall drop as rain, My speech flow down as dew", Deut 32: 2.

R.S. Such a voice is uttered to Him, not so much for them.

E.C.B. That is right, but they heard it and they were with Him on the holy mountain. The impression they would have gone away with, and that evidently was formed in Peter and retained there enlarged by the Spirit, was what the voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son". Now that is the Man round whom God is building a world for His pleasure, Jesus the centre of it and Jesus glorified.

T.N.P. Peter does not make anything of the adjustment. Is it the re-assertion of the glory of Christ that is the prime thing?

E.C.B. That is right, the adjustment would be out of place now, would it not? Peter has not time for anecdotes about his past history. What is needed is to be free from that kind of past history and find that what emerged from that history was some new impression that the Father's full delight was centred in the Son. Do you think that?

T.N.P. We often miss the positive gain in exercises, do we not?

E.C.B. I think we do, and we do love anecdotes about our history, and they become embellished as we go on, but what we are really doing is talking about ourselves when the Father would talk about Christ.

R.J.C. Does the woman in John 4 set out the effects of the kingdom in blessing?

E.C.B. Yes, she drew the men to Christ. She said, He told me all things I had ever done, but she does not go over them all again; she says "Come, see a man"; and they went out of the city and came to Him. I am sure that that chapter in John from one point of view, following the last verses of chapter 3, bears on the kingdom being in the hands of the Son of the Father's love and how He would use the kingdom to draw persons to the Father in worship.

J.R. Peter was an actual eye-witness; we are not eyewitnesses. Does the report come to us in the glad tidings? and are the Spirit's activities important - "He shall glorify me"?

E.C.B. That is interesting, because the point of one of Peter 's preachings was "God has glorified his servant, Jesus", Acts 3: 13. That enters into the preaching, so maybe the brothers will be able to preach for one hour again! Maybe!

J.R. Peter writes in his first epistle to the sojourners: "whom, having not seen, ye love", chap 1: 8. That is our position, is it not?

E.C.B. Yes, the writer of Hebrews says "we see Jesus... crowned with glory and honour", chap 2: 9. Now that corresponds to this, but you are put to the question, who crowned Him? Was it not the Father who crowned Him and gave Him this place at the centre of divine administration?

J.R. According to Ephesians 1, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, set His beloved Son down at His right hand.

E.C.B. Yes; and just to go back to Luke, it is quite interesting that in the verse we read yesterday the Lord's reference is to the Son of man, but the Father does not say, This is the Son of man; the Father claims Him for Himself: "my beloved Son", and that is the sphere of divine administration.

P.H.B. Would this reference to "his majesty" be the honour accorded to Christ in the Father's affection?

E.C.B. The whole thing here brings out the greatness of the place that Jesus has in the eye of the Father. He was transfigured. Now how was He transfigured? The suggestion was made by Mr Clapham that, in one sense, He was transfigured by what was inward coming out; but then I think there is also the sense of what was about to be conferred, brought in on the mount of transfiguration, and that would be the Father's doing it. The Father is ready to glorify Jesus. In John 17 Jesus says "glorify me".

J.M. Does the verse in Hebrews 2 bear that out: "crowned with glory and honour" - as though it was an act of someone else?

E.C.B. You remember that one of the first addresses in Mr Taylor's printed ministry is 'Christ Crowned by the Father and by the Saints' (see Vol 1: p.19), and I think when we see Him crowned with glory and honour it is the Father that has crowned Him, linking with the word to the overcomer in Laodicea: "to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in his throne", Rev 3: 21.

J.M. It is an interesting verse in relation to Mr Renton's earlier remark as to eyewitnesses, because it says there that we see Jesus. I take it that would be by faith.

E.C.B. Yes; the expression used to be used among us 'with the eye of faith'; that is how we see Jesus, with an enlightened eye.

A.C.C. Also cannot we enter the holiest and see something of His glory without literally being eyewitnesses of the Lord as Peter was on the mount? Can we not, by the Spirit in the holiest, see something of the glory of the Ark, and in the sanctuary see something of the glory of Christ?

E.C.B. Yes, in fact that is what there is in the holiest, the glory of Jesus as Man: we can never leave out His divine glory; but peculiarly the glory of what a man is for God is found there. But how do we get into the holiest? Only by the Spirit.

J.R. So as Peter's eyewitness was actual, with us it is, though not actual, nevertheless real.

E.C.B. That is right, and you would notice Mr Darby's footnote that the word 'eyewitnesses' involves initiation into the mystery; that is, when the eyes of your heart are enlightened you can become initiated into a mystery.

