

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THE ASSEMBLY FOR CHRIST

Ephesians 1: 15-23; 2 Corinthians 11: 1-3

J.R. I thought we might consider the assembly femininely for Christ. The assembly femininely is the special answer to the manhood of the Lord Jesus. In type we can see this before sin came in in Genesis 2; there was the man alone but it was not good that man should be alone and Eve, the woman, Ishshah, is built as the counterpart of Ish, the man. We need all to be enlightened as to this great matter. Paul writes "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation", and that statement runs down to the truth as to the assembly, and the conferred glory of the Lord Jesus: "gave him to be head over all things to the assembly". The assembly shares with Him in His headship: "head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all". These statements could refer only to the assembly and no other family. Wonderful as it will be to belong to any other family, none will have this privileged position. We all need to desire to have the spirit of wisdom and revelation to apprehend the distinctiveness of the assembly as a family, and femininely as an entity for the heart of Christ.

In 2 Corinthians we have the practical side of this. Paul says "I have espoused you unto one man, to present you"; that is, the Corinthians, that local company. He has them in mind that they may be an expression locally of this very thing we are speaking about. It would seem that we would be enlightened by the spirit of wisdom and revelation as to the assembly and the special character of it to be able to work out exercises in view of an expression of that feature femininely in our localities. What do you say?

A.B.P. I think we have some little impression of it but we surely need help.

J.R. We all need help. I am taking the place of needing help as much as anybody, and in the time in which we are we need to help

one another mutually. We need to be in dependence and be mutual helpers one of another.

A.B.P. I think that that should be our attitude certainly. What the Lord may do and say is His matter, and if there is a humble desire to reach the things that are so infinitely precious I do not think He will disappoint us.

J.R. I am sure that is right. Paul had imparted much to these Ephesians but he is concerned that something should happen from the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. This spirit of wisdom and revelation is not that which we can arrive at by study; we need to be set in our desires that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may impart it to us.

A.B.P. Why is the expression "Father of glory" used?

J.R. "The Father of glory", it seems to me, identifies who Paul has in mind in saying "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ". The Lord said "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", John 20: 17. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ is God as the Lord Jesus Christ would know Him fully, as Man. He, that Person, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the Father of glory. It is of course a very glorious appellation. What do you say about it?

A.B.P. Does it mean that all glory emanates from Him? It is not a cold matter but a feeling matter. I have often been impressed with the fact that when the eternal state is referred to it is "to him who is God and Father" (1 Cor 15: 24); the supremacy of God is in mind but along with it the feelings of fatherhood.

J.R. That is very interesting. As you quoted this morning, "the Father himself has affection for you, because ye have had affection for me, and have believed that I came out from God", John 16: 27. It is the warmth of the Father's own affection.

C.F.D. "Would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of him" is the way Paul is writing to these Ephesians, involving fulness and maturity and, it seems, a knowledge of divine

Persons for instance "the Father of glory". Would you open up for us "in the full knowledge of him".

J.R. I was impressed with the fulness of it. "The full knowledge of him" would include the understanding of His purpose. To Him, according to this chapter, belongs the glory of purpose; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; according as he has chosen us in him" (that is in Christ) "before the world's foundation" (vv 3,4). The glory of purpose is attributed to this Person who is referred to here as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. The knowledge of Him would include the understanding and appreciation of what God has in His purpose.

C.F.D. Do you think God intends that the glory and the fulness of this should find its expression in the service of God?

J.R. I am sure that is right. It would go back to Him. He goes on to say, "being enlightened in the eyes of your heart"; how we all ought to desire to be enlightened believers. All believers are not enlightened, and maybe we are not all enlightened or only partially so. "The full knowledge of him, being enlightened in the eyes of your heart" is something we can have initiation into. We have only touched the fringe; there is so much we can become initiated into, wonderful things. "Enlightened in the eyes of your heart, so that ye should know" runs on to these statements as to the assembly.

L.MacF. I wondered whether in the type in Genesis 2 we have full growth and maturity. Is that not intended to help us regarding what God had in His thoughts? It is not childhood there but full grown persons.

J.R. It is a type of the assembly before sin came in, a type of the assembly according to divine purpose. It is what Jehovah Elohim produces from the rib from Adam. In Genesis 24 the servant comes in to it and the servant's men; in other types other persons come in, but in Genesis 2 it is wholly divine workmanship. It is what Jehovah Elohim does by Himself without the introduction of any intermediary service on the part of others.

L.MacF. So the intelligence of man is there: "This time" (v 23).

J.R. What shines in that type is not exactly affection; it does not say that Adam loved her; what comes to light is affinity. It is a vessel wholly in affinity with himself; it must be so because it is wholly of himself. With Rebecca it says "She became his wife and he loved her" (Gen 24: 67); affection comes into that, but it is really affinity in Genesis 2. Just as it would be here: "gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body"; that includes the idea of affinity, it is what has derived from Himself, and it is "the fulness of him who fills all in all". What derives from Christ must have affinity with Him.

