

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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LIVING WATER

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THE TESTIMONY OF OUR LORD (2)

Revelation 3: 7-22

E.M.W. This passage is very well known, and I thought the Holy Spirit would help us to draw on it for encouragement in our day, so that we might be exercised to be overcomers, to which reference has already been made in the earlier reading. Most of us would know that the last four assemblies run on together to the end, because the Lord's coming is mentioned in each. We should be careful not just to regard them in the letter or doctrine, whether it be the protracted view of them or the immediate application of them, because we are having to do with the Lord. It is a tremendous privilege to have to do with the Lord, but it is also a sobering responsibility, especially in days like the present. We have a marked contrast between Philadelphia and Laodicea, and I think it has been said by others that it is not a position or positions that are referred to but a condition. Philadelphia is one of the two of the seven that the Lord does not exhort to repent. There are two of the seven to which He twice speaks of repentance, but Smyrna and Philadelphia are not exhorted to repent, and I would submit that that is because they were in that frame of mind and soul before Him as John was.

These last two we should consider perhaps together but without limiting the brethren in any way, of course, in drawing on other scriptures which might help us. In the last two verses of the chapter we have evidence of the Lord still on His Father's throne and the Spirit still here and still speaking; so what was done by God nearly two thousand years ago, when He made Jesus both Lord and Christ and the Lord Jesus poured out the Spirit, still obtains. But He is on His Father's throne maintaining everything for Him, and the Spirit is still here and still speaking. Now the Lord would, I think, speak to us encouragingly with a view to our being in the condition or state that is suggested in Philadelphia. If you claim to be it you are probably Laodicean. At the same time we would credit one another with the desire that the Lord might find such conditions that He can

approve. But we must remember that He is still in control; He is still on the throne and the Spirit is still here.

J.A.P. You mentioned the matter of overcoming and you referred to the last two verses. The Lord said that He overcame; what would that mean?

E.M.W. He says in John's gospel, "In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world", chap 16: 33. It is set out in Him supremely and perfectly. He does not specify here what He has overcome, nor does He specify what the overcomer is to overcome, but it seems to me that that character is to mark us. What do you think?

J.A.P. I think your reference to John 16 is very helpful. Just what do you understand by the word 'overcome'. It is more than self-judgment, is it not?

E.M.W. Oh yes. In each case, as far as I see, the Lord, as I have said, does not specify what it is that is to be overcome, but it is rather the moral and spiritual fibre in the believer that overcomes in whatever conditions or position he may be, or whatever circumstances he may have to face. I suppose primarily it would refer to what is ecclesiastical or religious.

J.Mcl. Would there be a link between overcoming and "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says" ?

E.M.W. Do you mean it would be the overcomer who would have the ear? I suppose that would be right. At the same time "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies" would leave it open to any soul. It is the breadth of grace really, but I do not doubt that the overcomer would have an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

J.Mcl. Is it essential that we lay hold of what the Spirit is saying currently?

E.M.W. Yes; and the next question to that is, What is He saying? But I think we should recognise that the Lord is still on His Father's

throne, and the Holy Spirit is still here and is speaking, as you say, currently. Now I judge that the spiritual would discern that.

H.W.J. In each case it seems that the exhortation is to hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies, and connected with that what the Lord says to the overcomer in each of the churches. Would the overcomer find out what to overcome by hearing the Spirit's voice?

E.M.W. I think that would be so. It is changed around in certain cases, is it not? In some cases what the Spirit says is put before the word to the overcomer, but I think what you say would be right. There is what the Lord says to the seven for that matter, and we recognise that, but there is also what the Spirit says. And in what the Lord says He includes the exhortation to hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

S.D.K.R. Would overcoming be something like a fish that swims against the current and has fins and scales?

E.M.W. I think that would be included. They do not go with the tide or with the stream; there is power to go against it.

L.MacF. In Acts 13 "the Holy Spirit said" (v 2). We are speaking of hearing what the Spirit says to the assemblies. Would you say a word as to the means He would use in a local assembly.

E.M.W. It is what He says to the assemblies, is it not? The passage to which you refer is emphasising the fact rather than the means. It says the *Spirit* said "Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them", without telling us the means by which He did it. I think that has great importance, that He would have us to understand that *He* speaks. The means that He uses is, of course, a matter for Him. It has often been said that no doubt he used a brother who was there. They were ministering to the Lord and fasting. But I think the great fact is that it is the Spirit that says it, and someone detects that it is the Spirit that says it and writes it down. It is a test to us as to whether we can detect what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

D.C.J. What the Spirit may have to say to me as an individual should be the same as what He may say to the assembly, as far as the testimony is concerned.