O.M. Is that what Paul means in the last scripture that we read: "joy in the Holy Spirit"? I wondered as to the kingdom side, if that is the way in, leading to the limitless character of joy in the Holy Spirit?

E.C.B. That is right. The impression I have about that scripture is, not merely that it would give us to understand that it is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, but that at the present time the kingdom of God is in the Holy Spirit and we learn in the Spirit what the kingdom is. It is in a sense, the operations of the kingdom in power; but the kingdom is now in the Holy Spirit. That is where we will find it and the characteristics are righteousness, peace and joy. These are the things which will distinctly characterise the world to come.

J.N. Had you any thought as to the time period between Peter's actual experience on the mount and his recording of it in his second epistle?

E.C.B. During that time the Lord had a lot for him to do, a lot more for him to learn and to experience. I think that through that period Peter's impression was refining and eventually it is just stripped down when he writes his epistles. He is left with just the things which are essential, and what he has essentially about the mount of transfiguration is "his majesty" and the voice from heaven. Those, I think, are the characteristics of the kingdom of God; Christ is there in majesty, and the Father's voice delighting in Him is what gives the thing character.

A.A.B. Attention was drawn in Mr Taylor's ministry (see Vol.85, p.179) to the period of ten days during which there was no divine Person on earth and I think in that connection he referred to the Spirit witnessing to the delight of the reception of Christ again in heaven. Would that link with what you said earlier as to the Father's affections being seen in administration? I feel the importance of that,

that the Father being the source of all would give character to every detail of administration.

E.C.B. I think that, and it is a thing in which we have failed. We would all admit that, but I think it is a thing to be learned, that divine administration in the kingdom maintains, we need hardly say, divine principles, divine order as a characteristic of the kingdom, but it maintains it through the One whom the Father loves. I think this is very blessed for us. The kingdom of God seems to me to be characterised by the maintenance of divine order in a Man in whom the Father delights. I think it is blessed.

A.A.B. Did Paul express it in the way he approached the Corinthian difficulty? He says "Not as chiding do I write these things to you, but as my beloved children I admonish you", 1 Cor 4: 14. He speaks of not many fathers, as if in his own approach to the whole matter he was expressing in himself the affections of the Father for the Son?

E.C.B. Hence does it not help us to understand his address to the Thessalonians: "in God the Father", 1 Thess 2: 7? Is not Paul in this system of administration of which the character is that the Father delights in the Son? I am not speaking about administration in any particular way but what you may call the climate in which things are administered is that the Father loves the Son. Does not Acts 17 bring that out? "He has set a day in which he is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by the man whom he has appointed" (v 31). The word 'judge' there is not judicial but administrative.

J.R. Do you think that it involves that we are loved too, in the kingdom? They entered into the cloud did they not? They entered into this environment: shall we say, of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us?

E.C.B. Yes, I think that is right. Hence Romans is another epistle about the kingdom and in it you are taught how to regard one another: you receive one another as Christ has received you to God's glory (see chap 15: 7). You look on a brother as the one for whom Christ died and this seems to me to be consistent with the

character of the kingdom and the view that we take of one another. It is all in the light of the Father's love for the Son.

R.S. This second epistle begins with "Simon Peter, bondman"; it is bondmanship before apostleship. Do these impressions help us to take on healthy bondmanship? I was thinking of the Queen of Sheba; when she saw Solomon's servants and their dignity she was affected by it.

E.C.B. Yes, and all the bondmen would be characteristic of Solomon's kingdom.

J.R. "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ", Rom 13: 14. Is that the idea?

E.C.B. That is the kingdom, is it not? I have an impression that our view of the kingdom tends to be too cold, but the kingdom is the area of light and love and especially the Father's delight in the Son. This would warm the saints. So Paul, at the end of Acts, preaches the kingdom of God and teaches concerning the things of the Lord Jesus Christ, but in the beginning of the chapter he is warming up the fire. I think that is a good kingdom man; he keeps the saints warm in the light of the love of the Father for the Son.

D.E.B. Each of the three synoptic gospels, when introducing the mount of transfiguration, refers to the fact that some should not see death until they had seen the kingdom. Is that to show that circumstances and tests here, even death itself, are faced in the light of the kingdom as thus presented?

E.C.B. I think so, and that persons who have come into the experience and joy of the kingdom as it is presented on the mount of transfiguration would be like Paul. He says, I do not mind whether I go or whether I stay. To stay is better for you, but for me, I do not mind, because in substance he was already in the world that was beyond death, and that is where his life was. "My kingdom is not of this world", Jesus said, John 18: 36.