A.B.P. His like.

J.R. Quite so, His counterpart. His complement: is that an expression that can be used?

A.B.P. I think so, but I thought "his like" covered it very exactly because it is of Him, therefore it is like Him; but not like Him as having reached that experimentally but as of Him personally.

J.R. His like because she is derived from Him. We need to be enlightened in the eyes of our hearts so that we have an appreciation of God's purpose regarding the assembly. "Head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all" would be the assembly complete from Pentecost until the rapture, the complete thing. We need to be enlightened in the eyes of our hearts and have an appreciation of what the assembly will be as a complete vessel; it will be perfect, apart from flesh and blood condition in the world to come and in eternity. It will be perfect, nothing but divine workmanship, wholly spiritual.

A.B.P. I think that the full knowledge of Him must relate to this same thought because Paul himself says "If any one think he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know it", 1 Cor 8: 2. It involves the whole assembly and that vessel in her eternal condition.

J.R. Quite so. It would have the world to come in mind in that it is a quotation from Psalm 8: "and has put all things under his feet"; it is

the Lord's preeminence in the world to come and the assembly alongside of Him having part in His administration. Is that what you understand?

A.B.P. And He will be known through them.

C.F.D. Does this involve "let them have dominion", Gen 1: 26?

J.R. That is just it. "Head over all things to the assembly" has been likened to a country where there is a king and queen; the queen shares with the king; she has a special relationship to him. The assembly has a special relationship with Christ and it will be manifestly so in the world to come; only the assembly will have that special relationship.

O.L.L. We have been speaking about His like; it says "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh", Gen 2: 23.

J.R. That is right, derived from Him - bone of His bones. The tribes came to David and said "Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh", 2 Sam 5: 1. That is not the same idea; we are thy bone and flesh really means we are thy kith and kin, we are the same kindred. But *of* His flesh and *of* His bones means that they have derived from Him; there is something nearer even than what is kindred. We read "For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Christ the assembly; for we are members of his body; we are of his flesh, and of his bones", Eph 5: 29. His body has derived from Him, His body expresses Him.

A.B.P. So when we have our glorified bodies they will be substantial.

J.R. I am sure that is so. I like to think that we are in for some delightful surprises. We have little idea of what is ahead of us. There is very little said of our body of glory except that it is like His body of glory. Is that not blessed? Will it not be delightful to have bodies of glory like His body?

A.B.P. It is getting nearer every day.

J.R. That is right. We have had some surprises in the testimony that were not very delightful but we are going to have some delightful

surprises surpassing our greatest expectations.

C.S.E. The apostle prayed that they would get the spirit of wisdom and revelation, and he says in verse 15: "having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is in you, and the love which ye have towards all the saints". Would we on our part seek to provide the conditions, and if they are there, would that make way for God to come in and give us the spirit of wisdom?

J.R. I think that is right. So they were ready for this because of features that Paul could take account of. As you say, "the faith in the Lord Jesus which is in you, and the love which ye have towards all the saints would show there was reality in their faith and in their love. Paul could take account of this and so pray for them according to this high level. He might not pray for all the saints according to this high level; maybe for the Corinthians he would pray something a little different, what was required in that locality.

C.S.E. It would seem as if there was an enlarged measure in their hearts at Ephesus. Do you think where that is so in any locality it provides the basis on which God can act?

J.R. Quite so. So we would seek to have these qualifications that Paul refers to in verse 15 and help one another to have them. Regarding "which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all", I understand that every family will express some feature of Christ but the assembly will be His fulness; every feature of Him as Man will be appreciated and expressed in the assembly. Is that what you understand?

A.B.P. In the economy; we cannot go beyond that. It is a marvellous thing. It says of Samuel that none of his words fell to the ground (see 1 Sam 3: 19). There was capacity in Israel somewhere to receive everything he said. But with the assembly there is capacity to receive all that has come out in manifestation. I think it is a very wonderful thing, and it relates to what has been said, that the approach is equal to the declaration.

J.R. Quite so. The holy city is said to have the glory of God: "having the glory of God", Rev 21: 10. Then it goes on to speak about "her

shining": there is something distinctive about that. As "having the glory of God" she is a vessel which has absorbed knowledge of God and expresses it. That shines for the benefit of the universe; the assembly will be the heavenly metropolis of the universe in the world to come, and we understand that the assembly will be the only feminine vessel in eternity. There will be Jerusalem which can be viewed as the earthly bride, the earthly metropolis, but that will not go into eternity I understand, but the assembly will be eternally the feminine answer to the heart of Christ.

C.F.D. Therefore the marital thought is reserved exclusively for Christ and the assembly.