E.M.W. I think that would be right. Do you mean that would keep me as an individual consistent in the path? Have you that in your mind?

D.C.J. What the Spirit may say to the assemblies should not be something that is foreign to me, or a shock to me, because the Spirit has had to do with me individually.

E.M.W. Very good. I think that is the way in which the spiritual, as having to do with the Spirit, discern what the Spirit is saying to the assemblies. I think that should exercise us.

A.C.C. Is it significant that the Lord presents Himself as "the holy, the true"? I thought it assumes that they had faced the matter of righteousness as in 2 Timothy 2, and that it is rather the service of God that the Lord has in mind in "the key of David". Holiness would be required for the service of God, would it not?

E.M.W. Yes; and presenting Himself thus would have in mind an answer in those to whom He presents Himself which would be the same in character. Your reference to the service of God is helpful, because my own impression has been that, amongst other things, the Lord very largely used the ministry given through Mr Taylor to use the key of David and open up the service of God, because it was David that inaugurated and established the service of song. I would not, of course, limit it to that, but it seems to me the Lord used the key of David there. But He still says, even to Philadelphia, He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

A.C.C. That would be current and would keep us in accord with the mind of heaven.

E.M.W. I think it would. There is a tendency to limit the Spirit of God to the good teaching. Now the good teaching is limited to the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of God is not limited to the good teaching.

S.D.K.R. Do you mean that we may bring our ideas into a scripture rather than letting the Spirit speak through that scripture?

E.M.W. Yes, I do think that. If I might speak experimentally for a moment, one has been looking into the good teaching for nearly fifty years. Obviously that has moulded my mind, and when I approach scripture there is a danger of taking a sense to it and limiting the fulness of what is in it to the sense that I am taking to it and not allowing for the fulness and depth in the scriptures which have never been exhausted. So one has the impression that we should be praying to the Lord for a prophetic lead in which the Spirit is evidently speaking to the assemblies.

S.D.K.R. Would you open that out a little. Have you in mind a person as a prophetic lead, or a teaching?

E.M.W. Well, just what is distinctly prophetic. How the Lord may choose to do that will be His matter. But I am not thinking of a king; we do not want to choose kings or anything like that. But one would desire that we should recognise the Spirit more and not in any sense limit His speaking. We should be alive to the fact that He is *saying* something to the assemblies at the present moment.

C.F.D. Should we not be in faith about this in our localities? "The assemblies" is plural, which would get down to where we are; Philadelphia was a condition and is a condition, but should we not be in faith that the Spirit is able to bring in the current mind of God locally where we are?

E.M.W. I think that is right although what the Lord says is broader than that. It is what the Spirit says to the *assemblies*. We are viewing the seven assemblies now as existent at one and the same time, not simply looking at the protracted view. But what He says to the assemblies He tells John to "write in a book" (Rev 1: 11); it is *one* book. So every assembly would know what was said to every other assembly. Therefore the Spirit speaking to the assemblies, it seems to me, would be consistent and it would no doubt have in mind unification, thinking the same thing and moving in the same direction, the cherishing of Christ and His interests.

K.A.O. Do you not think that sometimes we limit the Spirit as to the way He may act in relation to certain things? Sometimes we do not rely upon the Spirit to do as He will, and we let our natural minds be occupied with how things are taking place.

E.M.W. I think that is right. Hence what we have said previously in these meetings is so essential, the recognition of the Lord as supreme and that His will is to dominate. And when I use the word 'dominate' I do not want to convey the idea of what is arbitrary, but He does not bend to anyone's will at all. While we feel our own weakness, and often that we exercise our own wills, maybe unconsciously, we should accept in principle that in the assemblies there is one will which should be governing in Toronto and Gillingham and wherever it may be.

K.A.O. And when we are in subjection to the Lord, do you not think that then we are able to allow for the Spirit to act in the way that He will?

E.M.W. That is most important. Hence we link that with what was said, that they were ministering to *the Lord* (see Acts 13: 2). Insubject persons cannot minister to the Lord. And what you say makes room, where there is a simple state of subjection, for an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. But while the prophetic word comes into our localities to encourage us, comfort us, console us, maybe correct us, yet there is what He is saying to the assemblies, that is to all of them.