A.C.C. I was thinking about the excellent glory. Was there an object here to draw out that unique expression and character of glory? Should that not come into our administration?

E.C.B. I think so, and if you think about the Father's delight in Jesus, there was an excellence of glory in that which can never be surpassed. But then the saints are drawn into what is excellent; they are to choose what is more excellent. We are to learn what excellent glory is, and then it would come out in everything that we do or touch.

W.D. We have had experience of failure, as you have said, but we have also had experience of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in assembly history in living memory.

E.C.B. We have, and we still have.

W.D. And that is not confined to the Supper or to matters of conflict.

E.C.B. I would say we still have experience of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, because sometimes you have an impression that He has been among you in a way that was quite different from every other way and there was an excellent glory that day. But if the glory of Christ was excellent among you, what did it mean but that there was more of the Father's delight to be experienced.

W.D. Is that not the way you would seek resolution of much that is current that burdens the saints? Your prayers would be directed that the conquest would be made in the power and glory of sonship.

E.C.B. I am sure that is right; and also I think if we are pursuing such things as righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit we would not let what was natural intrude into our judgment of any failure or departure. We would judge things according to God and to the Holy Spirit. Often we are too much swayed by what is natural, which is part of our makeup, but I think the Lord would encourage us to seek to be delivered from that so that we do not get things out of proportion but what we pursue is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

W.D. In that sense do you have the King of Salem?

E.C.B. You have indeed.

E.C.M. After everyone had submitted to Solomon it is said "Jehovah magnified Solomon exceedingly and bestowed upon him royal majesty such as had not been on any king before him in Israel", 1 Chron 29: 25. Is that the full answer? That would be really what Peter says in his letter.

E.C.B. I think that foreshadows for us the excellent glory which was never surpassed. Solomon says, The house that I build must be more magnificent than has ever been. Why? - because of his knowledge of and relations with God.

D.M. Stephen not only saw the Son of man but he saw the glory of God and Jesus. Is that like standing alongside the excellent glory?

E.C.B. It no doubt gives us that impression, that he saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; but the sense he had of the place Jesus had as glorified, so closely associated with the glory of God, would be like what we are speaking about, the place that Christ glorified has in the affections of the Father. In a sense He has even more place in the Father's affections now He is out of death than He had when He was on earth: "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again", John 10: 17.

R.S.R. Might I ask why the Father says "This is my beloved Son" and not as in Luke 3, "Thou are my beloved Son"?

E.C.B. The point was that the disciples were to learn it, not so much that the Lord needed that word. He had taken them up into the mountain knowing they would see the kingdom, but the word was for the disciples to distinguish Christ, and I think that is one of the main features of the kingdom, that Christ is distinguished.

A.A.B. The mountain is spoken of as the holy mountain. Things had become changed, like "righteousness unto holiness", Rom 6: 19. The kingdom makes way for that.

E.C.B. Yes; and do you not think that if you compare the mount of transfiguration as a holy mountain, with Sinai as the hill of His holiness, you get some sense of what administration in this day is

intended to be? It is not thunder and lightning but the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love.

J.R. Did you earlier use the expression 'a kingdom man'? Would not a truly kingdom man be an assembly man? Sometimes we think so-and-so is a kingdom man but not an assembly man, but if he is truly a kingdom man he will be an assembly man, will he not?

E.C.B. Yes, he would have taken the next step.

J.R. It would not be a far step either.

E.C.B. No. It is very interesting that Matthew 18 is about the kingdom; we always speak of it as about the assembly.

J.M. Was that not seen in Peter and John as earlier referred to? Peter looking steadfastly upon him with John said "Look on us". The kingdom was seen in expression there - authority and love.

E.C.B. Yes, we cannot afford to divorce those things, but the authority is exercised in love. I think the expression in Colossians is intended to draw us affectionately into the kingdom and make us come out affectionately: "the kingdom of the Son of his love". I think that is what the kingdom is for us.

GLASGOW

22 April 1978

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"WHERE NO WOOD IS... "

E.C.Burr

Proverbs 26: 20 (first part)

As we would expect with proverbs - proverbs generally, not just the book of Proverbs - the meaning is fairly clear on the face of the text.