J.R. That is what I understand. It is good to converse about these things and to get an impression and an appreciation of them. In 2 Corinthians Paul says "I have espoused you"; he makes known in this verse what has been the secret and what governed him in his labours for the Corinthians from the very beginning: "I have espoused you unto one man". When he went to Corinth there were not very promising conditions but he spent eighteen months there teaching the word of God. What was his objective? To espouse them to one Man. In these two letters, what was his objective? To espouse them to one Man. Now we may ask ourselves, in all our activities in our localities what is our objective? Is it what is feminine for the heart of Christ? Does that govern us? If we do not have the light of it it will not govern us. But we may have the light of it and yet it may not govern us. But as we have the light of it and have it governing us there would be something effected in view of what is feminine locally.

A.B.P. In this verse 2 I do not suppose you can find any difference between that service and the service of the Spirit; that is what the Spirit is labouring for.

J.R. That is right. The servant in Genesis 24 espoused Rebecca for Isaac; he was sent out for that purpose. In all his activity he did not approach her with any selfish motive; she was to be all for Isaac. And then he had men with him; they are not mentioned until halfway

through the chapter, but you find the servant and his men. There is what the Spirit typically in the servant is after and there were men of the same mind. Paul was one of them, and we could fill out that service in our own locality, do you think?

A.B.P. That is very fine, because service, while it was set out perfectly in Jesus, is set out perfectly in the Spirit too.

J.R. Quite so. We can take on that same kind of service according to our measure. Let us have this objective. Hegai in the book of Esther was a chamberlain, a eunuch, and could be entrusted as keeper of the women; he would not be thinking of his own selfish satisfaction but he served the king. He really espoused Esther in view of the king's pleasure, typically in view of the pleasure of Christ.

A.B.P. So that Paul really was a eunuch.

J.R. He certainly was. The Lord speaks about that: "there are eunuchs who have made eunuchs of themselves for the sake of the kingdom of the heavens" , Matt 19: 12. This principle can be taken on by any one of us, not to be in any service or anything for our own satisfaction for our own ends but for what is for the heart of Christ.

A.S.H. Why do you think Paul begins this chapter with "bear with me in a little folly"? Then he goes on to so much greater things.

J.R. He almost rebukes himself for speaking of himself in these chapters. He is reaching the end of his second epistle and he is so concerned to gain their confidence. He espoused them to one Man, but was he appreciated in Corinth? No, he was not.

A.B.P. I am glad you are speaking of it because that scripture was so misused to justify a lot of nonsense that was carried on in the meetings.

J.R. That is very important. That was not on the line of espousing you as a chaste virgin to Christ; it was very far from it; it had a corrupting influence. Verse 3 would apply: "lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craft, so your thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ".

G.D.W. Would this tendency to discount what Paul said cause him to use this great skill? He says "Would that ye would bear with me in a little folly", as if he would make himself the lowest among his brethren and win them and espouse them to Christ.

J.R. That is right. The question with the Corinthians was, were they willing to be espoused. That was his objective; "I have espoused you"; but were they willing to be espoused? Rebecca was willing to be espoused, and Esther was willing to be espoused; they were subject. In fact Esther required nothing but what Hegai provided; she was entirely subject and obedient. Now if there are persons in my locality who have this objective and are labouring to secure this result, I need to appreciate them and appreciate their objective and be subject.

G.D.W. Paul is communicating with the Corinthians; we have affinities, but then there is the thought of communion. It says of David that he communed with Abigail (see 1 Sam 25: 39). And there is our side of that too.

J.R. I am glad you refer to that because the servants whom David sent to commune with Abigail were really espousing Abigail for David; they were representing David and his desires and therefore they were espousing her and she was willing to be espoused. She was humble; she said "let thy handmaid be a bondwoman to wash the feet of the servants of my lord" (v 41). That is the kind of spirit of persons who are willing to be espoused. The question is, Are we willing to be espoused? Are we willing to be led along this way that there may be a feminine answer for the heart of Christ?

G.D.W. Is not that communion a two-way matter? Christ has done everything to communicate with us from His side; now the question is our response.

J.R. That is right.

A.Macd. You were speaking of the labours of those seeking to espouse to Christ; that involved Paul's prayers as well as platform service.

J.R. That is very important. It involved his tears too; he tells them in the second epistle that he wrote the first epistle with many tears (see chap 2: 4). They were rebellious; they were not willing to be espoused; they were a little like Zipporah. Moses' father-in-law really espoused Zipporah to Moses. It was he who gave Zipporah to Moses, and you find later that Moses' father-in-law protected Zipporah and her sons in view of bringing them again to Moses after the people came out of Egypt (see Exod 18: 2-5). This protecting, espousing service is important for some one or ones to take on in every locality. But then we all need to be subject and appreciate that such service is taken on on our behalf.