J.Mcl. Is it interesting that the word is not 'I know what you are saying' but "I know thy works"? Is that the measure of each one of us in our assemblies?

E.M.W. I suppose that would be just. The Lord says to Philadelphia, "behold, I have set before thee an *opened* door" - not an open door; it is not wide open, it is *opened* - "which no one can shut". I do not think it is a wide open door; that is not the idea of it, but opened. Faith and spiritual energy will cause me to move, I think, through the opened door.

S.D.K.R. Referring back again to the Spirit speaking, I think we would all like to be in unity. Could you say something as to how the Spirit would speak?

E.M.W. Well, He uses vessels. But I think that the first impression we should lay hold of - I do not know if you agree - is that *He does speak*. So that in the important passage referred to it says, the Spirit *said*. Someone says, How did He say it? But for the moment the writer indicates that that is not the point. He says, lay hold of this fact, that the Spirit said "Separate me now Barnabas and Saul". So there was not too much concern in the mind of the writer as to *how* it was said. But at the same time the means that He uses have to be accepted.

S.D.K.R. Is it more, How do we detect that it is the Spirit's voice?

E.M.W. I think that would be by what our brother indicated, your personal link with the Spirit. It is the spiritual that discerns all things. The spiritual sitting in a meeting like this would discern what is coming from the Spirit and what may not be coming from the Spirit.

G.W.S. Peter writes about the scope of prophecy (see 2 Pet 1: 20). It is not by its own interpretation but by the Holy Spirit. We have to be sensitive to see that the Spirit is speaking; there is a great scope of things.

E.M.W. That would be right. It seems to me that the great need is for the subjection to the Lord; it is the Lord who says "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies". As you say, the scope of no prophecy is to be had from its own particular interpretation, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. We need to be very exercised about this because we are having to do with God and the great things of God. Now, can we detect what the Spirit is saying at this moment to the assemblies?

J.A.P. In the Old Testament, as to this word you use about a prophetic lead, Isaiah's ministry was largely, as I understand it, that the saints should stay in Jerusalem and be a testimony. When Jeremiah ministered he said that the saints should accept going into

captivity, and one would have to be on the alert therefore as to what may be proceeding in the time I am living in.

E.M.W. That is most instructive. What you are saying is that in Hezekiah's day they were told to stop in the city. God says, so to speak, I will deal with Sennacherib. In Jeremiah's day they were told to go out of the city. Some people may have said, to their loss, That is not what Isaiah said, we are stopping here. Hence you can see the need of what is prophetic at any moment. I feel very tested myself about the communication immediately by God of what He is thinking about us at the present moment, what He is doing at the present moment. Faith must enter into that, because we are, speaking for one's self, very casual both about our local prophetic meetings which have been referred to and maybe also about meetings of this kind. They are not just convivial occasions for happy fellowship - they may be that, we thank God for that - but it is intended that there should be prophecy in them.

H.C. Here it is a question of the ear: "He that has an ear, let him hear". It is a question who has the ear to hear; not everyone has an ear. Is that right?

E.M.W. That is right. That would be a circumcised ear. Some are said to be uncircumcised in heart and ear (see Acts 7: 51). The flesh is active in the heart and active in the ear, and consequently there is no hearing what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

T.E.D. Does James' word have a bearing where he says "Take as an example, brethren, of suffering and having patience, the prophets", chap 5: 10? Is that feature of suffering and patience essential to the making way for the Spirit to have His way in speaking to me?

E.M.W. I think that would be right; and then as indicated earlier, that would lead to spiritual perception as to what He is saying to the assemblies. He speaks, as we know, through vessels.

T.E.D. Daniel in chapter 9 expresses priestly sensibilities; I feel the need for that currently in my own spirit, and also amongst the brethren generally. We hear things being said and things being done

which seem to lack the priestly sensibilities that marked holy men of God as set out in the prophets.

E.M.W. That is humbling, but at the same time, as the Spirit speaks to the assemblies, it brings out where people are, does it not? The crises also bring out where people are; they go to their own place. The extreme of that is Judas; it says he went to his own place (see Acts 1: 25). In various divisions you find people going to their own place. Some go into the world, some go into open brethren, some go here and go there, they go to their own place, that is morally the place which is suited to the state in which they are. That should challenge all of us.

D.C.J. Despite the conditions, the Spirit does not cease speaking.