I can remember when I was at school (children do not seem to be educated in quite the same way nowadays) we used to be given exercises to explain the meaning of proverbs: Explain what this means - 'A stitch in time saves nine' and things like that. We more or less made something out of it, but the significance of a proverb is that on the whole the meaning is plain on the face of it. There is a kind of wisdom condensed into a sentence or so of which the meaning is clear, and in that way the meaning would not require much to be said about it. I would like this evening to say one or two sentences in passing about the meaning of this scripture and then to go on, as the Spirit may help, in applying the scripture. It says "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out". We all know as a matter of practical experience that if you have a fire and want to keep it going you have to keep feeding it with things that will continue to burn. Of course, in the immediate setting of the scripture the sentence has its application on the face of it and you only need to read the rest of the verse to see what its application is; and in its direct meaning the verse itself would have something of worth to say to us. There are many matters persistent or even past, to our knowledge, as to which this proverb itself might be very good advice. There are fires which could be allowed to go out, fires which are kept burning by additional wood continually being put on them. I should not catalogue them here, but there are fires which are kept going by the constant addition of wood. More likely the constant addition nowadays is paper, especially reproduced paper, and it keeps fires going that should really be allowed to go out or should perhaps be allowed to burn in the place where they belong. The tendency in which we all indulge, I venture to say, to add fuel to these fires alas! to keep them going, may not be the best occupation for us. It may not be the most

advantageous occupation for us, it may not most further the Lord's interests. I have sometimes felt, even when there are exercises rightly carried among the brethren, that in some ways the saints have not learned to live with a world which has become so much smaller as a result of the improvement in communications. Because - let me go back in history there was at one time quite a protracted and serious exercise in Newcastle but this was not the constant occupation of brethren in meetings in London and such other places. Even Newcastle was so far away from London that we did not feel that we were participants, as it were, in that meeting and we did not therefore bring wood to put on that fire. But the world has become smaller and communications have made it smaller. The aeroplane has made New York as close to London by air as Aberdeen is by train. The world becoming smaller has given us perhaps more involvement than is according to principle in matters which are not in the area of what I might speak of as our own fire. Much wood is brought in to many matters and it would be well if we for our part, while maintaining interests substantially in exercises which are universal, did not ourselves seek to feed such things. I think that this would help us.

One consequence of the feeding of fires is that, instead of being soberly and righteously exercised about a matter, we can easily become obsessive in relation to it, and once there is obsession we have certainly reached the point where the fire should be allowed to die down. I do not say this as correcting anybody; I say these things to myself. I am myself as interested in things that proceed among the saints as I suppose any brother is, but where no wood is the fire goes out. The Lord allows fires to arise in their own place. The same thing can happen in personal relationships; they are interfered with or are in a degree marred. If no more wood was brought to the spoiled relationship the fire would go out and relationships could be resumed, not out of the ashes but in normality, because things were not still being fed. There are personal histories which are continually fed with wood from the past - 'I remember how I was treated and I remember they did this to me and that to me';

and more wood is brought and the fire is kept alive, and unhappiness is bred even in persons themselves, when the fire might be allowed to go out, and they might begin, I might almost say, to live again.

Some men even get their wives to bring the wood - 'I was treated like this, was I not?' and 'Do you remember what they did to me?', and here comes the wife with another ton of wood and the fire is kept going again. Sisters, please do not do it. Let us learn to let fires go out, let us learn not to feed them, let us learn to carry exercises with the Lord. He maintains things according to what they ought to be, according to the temperature at which they should be. Let us learn not to be continually bringing wood either for self justification or for the feeding of personal matters. Let us not even continue to bring wood that nourishes assembly difficulties. The Lord is amply able to resolve all these matters Himself.

But I do not wish to speak about the interpretation of this scripture, I have said enough of that. If I had just read the verse I could have sat down, if that was all I had to say, but I would like to give the verse an application, because there is a fire that I do not want to go out. There has been a fire kindled on the earth as the Lord Himself said: "I have come to cast a fire on the earth", Luke 12: 49. And while He refers in that context to division which would come in as the result of His own ministry on the earth, and the product of it working to divide one person from another, yet there was a fire He had kindled on earth which still burned when He was in resurrection. "Was not our heart burning in us as he spoke to us on the way, and as he opened the scriptures to us?", Luke 24: 32. That is the fire that I would like to keep burning and I trust that you would like to keep that fire burning. If you do not bring wood to that fire, then that fire will go out, and if that fire goes out, then the recovery will go out and there will be great loss to the Lord, there will be great loss to believers, there will be great loss to yourself. There is a fire to which we need wood brought constantly. Let us be committed to it. One has had the opportunity, indeed the privilege, of speaking to some of the beloved young people of whom I see so many in the gallery, and I have found in individuals among them that this fire is there. One of

the greatest joys as we grow older is to find young people who are responsive to discussions about Christ and about the meetings and about the truth. Beloved, it is a privilege to meet and speak with young people about that. I would like to urge them not to let the fire go out. Go on bringing wood to that fire. The day you stop bringing wood to that fire is the day Christianity will begin to die down in you and one day you will be looking back perhaps on a husk of your better days and you will wish that you had kept things burning which were like the day of the gladness of your heart, when you went after Christ in a land not sown. I do encourage you, beloved young brethren, to foster your impressions of Christ and to grow according to them. There is a fire which must not be put out and that fire needs wood and that wood is Christ. One thing in Scripture that is almost a consistent type of Christ is wood. You do not find in men consistent types of Christ, because men break down. There is a man like Daniel as to whom no particular fault is recorded in the scripture.