C.F.D. What you are raising is certainly a very challenging and yet a wonderful idea. "I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ". Ephesians 5 shows that He actually presents the assembly to Himself. The servant brought Rebecca to Isaac but Isaac really presented her to himself. But Paul speaks here about presenting them a chaste virgin to Christ. Would you help us as to the fine meaning involved in this.

J.R. I thought that the servant presented Rebecca to Isaac; the messengers David sent to commune with Abigail would present Abigail. The servant took ten camels: ten camels went out, ten camels must have come back; the servant was on one of these camels; and the men (we are not told how many there were). Then coming back there was the servant and his men but there was Rebecca and her maids. The ten camels might not all have had occupants when they went out but I think they would have when they went back. Isaac lifted up his eyes and saw camels coming, and then the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. He would go over the whole commission he had taken on and how pleased he would be with the result. I thought that the servant really presented Rebecca to Isaac. "And she had said to the servant, Who is the man that is walking in the fields to meet us? And the servant said, that is my master! Then she took the veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac led her into

his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebecca , and she became his wife, and he loved her", Gen 24: 65-67.

C.F.D. Is it your thought that the service of the Spirit of God, and of those under the hand of the Spirit, brings the persons and presents them in the sense that they are in immediate proximity to Christ?

J.R. The espousers have in mind to make the persons presentable. Rebecca was presentable as the result of the servant's activities. "I have espoused you": that is how Paul regarded these Corinthians; he regarded them as espoused to Christ but his labours were that he might present them, that there might be the practical answer to what he had in his mind as to espousal..

A.B.P. I think you have touched on something that is very important - to distinguish between the leadership of the Spirit and the leadership of Christ. The leadership of the Spirit brings us into a spiritual area, but the leadership of Christ takes on in the assembly.

So Isaac led Rebecca into his mother's tent: that was his part of leadership. The leadership of the Spirit - "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom 8: 14) - related to the wilderness.

J.R. Very good.

O.L.L. The Spirit will be with us for ever, even when we are with the Lord.

G.D.W. This matter has to be worked out in our localities, and is that not why you referred to Corinth?

J.R. That is right. Of course we have to bear in mind that they were a company who could be addressed as the assembly of God. They were all together as believers; that was before the breakdown came in. Now in the day in which we are we cannot take the place of being the assembly of God in a place because that must include every believer in the place. We could accept the obligation to bring every believer to this, but we can work only with those who are available.

G.D.W. It is really a question of acting in the light of the assembly.

J.R. Exactly. We are somewhat limited to those who are available.

Not that you would not have in mind other believers; if you know other believers in a place you would endeavour to enlighten them as to the assembly and see whether they are espousable and presentable, but with those who are available is largely where the labours take place.

T.E.D. Rebecca said "I will go"; is that not the needed exercise on the part of individual believers in view of being presentable?

J.R. That is very good; she was willing to be espoused. The Corinthians were really unwilling to be espoused and did not appreciate the one who had espoused them, or his labours. It tends to be in our localities that those who have this high objective are not appreciated as they ought to be. We have exhortations in the Scriptures, like 1 Thessalonians 5: 12: "But we beg you, brethren, to know those who labour among you, and take the lead among you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to regard them exceedingly in love on account of their work". That is in principle this espousal service.

And in 1 Timothy 5: 17; "Let the elders who take the lead among the saints well be esteemed worthy of double honour, specially those labouring in word and teaching"; that is, persons who undertake this kind of service are not to be resented. The Lord will lose if such service is resented. We need to be subject to admonition and all that kind of thing on the part of persons who have this objective that Paul had regarding the Corinthians.

G.D.P. The brother giving thanks this morning said, In the world there are lords many and gods many but we come to this one Man.

J.R. That is right, "I have espoused you unto one man". Then let one Man and what is for Him be our objective in al I we do. That ought to be the objective and motive in al I local exercises, what is feminine for the heart of Christ.

A.Macd. Would the one Man link with "simplicity as to the Christ"? Sometimes we get our eyes off Christ and things become complicated.

J.R. That is very true. We have known by experience how complicated and involved things became because we got our eye on other men.

O.L.L. At one time Paul told the Corinthians that he did not lie; he said "The God and Father of the Lord Jesus knows - he who is blessed for ever - that I do not lie" (2 Cor 11: 31), because they did not believe what he was saying.

J.R. That is right. In chapter 1 of this epistle Paul has to defend himself because they were accusing him of ulterior motives in his actions. All these kinds of things are attributed very often to persons who have this high standard locally of what is for the heart of Christ. We need to guard against this and accept admonition, whatever it may be, by persons who have as objective an answer to the heart of Christ locally.

C.C.G. Do you think the Song of Songs would have a bearing on this, to have the one Man before us so that we can distinguish His beauty from head to foot?