E.M.W. That is most important to lay hold of and not to suppose, as some did when Mr Darby was taken, that the Spirit ceased to speak; or when Mr Raven was taken that the Spirit ceased to speak, and the same when Mr Taylor was taken; persons were held up by that. Whatever the conditions, I think the Spirit is speaking to the assemblies. Now the challenge is as to whether I can detect that.

S.D.K.R. Do you think particularly if we hear diverse things said?

E.M.W. When you hear diverse things said it becomes a test to you, does it not? If my friend says it I may be apt to take it more than from the brother I do not get on with, so that that immediately becomes a test of my submission to the Lord and of my spiritual state. But diverse things are said, and the Lord is patient with us to bring us around to the truth, but each should be exercised to have this ear, I think it is a circumcised ear, to hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

S.D.K.R. Have you in mind that there may be a lack of exercise and just let things slide and not be very much concerned about things that may be happening in the assembly generally?

E.M.W. I have wondered about that. We should not be casual but be on the alert for what the Lord may say or do. We do not want to set up kings or become dominated by men but have moral and

spiritual fibre so that we are marked by manhood. That is what has been lacking amongst us, I think, in the 1960's especially. But then spiritual perception would help us to see where the Spirit may give a lead.

H.J.G. The Lord left a word before He went on high, did He not – watch? I wondered if that applies to the time of the Spirit.

E.M.W. I think it would. It may perhaps in its interpretation refer to the remnant in the day to come, but at the same time, what I say to you, I say to all, Watch (see Mark 13: 37) is important; that is to say, we are to be alive. Laodicea indicates the natural tendency with all of us. It is not the natural tendency with *some*, it is the natural tendency with *all of us* to settle down.

S.D.K.R. Would this matter of the book that was sent to all (see Rev 1: 11) indicate that I cannot say it is not my matter when something occurs in the testimony elsewhere.

E.M.W. I think everything that happens in the testimony anywhere is my matter. That is how I would regard it. It may be that the only responsibility I have is to pray about it. But it is nevertheless my matter because I am in the same partnership; I am under the same Lord and have received the same Spirit; and there would be earnest prayer for the protection of what is precious to Him wherever problems might occur.

C.F.D. You mentioned that we do not want to set up kings, which is certainly right, yet at the same time the Lord uses the principle of gift that He sets amongst the saints. How do we keep this in balance?

E.M.W. I think it is in your own individual link with the Holy Spirit and with the Lord, and that should be developing day by day. That is my own impression. In our previous readings we have emphasised the need for being subject to the Lord and giving room to the Spirit. But what do you say?

C.F.D. I think it is a challenge to us, because it gets to this matter of the spiritual discerning. It might be in my mind to discount what a brother says whom the Lord might be obviously helping, and yet

tenaciously cling to something that someone else might say. The Lord has variety in the assembly; He has given gifts to some, and therefore there is a system of help that the Lord has established Himself that is to be available to us and availed of by us individually. There was a tendency, going back a few years, to discount this side of things, but I think what the Lord is pointing to is that the matter of kings that you refer to is something that we need to judge, the principle of rule as it has been experienced by us, but to hold on to what the Lord in His grace and goodness has given to us in those that can help. Therefore we do not discount the gifts as the Lord has seen fit to set them in the assembly.

E.M.W. I think that would be right. "*He* has given some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers... with a view to the work of the ministry", Eph 4: 11, 12. The ascended Man has done it. Now while we are in days of breakdown, I think faith would anticipate the distribution of gift, and we should pray for gift.

G.T.McC. The writer of the Hebrews puts it, "Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God" (chap 13: 7), and then later, "Obey your leaders; and be submissive", chap 13: 17. Then he says "Pray for us" (v 18). I wondered if that would protect the side of things that we are speaking about. It is leaders, and it is remember and obey, but then it says, Pray. I wondered if our responsibility is to pray for our leaders.

E.M.W. I think that would be right. You never think the same of a man that is contemporary with you as you do of a leader that is past. Now that is common amongst men; if a man is a leader and someone went to school with him, he says, 'That is only Joe, he is nobody'. If you think of a past leader - George Washington if you like - well, of course, he was a man! But somebody who went to school with him and in his time was contemporary might say, It is only George, who is he? That creeps into our thinking, whereas if we are spiritually minded we shall discern any vessel the Lord may be using to give a prophetic lead; that is, to convey His mind to the assemblies at the present moment.

R.A. Would you get that with Jehoshaphat) He said "Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides...?", 1 Kings 11: 7. Micah did not assemble with all the prophets.

E.M.W. Kings were sitting there, like the kings of Corinth.