There is a man like Joseph as to whom relatively little fault is recorded in scripture. There are other men like David of whom you have to say, in this he typifies Christ, in that he typifies the believer and in that he is an awful warning. This is characteristic of men because there is only one Man perfect and that is Christ Himself and He is the wood that is to keep this fire burning. What I would like to do is to encourage the saints to be nourishing themselves with Christ in order to keep themselves alert, alive, vigorous and virile for Christ. Let that fire not go out. If you need it, I should come back to the scripture "Go up to the mountain and bring wood" (Hag 1: 8) in order that this fire may not go out. Go and gather something fresh about Christ in order that the fire that you already have in you may be something here which would turn you from a believer partly going on in the testimony, to one whom that fire is making a light in the world (see Phil 2: 15).

So I would just like to touch on one or two occasions in Scripture in order to recall for us some impressions about wood on which we can be nourished and by which we can keep the fire burning. The first substantial reference to wood in Scripture, apart

from the trees in chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis, is "Make thyself an ark of gopher wood", Gen 6: 13. It is interesting that God commanded Noah to make an ark of gopher wood. It was a wood that was buoyant, no doubt a wood that was impermeable, a wood that would see the ark through the time of judgment. But beloved, I am not now concerned for you to take wood and build something for your preservation through judgment. What I am concerned about is that you should have that impression of Christ as having seen you through the judgment that will kindle and maintain a fire in you that you do not wish to go out. Remember that one of the English martyrs when put to the stake said, We have lit such a fire in England today as shall not go out. Are all the brethren today concerned that there shall be such a fire that will not go out? The first thing you need is to bring continually the wood of Christ as the means of salvation the means of bringing you through the judgment, the means of saving you when God's judgment is coming upon the world on account of sin. What does God do? He tells Noah to bring wood: in a certain application of it, to take Christ and find salvation in Him. I know it can also be applied in relation to Christ as a means of bringing you through the world apart from judgment. Where God's judgment is all around you, you have in Christ what makes you secure. I do not at this time refer to Christ's death and His being buried and being raised on account of our sins, I refer to Christ as the means of salvation. One thing needed to keep this fire burning is that you are constantly appropriating Christ as the means of salvation from the world which is about to come under the judgment of God. Of course, there is another aspect of the escape from the judgment of God in the passover lamb, but God provided in Christ, in which is typified in the substantial reference to wood, a means of salvation. Beloved, feed on Him, gather gopher wood.

You will not find it in the Highlands or anywhere like that; you find it spiritually. I do not know where you would find gopher trees today but I know where you can find Christ and that is what you need. You need Christ as the means of salvation and you need continually to be bringing this kind of wood in order that your

attachment to and affection for Christ may not go out. The fire that you have, in the sense that in Christ you have salvation from the world and its whole system, will go out unless you are constantly nourishing yourself on Christ as the means of that salvation. As soon as Noah came out of that ark he must have had wood available because he made a fire and a burnt-offering, but he had come through in the sense that in Christ there was the means of salvation when God's judgment was about to come on the world. Go on and gather that wood. You will not have to go far for it. Nobody has to go far for it. It says in Deuteronomy, "it is not too wonderful for thee, neither is it far off", chap 30: 11. You do not have to go up to heaven for it, you do not have to go over the sea for it; "The word is near thee", Paul says in Romans 10, "the word of faith which we preach" (v 8). Then he goes on to say, "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved". There is wood to keep a fire burning in you in order that you might be saved. Well, beloved, may we all be saved in that sense - not only saved for eternity: I trust everybody here knows what eternal salvation is through the blood of Christ - but let us learn salvation in Christ from the present order of things. Let us learn to confess the name of the Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead.

Then we will be saved and we shall know what the ark made of gopher wood is. Let us go to Romans 10 and continually collect that wood, that there is a means of salvation from the world in the present day. There is an old chorus of which the first two lines say, 'Romans 10 and 9 is a favourite verse of mine'. Well, I trust it is to everybody: "thou shalt be saved".