J.R. That is good because that is a love setting, a matter of affection. She was able to say "I am my beloved's, And his desire is toward me", chap 7: 10. She is being espoused and she is presentable. The keepers of the city were rough on her at one point. Unless we have this pure objective we can be rough on the brethren unnecessarily. This objective would preserve us from being unduly rough on the brethren. There would be a tenderness with service of this kind because the Lord Himself is tender; and patience too, and yet we need to maintain that high standard.

C.S.E. The apostle said "I am jealous as to you with a jealousy which is of God". Do you think this kind of motive needs support and encouragement in order to help the saints that this pure line of things for Christ might be developed more?

J.R. Jealousy is the form love takes in certain circumstances.

B.T. Would the eyes of our heart help us in relation to keeping current with the one Man? Head knowledge and other things have

come in in relation to the breakdown, bringing in other men. That is what has happened in professing Christendom.

J.R. That is right. It was a departure from this kind of outlook that brought in the breakdown. Clericalism developed, and that makes much of the cleric. What is needed is service undertaken locally with a view to the satisfaction of the heart of Christ. The feminine side of the assembly is an entity; it is not exactly so many persons. Sonship involves so many persons, brethren of Christ so many persons, but the assembly as a chaste virgin involves an entity, something in oneness and unity, one result for Christ.

A.B.P. What about motherhood in relation to this?

J.R. I was thinking of Ruth and the motherhood of Naomi; she really espoused Ruth for Boaz. In chapter 3 she instructs Ruth and Ruth was subject; she was espousable and also presentable.

A.B.P. She did exactly what Naomi told her: she washed herself, she anointed herself, she put on raiment - which was not a gleaner's garment I am sure - and went and lay down at the feet of Boaz. I was thinking as you were speaking that that is a wonderful example of espousing.

J.R. It is indeed. You get many examples of it in the Old Testament, but what is needed is this kind of thing in each locality, somebody representing what the Lord is seeking and all of us subject to that element.

B.T. God said "I remember for thee... the love of thine espousals" (Jer 2: 2) as if it is a delightful matter to Him.

J.R. That is right. There is a freshness about espousal; it is full of promise; it opens up a new vista.

P.L.D. Does the overcomer in Philadelphia fit with this and with what you said yesterday about Paul saying "My God"? All this is written upon one person; "the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven, from my God", Rev 3: 12. Would not this link with the way Paul desires to set Christ forward? And then Christ gives God all the glory for it.

J.R. That is good, because I think we are in the day of the overcomers of Philadelphia. Looking back we have a certain advantage over those who have gone before us. In certain years the claiming to be Philadelphia was repudiated and rightly so, but looking back on all that has happened since I think we can recognise a Philadelphian phase of things in the history of the testimony, when there was a ministry in power and freshness taken account of universally. Mr Darby's ministry was a known matter, his Collected Writings are known in Christendom. There was a power and life that made an impact on Christendom, and that lasted for one hundred and twenty years. Now publicly that has passed and we are into a Laodicean order of things.

A.B.P. And we realise that we thought we were in it but we really were not. There was the expression of it but many of us were really not in it.

J.R. That is right. But we can be overcomers. I often used to wonder why there were overcomers in Philadelphia.

A.B.P. Are we not overcomers in Laodicea rather?

J.R. Yes, we are overcomers in Laodicea. If we are anything at all we are overcomers in Laodicea.

A.B.P. The only way for us to get into any Philadelphian character is to be overcomers in Laodicea.

J.R. That is the truth I am sure.

C.F.D. The last four assemblies addressed, as we have been helped to see, run concurrently right on to the end, do they not? Therefore the feature of the overcomer seems to be the key at the present time as to whether we really fit into that pattern.

J.R. Yes, we have been taught, and I agree with it, that these four go on to the end. But in the historical setting Sardis came out of Thyatira, Philadelphia came out of Sardis, and Laodicea follows on that.

C.F.D. Quite so. I think what you have said as to the overcomer is something extremely important in our own day because the

expression of these things is to be found somewhere. Do you not think that it is in the overcomer that the expression of it is seen and therefore the challenge to everyone of us here today is, Are we truly overcomers in these conditions? Because we are here it does not mean necessarily that we are.

J.R. So overcomers locally at the present time are the answer to "where two or three are gathered together unto my name", Matt 18: 20. They are two or three overcomers, and I believe that there have been overcomers right through the different phases. The overcomers in Smyrna lost their lives in martyrdom; I am sure there were overcomers in Pergamos and in Thyatira, and so on right through, there were overcomers in Sardis; and if Philadelphia exists at all today it is in overcomers.

G.D.W. "Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking" (Rev 3: 20): is that not a great appeal for us to open from our side? The overcomer is like 2 Timothy 2: "if therefore one" (v 21); so it comes down to what is individual.

J.R. That is right. It comes into John 14 as well: "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me" (v 21); that is the overcomer. It comes down to two in Matthew 18; it comes down to one in John 14.