Now a following substantial reference to wood is in Genesis 22. There we have a solemn account of wood. Abraham as under the word of God was told to take his son and offer him up on the mount that God would show him. It says "he clave the wood for the burnt-offering" (v 3). I suppose we would get some sense there of the Father's feelings as He contemplated Christ going into death, not on account of sins but in view of some fragrance for God coming out of

the obedience of the Christ. Then it says that he laid the wood on his son. Think of Isaac bearing the wood! After a moment Isaac says "My father! ... Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the sheep for a burnt-offering?" But the wood was there. It says, "God will provide himself with the sheep for a burnt-offering", but the fire and the wood were there. What Paul says in the beginning of Ephesians 5 bears on us in regard to this, that we are to "walk in love, even as the Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour", Let us gather wood like that. Let us learn to bear it, to be those who can carry wood in that sense, wood that is going to enter into our appreciation of the way Christ was offered spotless to God. I would not like that fire to go out. It would hardly be worth being among the brethren if the appreciation of the fragrance of the sacrifice to God of Christ was ever lost among them. Let us keep that fragrance up among the saints. Whether you are young or old, keep it up, the fragrance of what Christ was to God in that perfect obedience in which He went into death, as typically he said, "Behold the fire and the wood"; as if there were the means there immediately by which a sacrifice was to be accomplished. "Where is the sheep?" - but the fire and the wood were there. In our spirits we can enter into the gathering of the wood.

If we came to the wood-offering in the day of Nehemiah, it was with a view to the burnt-offering. Persons took lots to bring the burnt-offering to the Levites and into the house of God in order that the burnt-offering might be sustained. Let us learn what the death of Jesus was in its fragrance to God; the blessedness of what God was to Jesus and what He was to God, and even more in His offering Himself spotless to God. Have you gathered wood like that? Have you brought just something of your own, which as you brought it has brought out for you some fresh element of the sweet-smelling savour of what Christ's death was for God? Noah had to do that; he would have to gather wood in order to offer an offering of a sweet-smelling savour immediately after the flood, and as he gathered it he would have in view what was going to be for God. Beloved, as you yourself

gather impressions of Christ who has offered Himself spotless to God, you will be gathering what will keep the fire going that must not be allowed to die out. I say again, that it would hardly be worth being in fellowship if the fragrance of Christ to God in His death were lost in the sensibilities of the saints. Let us be sure it is kept up, let us be sure it is nourished. Whether young or old, let us be sure that we ourselves are constantly growing in the appreciation of what Jesus was to God, especially in His death, apart from the question of sin, His death in the character of the burnt-offering and in its fragrance. When did you last dwell on it? When did you last have any sense of carrying the wood in view of there being that kind of yield to God? You say, 'We had some touch of it at the Supper, a brother gave a word', or something like that, but beloved, you should have had it today as well, because the burnt-offering is in the morning and in the evening. It is continual and the fire is to be continually burning upon the altar. You must all the time be seeking some fresh impression of the fragrance to God of Christ in death, if this fire is not to go out. Who would wish to be here if there were nothing of that fragrance here? I venture to say, hardly anybody.

The whole thing would disintegrate into what is formal and institutional. It is because the dying of Jesus is cherished that there is something here that makes it attractive.

As we go on we find another substantial reference to the wood in the building of the tabernacle. God says, Tell the people to bring gold and silver and copper and precious stones and goats' skins and badgers' skins and acacia wood. When God gives instructions about the building of the tabernacle He does not say, You have to do this with the gold and this with the copper. He says "And they shall make an ark of acacia wood", Exod 25: 10. God starts with the wood, with the humanity of Christ, as the centre of His system of things. If God will meet with you and speak with you on the mercy seat it is in relation to the humanity of Jesus. It is going to be covered with gold, but underneath the gold is acacia wood and someone has to bring the acacia wood. The temptations in the beginning of the gospels bring to light the acacia wood, what was

incorruptible in the wilderness, and that is the humanity of Jesus.

Learn to reflect on Jesus in the gospels. Begin with Matthew and go through. Begin with Mark because it looks short - it is not as short as it looks. Begin with Luke because Luke's platform is humanity.

Begin with John because it is the easiest to understand. Thus you will gather up impressions about what the acacia wood was.

Apprehend in your soul how Christ as Man is the centre of the divine system. God will see to it that it is covered in every part with gold, but there is the humanity of Jesus at the centre of God's system.