G.D.W. Mr Raven stressed the importance of what is individual so that we would understand how to act in the light of the assembly.

J.R. Paul says here "I fear". He had espoused them; that was what took place in his mind. I suppose the gospel really espouses us. In the first epistle Paul gives a list of sinful persons and he says "these things were some of you", chap 6: 11. Paul had espoused them by means of the glad tidings: "but ye have been washed, but ye have been sanctified, but ye have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God". We have been espoused by the glad tidings, but do we go far enough as to what is for the heart of Christ?

A.B.P. I was wondering about that because the servant saw in Rebecca something that he had not effectuated. He could adorn it,

he could bring the garments from the heavenly sphere which would make her suitable for it in relation to the espousal, but there must be something there; she said "I will go".

J.R. Quite so. She lived by the local well before the servant espoused her.

A.B.P. That was not her first visit there.

J.R. The well is a local idea; it is what is available to us locally in the Spirit in freshness and life, and she lived by that, she was subject in that area.

A.B.P. In contrast to a river, for instance.

J.R. Exactly. You see it in the Old Testament, Beer-sheba for instance: Isaac's servants dug a well "and he called it Shebah", Gen 26: 33. Later there was the city of Beer-sheba; that is, the city was built around the well, the well being a local idea where refreshment and life were maintained.

T.E.D. There is a reference in verse 3 to "your thoughts". If I am living by the well will not my thoughts be protected? Our mind is an area we need to protect, do we not?

J.R. Very much so; control of our minds is very important. Our minds come into the epistle to the Romans: "I myself with the mind serve God's law", chap 7: 25. The mind is a faculty the believer has which is to be used for his protection and his progress. The Spirit will help us to control our minds. Is that what you understand?

T.E.D. I was thinking of that. We need to allow the Spirit scope.

J.R. That is right. Paul says "the arms of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful according to God to the overthrow of strongholds; overthrowing reasonings" - we are often subject to reasonings - "and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God, and leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ", 2 Cor 10: 4,5. That is part of his espousal service.

C.F.D. All that stands over against simplicity as to the Christ. When our minds become entangled and complicated we lose the touch of

the simplicity as to the Christ. The Spirit of God would help us to get back to that.

J.R. I am sure that is right. "Simplicity as to the Christ" reminds you of the simple eye: "when thine eye is simple, thy whole body also is light", Luke 11: 34. It is simplicity and singleness of purpose and outlook.

A.B.P. It seems that in marriages that take place amongst us these days there is not always the simplicity as to the Christ. I mean the wedding gowns and all the dress-up that is brought in is giving real concern. You can understand a certain amount of it and have sympathy with it, but when it is carried to extreme it gets beyond the simplicity of the Christ. John the baptist could say "He that has the bride is the bridegroom", John 3: 29. What could be simpler or more profound than that?

J.R. Certainly we should avoid being as like the world as possible; which is a tendency. Young people, of course, we can be patient with but, as you say, it can be overdone.

A.B.P. I have noticed that it gets a little bit more extreme at each wedding that takes place. This kind of thing is one of the indications of what we have to be guarded against if we are going to go on in the simplicity as to the Christ.

J.R. The question would be if such an exercise as yours would be heeded. Some might think you are old-fashioned, you do not understand. You are speaking in the light of espousing the local company for Christ, a chaste virgin to Christ; that is your exercise and such an exercise should be respected and persons should be subject to it. They were saying all kinds of things about Paul; I do not know whether they were saying he was old-fashioned but in any case they were saying all kinds of things about him in his absence.

They would not say it to his face, of course; they would not say to your face that you are old-fashioned and you do not understand, and so on. I know the kind of things that could be said. But that is an example of this kind of exercise not being heeded, persons not prepared to be espoused. Do you follow?

A.B.P. I do. I hope I am not extreme in what I am saying but I really feel that there is a tendency to get away from the simplicity as to the Christ.

J.R. That is right. You have given us a practical example I am sure.

A.B.P. I am sorry to bring this in.

J.R. We are on practical matters and that is an example of it; if only such exercises were heeded and show kept within certain limits. Not that it should not be a happy occasion; some people say it is the happiest day in a man's life. I do not believe that; it ought to be the beginning of many happy days, and for the bride too.

NEW YORK

18 November 1979

Key to initials

C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; P.L.Druckenmiller, Plainfield; T.E.Druckenmiller, Plainfield; C.S.Elliott, New York; C.C.Greenidge, Plainfield; A.S.Hinkson, New York; O.L.Linton, New York; A.Macdonald, New York; L.MacFarlane, New York; A.B.Parker, New York; G.D.Pfingst, Plainfield; J.Renton, Edinburgh; B.Taylor, New York; G.D.Ware, New York.

"FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH"

J.C.Evershed

Psalm 84: 1-7

Our brother has just mentioned in prayer those who would like to be here but are not able. This Psalm was written by one such. He would like to have been in the place where God's service was going on. It was already going on in his heart, but the very deprivation of it made it all the greater to him. I just carry this thought from our brother's prayer, that we should value more than we do these times of assembling, when there can be not only a flow of things from God to us but a return flow to Him. We have already had a sense that a highway has been made in the desert for our God. He could have made it for Himself and He did in one sense; but then He has used persons to make His highway in the desert. I think that is one of the very few passages - that from Isaiah 40: 3 - which is quoted in each of the four gospels. It shows the essential importance of it, that a highway has been made for Him. But then these persons of whom this psalmist writes are those in whose heart are the highways and I take it that this suggests a responsive system going on in power towards God, because he speaks of persons going from strength to strength. I feel we need to concern ourselves more with this, that there should be an adequate answer from us. If a man who was not in the circumstances where God's service was going on collectively could have these longings and could say these things, how much more then should we be able to answer in a collective way!

I had not much to say as to detail but the thought of rest comes in with God, in His mercy, having made a resting-place for the commonest bird and a nestingplace for the most restless bird. But then the psalmist's thoughts go immediately to the altars where, as I have read in Mr Darby's writings, the worship of God is the true rest of the soul. So if we want to know what rest of soul is, it is found in worship. A further feature of the part of the Psalm that I read is that things are magnified: it is not one tabernacle but tabernacles; not

one court but courts; not one altar but altars; not one highway but highways. I think that means that the whole matter, a whole system of response, has become magnified before the psalmist in his going over these matters and considering for the service of God. We have light and understanding of things, in God's ways, beyond what men in that dispensation had, even though we be not so great morally as they were; but nevertheless he says "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee", so that we can each come into that; and then he immediately says "they, in whose heart are the highways". Now that is a concern for us in our localities as walking together in the truth, that the highways should be in our heart. We can speak of righteousness and other moral requirements as being highways, and also all that has come out in ministry as to separation, but I would think that the great highway would be that of responsive service to God.

But then the writer contemplated that we should not always be in the highways as to our experiences we may be in the low ways, so he says "Passing through the valley of Baca, they make it a well-spring". We all know what it is to pass through the low ways of this valley: there are those who mourn the loss of dear ones and we share with them sympathetically; there are those who suffer in body; there are various limitations and sorrows that cause weeping; but there seems to be power with these very persons to make it a well-spring. I wonder if we know much about the fact that the Spirit residing in us would enable us to draw some refreshment even in circumstances such as those. Then God adds His early rain covering it with blessings in view of a fruitful crop for Himself. Therefore persons are able to go from strength to strength. As we know, Scripture speaks of "faith to faith" and "glory to glory"; and this "from strength to strength" is obviously not from weakness to strength. We have been much edified and strengthened by meetings in America, in the book entitled 'Strength out of Weakness'; but to go from strength to strength was evidently a matter that the psalmist here had in mind as going on, as it were, from one peak to another, having in view that each one would appear before God in

Zion. I take it that means that there is a response according to what is pleasing to God's mind and what He has set His heart upon. Zion represents what He has chosen and there are persons appearing before Him in relation to that system of responsive praise such as we sang of. It is just the simple Christian who does this I think, because it is he who is responsive and says "Amen", according to the letter to the Corinthians (see 1 Cor 14: 16). I think that the simpler we are in divine things the better, in order that we may be in this strong upward movement of appearing before God in connection with His rich and great thoughts. In the Name of the Lord Jesus.

BUCKHURST HILL

27 December 1974

GUIDANCE BY GLORY

R.Taylor

Matthew 2: 2,9; Luke 24: 31-34; 2 Corinthians 3: 18

It was our first hymn, dear brethren, that led me to refer to these passages as to having a view of Christ in His glory and being led by it. It is striking that at the beginning of the wilderness journey God should have appeared with His glory, as if at the outset He would lift our view. The wilderness journey was before them, but in that journey there was to be guidance by His glory. I believe that God would normally meet things by His glory. The references in Hebrews to what was in the ark would substantiate that; the golden pot with the manna, Aaron's rod and the tables of the covenant: these things were like the intervention of the glory in answer to murmurings. May we be helped to have our eyes lifted from murmurings and confusion and despair, to be led by the glory, to be led normally we may say.

Few of us may have trodden that way, and yet may we be helped to speak of it, so that we may be encouraged to move that way. It is the basis of speaking, I believe, the basis of ministry. It says that Esaias "saw his glory and spoke of him", John 12: 41. How much speaking there may have been without our eye on the glory! maybe our eyes on the brethren, maybe our eyes on difficulties, but the basis of ministry would be that it is with our eyes on the glory, so that God is rightly spoken of, so that He is rightly represented.

I just thought that in Matthew the star may be an allusion to His glory, guiding these men, simple souls maybe but guided through a maze of confusion and the great weight of the enemy's power against Christ. It says His star: "we have seen his star in the east".