Other wood was to be brought to be used in the boards and in the table, wood was to be used here and there, but God starts with the acacia wood for the ark. That wood has to be gathered, has to be brought, and unless wood is brought the fire of the appreciation of the humanity of Jesus will go out. If He was just thought to be some good man, some man in whom good was expressed in the midst of evil, it would be because He was not treasured as God manifest in flesh. In the perfection of His manhood there was the perfection of His Deity. There was the acacia wood but it was covered in every part with gold. Let us gather up from the gospels impressions of the humanity of Jesus, what He was to God but also what He was to man, that blessed humanity in which God delighted but in which He also increased in favour with men. As He went on day by day crowds gathered to Him and crowds went away but some stayed.

Persons who were interested in the acacia wood stayed. They would, as far as they could, see that humanity through to the end.

There came a moment when all forsook Him and fled. There was an earlier moment when everyone went to his own home and He went to the mount of Olives. In the end they all forsook Him and fled but the acacia wood went right through. Hebrews tells us that, in the temple, there is the ark of the covenant, covered round in every part with gold (see chap 9: 4). The humanity of Jesus has gone through to the new condition in which He now is as Man. He lives as Man for ever. It is an indispensable feature of Christianity that Christ is glorified and lives as Man. If anyone takes that away he has taken Christianity away. Let us feed on the fact that Christ lives as Man, on the blessedness of the Man that was here in humiliation and

temptation and went through it all and manifested God's glory in it all. God has now glorified Him and made Him the centre of what speaks of the universe for God, the glory of that universal system in which God's glory is manifested in Christ. It is manifested in Christ as Man in the humanity that has gone through. Keep on bringing that wood. See where you can find some fresh impression of what the humanity of Jesus was when He was here. Go to the gospels, go to ministry that is available among us, go to the preaching, come to the meeting and you will find all the time that acacia wood is being brought, that more and more impressions of the humanity of Jesus are being worked with among the brethren in order that a fire may not go out. There is nothing keeps the fire burning in the soul like impressions of the humanity of Christ.

Well, beloved, I just suggest these thoughts to the brethren. Later scriptures could be referred to. As I have said, in the day of recovery under Nehemiah they cast lots as to who would bring the wood offering for the sustaining of the burnt-offering. The blessedness of what was to be re-established in recovery depended really on the maintenance of the burnt-offering and this required that persons would commit themselves to the wood-offering; that is to say, the sustaining of the recovery depends on who can bring impressions about the reality of His condition here and what He is in the condition in which He is now. Unless wood is brought, that fire will go out. There was no fire, I think, when Nehemiah got back to Jerusalem. He found things in a very disorderly state. He found plenty of combustible material but not much of it was wood and he had to arrange that persons cast lots to bring the burnt-offering. I think the significance of the casting of lots in these recovery books is not so much that there were so many people that you had to find some way of choosing among them but rather that there were so few that some had to be designated by lot in order to undertake the task. But perhaps you would volunteer, perhaps you would like to be willing. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power", Ps 110: 3. Every person that was willing-hearted brought things for the tabernacle. People that were ready and were prepared to bring

these things brought them. In an earlier day, before the order of things that Nehemiah was going to serve in relation to was broken down, David says "I have prepared... gold for things of gold... and wood for things of wood", 1 Chron 29: 2. When David had the house in view he prepared wood for things of wood. He was determined that the fire should not go out. When he was at home, when he heard of the ark in Ephratah, a small spark was lit in his soul, just a spark, and David says, I am going to build for that, wood for things of wood. All the time David was concerned that that spark which had been struck in his soul was not going to go out and he went on gathering wood. All the time he prepared wood for things of wood. I suppose he prepared wood for different aspects of the temple, for building rather than for the offerings, but he was preparing wood for things of wood. He was determined that as far as he was concerned the spark that was lit in his soul when he was young was not going to go out. However young we are we can prepare wood for things of wood, and one of the things of wood is to keep the fire burning.

Now David did not prepare enough wood. That is quite clear if you go into the second book of Chronicles. You find straightaway that David had not prepared enough wood because Solomon sends away to Hiram and says, I want more wood and you are an expert in wood. He went to the man who knew how to fell timber in Lebanon and he had things brought out of Lebanon in order that not only the house might be constructed but for something else too. How do you think that that immense burnt-offering of Solomon's was sustained? There must have been wood enough to sustain it, readiness in preparedness in spirit to be nourishing what would release the fragrance of Christ among the brethren. This is open to us. It is not too late to be gathering wood. We know that in Haggai the reference to going up into the mountain and collecting wood was for building rather than for burning, but there is still scope for bringing wood for burning, bringing wood to nourish enthusiasm for Christ among the saints, joy in Christ's things, rejoicing in the things of Jesus Christ. You can see that when Paul writes about the enemies of the cross of Christ and those who do not mind the things of Jesus Christ, these

were persons who had stopped bringing wood and the fire was going out, even if it was not quite out. The Philippian epistle relates to bringing wood in order to keep things kindled among the saints.