There was a great area of speculation, Herod was troubled, his wise men were troubled; they all knew more than these men but they did not have their eye on the glory. Many other stars there must have been in the firmament that night, but it says "we have seen his star", His star. And that star guided them through all that confusion and brought them to an area where they were able to open their

treasures and offer gold, frankincense and myrrh. So may we be helped, dear brethren, to seek in simplicity to be directed by the glory. His star: it will surely come, it is always there. These men for a moment were deflected from it. That may be in accord with most of our histories. But the star appeared to them again and it "went before them until it came and stood over the place where the little child was". May we be conscious that we are being led like this; may we be helped to get free of other influences, however oppressing, and be led like these men to the area where there is liberty to unfold our treasures and bestow them on Christ.

The ones in Luke were despairing a bit, maybe. It says that the Lord drew near to them on that journey. They were disappointed persons - something else that may ring a chord within us - and yet the glory was so near at hand, so close by them. It says "their eyes were opened, and they recognised him". Would that we were helped, by prayer it may be, to recognise Him more quickly. How many things crowd in on us! - the breakdown, the sorrows of the testimony; there is not a heart here today but what carries these; but may they not overcome us dear brethren; may we be guided by His glory. As I said, it is always there. And as they see it they said "Was not our heart burning in us". None of these other things that they spoke of so much caused a burning heart; and things which we so often revert to do not cause a burning heart save as He comes in with a touch of His glory. The Lord is ever ready to do it. He was more ready to show His glory than they were to behold it, and that is so often with us. How ready He is to come near to us in our difficulties! He came near them as they were oppressed, but how quickly He would cause our hearts and our feet to move in relation to a presentation of Himself.

In Corinthians it is possibly more normal. It says "We all, looking... are transformed". It is meant to affect us, that we are not the same as we were before. The word would be that it leaves us different. We could refer to many that that happened with. Paul himself speaks of "the glory of that light" at the outset of his life, Acts 22: 11. That light, the glory of it, the impact that it made on him,

changed him, transformed him into a new man. That was a drastic change we may say, but may it in measure cause a change with us as we behold His glory. This very dispensation we are in has not only been inaugurated in glory but it subsists in glory, a glory that will never be annulled. This whole page in Corinthians is full of these references to the surpassing glory that marks our time. How Paul would encourage us! Abraham too, the God of glory had appeared to him, causing him to move in relation to the glory, not in relation to the breakdown. So it says "having this ministry... we faint not", 2 Cor 4: 1. May we be encouraged that we are not among those that faint. What a time of fainting it is! What a time of going back it is! And yet all the time, dear brethren, so near at hand, there is the glory to lead us, the glory to guide us. However we may magnify the peculiar nature of our circumstances the glory of the Lord is there to lead us through. May it be that we are among those of whom Paul can say "we faint not".

LONDON

15 October 1974

THE CHILDREN'S PROGRESS

Every child is familiar with growth in the body, but with it there should be also progress in the soul. As a boy I used to be taken from time to time to visit a blind Christian in a Home for aged sisters in Christ.

It happens that this believer's name was Miss Day although it must always have seemed like night to her unseeing eyes! Each visit she used to touch the top of my head to 'see' how much I had grown.

She then asked if I had grown in my soul! No doubt she was thinking of Peter's last words to us: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". The grace would be outward and the knowledge inward.

The life here of Jesus is a model for believers, while Timothy, though quite young, was to be a model of the believers. In the first instance the word 'model' in the language in which the New Testament was written means a 'writing-copy' as used in schools. In the case of Timothy, he was to be a 'type' or example of what a Christian should be. His progress - as that of us all - should be easily seen and comes by keeping the mind's eye on the Master.

Luke tells us that, as a young child, Jesus "grew and waxed strong in spirit", while in the 'teen years after the visit to the temple He "advanced in wisdom and stature". This kind of progress is possible for us where the power of God's Spirit is known. Only one Child has been wholly pleasing to God the Father, but every other child should seek to be so.

We know that as we grow we can first reach up to something and then in time grasp it and touch something higher still. Thus Timothy was to "lay hold of eternal life". This meant that in his own spirit he could see and seize the blessings from God which far outweigh and outlast any advantage in this world. Growth too depends very much on feeding and the appetite for it which comes from tasting that the Lord is good. He feeds us for heavenly life as a shepherd feeds his sheep for earthly life. Such was His love that He laid down His life for us and was glorified so that, for one thing, we might feed on Him known to us as in heaven. It may sound at first

as a hard thing to understand but Jesus said that "he that eats me shall live also on account of me". If we always just say that we do not understand we shall never progress. Of Daniel we are told that he first set his heart to know difficult things and then someone was sent to make him understand. Do you pray for help?

J.C.Evershed