That is what is needed in our own day, so easily does the fire die down. Check your own meeting, check your weeknight reading, check your ministry meeting, check how quickly brothers will pray. Is the fire going down? Some people would say it is when they wait five minutes for a prayer. The sisters cannot then bring wood, except that they can pray, pray for someone to pray. If the fire is there someone will pray, someone will speak, someone will have a word from the Lord, someone will find that on Friday night things are as lively as they were on Lord's day afternoon, because the fire has been fed all the week, fed with impressions about Jesus in His blessed humanity. You cannot exactly associate the idea of wood with God; it does not speak to us of God; it speaks to us of Jesus, and in one setting after another I have endeavoured to say just a word to suggest lines of thought to the brethren on which they might develop their own thoughts and their own contribution; but what I do urge upon the brethren is that if they want the fire to be kept alight, then they must bring what will keep it alight. You must bring it in yourself and you must bring it to the meeting. It does not matter whether you are a brother or a sister, bring wood to the meeting, things that will cause the release of something fresh for God and for the saints. I trust that everyone here is committed to the proposition that the fire will not go out, but it will go out unless you do something. You may say, It is all right, so-and-so is here today! he will look after things in this address. He will not, you know. What he is dependent on is the Spirit and the Lord, the Father and your prayer. Things will go out unless you take your part.

I trust everyone is committed to the proposition that the fire is not to go out. Beloved, it needs to be freshly sustained all the time by persons who are devoted to bringing wood that is easily combustible, that easily releases something among the brethren.

We can all do it. There is often far more fragrance released in the service of God by five words by a young brother, there is often - my

mother used to say - more released by a mistake in the service of God than by well-ordered phraseology learned out of whatever books of ministry. Something fresh transforms the whole scene and could be brought in. I understand that a beloved brother who served in this city recently said (I think I have heard him say it before, but then we all say things twice) that it would be a great thing if some young brother said something at the Supper that had never been said before. It is an excellent thing when something that has never been said before comes in. You know that someone has been gathering wood, and once you know someone is gathering wood you know the fire will not go out. The great thing is to join in the gathering and bring wood yourself so that the fire does not go out.

May the Lord just use these impressions to encourage us to fresh committal to our apprehension of the Person of Christ and to the contribution of impressions to the reality of what is already among the saints, that the fire may be kept burning, that it may not go out and that He may be glorified in it and be well pleased with the result. For His Name's sake.

GLASGOW

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THE CHILDREN SAFE AND SAVED

Jewish ancient history relates that on the first Passover night a little girl, eldest child of the family, was anxious and sleepless because she feared that the blood of the Passover lamb had not been put on the doorposts and lintel of the house where she was. At length, shortly before midnight, it was discovered that the sprinkling of the blood had been left to a servant who in fact had not carried it out.

But there was just time to be *safe* from danger! An incident like this teaches us the importance of being quite sure of having God's own protection from His righteous judgment against sins. There is now nothing outward to be done, but a believing child, however anxious, may know that by faith in the shed blood of Jesus there is perfect and eternal safety.

Not only, however, do we as children or as grown-ups feel the need of being safe from judgment but also of being *saved* for God's will and pleasure. For the children of Israel that meant their leaving at once and for ever the place of hard bondage and judgment. By faith they passed - babes in arms, children and older persons - between the high water-walls of the Red Sea, on dry land but against a strong east wind. We too by being true to our baptism come by faith into a new life of freedom but we feel deeply in our spirits what death really was to Jesus to make a way for us.

God Himself is even more concerned than we are on our account. He "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance". In His wisdom therefore He works in our souls to make us aware of our need and seize the provision that He has made for us. I remember being much impressed with this when first travelling in an aeroplane about thirty years ago. Immediately on boarding there was a red light warning us to fasten seatbelts for safety. That is like the *conscience* - has a red light ever come up in yours to warn you as to the eternal welfare of your soul? Next there was the clear voice of an urgent speaker giving the same warning.

That is the *preaching* of the word of God - you cannot say you have never heard this! There was however still more; the gentle,

persuasive voice of a stewardess asking each passenger personally whether all was in order. That is the *evangelist* - perhaps this little reminiscence will do what other things may not have done and bring you to the Lord Jesus as your own Saviour. Will you let it?

J.C.Evershed