R.A. Jehoshaphat had discernment that all those prophets were not saying what was right, and he asked, Was there not a prophet besides?

E.M.W. If you read that passage you can see clearly that those kings were uneasy, even the king of Israel as well as Jehoshaphat, and that prophet evidently was in prison. But whatever the four hundred prophets said, he prophesied the truth. He said, What Jehovah gives me I must prophesy, and he was a very lonely prophet.

K.A.O. Would not what is said, "the spiritual discerns all things" (1 Cor 2: 15), be open to each one of us? Sometimes we think that only those who take a lead or have gift are spiritual, but that should be with each one of us, and we should desire to have that ability.

E.M.W. I think that is right; and when he says 'the spiritual' he is thinking of character, not stature. So, as you say, spiritual character and discernment can be with a young man or a young woman. When John says to the little children, "ye have the unction" (1 John 2: 20), that is John's way of putting it, "and ye know all things". But you will not get the gain of the unction unless your motive is pure. If your motive is not for Christ and Christ's interests you will not get the gain of the unction.

S.D.K.R. Would you mind saying a word as to leaders. In church history many saints have been led astray by leaders. The expression is "Obey your leaders", and persons perhaps without much exercise just do what they are told to do.

E.M.W. Let us look at the scripture. "Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation, imitate their faith", Heb. 13: 7. Now you are referring to verse 17; "Obey your leaders, and be submissive; for

they watch over your souls as those that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you". Do you not think that "Obey your leaders, and be submissive" would be leaders that are under the hand of Christ? It does not mean that you follow anybody that gives a lead, does it?

S.D.K.R. No; I want help on that.

J.A.P. In this section about leaders the Lord Jesus is presented as "*the same*": "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come" (v.8). That is the background and the context in which the writer to the Hebrews is speaking about brethren who give us a lead, that the Lord Jesus is the same. A leader would not be perfect.

E.M.W. I think it helps to see the context of it. You have "Remember your leaders" and "Obey your leaders" and "Salute all your leaders, and all the saints" (v 24). I think we have to see it, as you say, in that context. 'Considering the issue of their manner of life, imitate their faith' comes before there is any reference to obeying your leaders, or saluting your leaders, and it does seem to me that that would govern the outlook of the believer.

E.F.C. Jesus Christ is the supreme leader, is He not? "the leader and completer of faith", Heb 12: 2. "Leader and saviour" Peter says (Acts 5: 31), exalted by the right hand of God. We remember Him supremely, but then there are those who have followed in His steps that we must think of too, are there not?

E.M.W. Yes, but always when following the leader you would follow with priestly discrimination and discernment, otherwise you might well be led astray. But as you know, there is the word 'leader' or 'originator', which word in Scripture is only used of Christ. Apart from that 'leaders' is in the plural.

H.J.G. It says that God removed Saul and raised up David, "who shall do all my will", Acts 13: 22. We know David failed, but God was in his becoming king, and it was intended that the people should follow the lead in David, who characteristically did God's will.

E.M.W. Yes; and they would follow, as we have said, with discernment. It does seem to me that spirituality, what we have referred to as the spiritual, brought in so early in Corinthians is what is needed.

D.C.J. "My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me", John 10: 27. They would be persons who have been in close contact with the Spirit to know the Lord's voice themselves.

E.M.W. It is the voice they hear, not simply what He says. Two voices might say precisely the same thing, but you distinguish the person by the voice.

R.A. In Judges 5: 2 Deborah sang "that leaders led in Israel". They were marked by leading.

E.M.W. That is what is needed today. I think leaders who are prepared to lead sacrificially, and if such a thing as reputation exists, to be prepared to give it up and stake their lives for the sake of the brethren. But you find, I believe, that where there is leadership according to God the spiritual answer to it. It is very much in principle what Paul says; "if any one thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him recognise the things that I write to you, that it is the Lord's commandment", 1 Cor 14: 37. He says he will recognise it.

T.E.D. Is it interesting that Deborah brings that forward? "For that leaders led in Israel, For that the people willingly offered themselves": she is linking the body of the saints in the sacrificial line of things, is she not?

E.M.W. Yes, that would be important.

A.G.S. We should have the ability to see if the leaders are leading in the paths of righteousness, should we not? as in Psalm 23: 3.

E.M.W. So it is most important to accept leadership, but to follow leadership with priestly discrimination and discernment, because a leader may go wrong.

H.W.J. It is interesting that in Hebrews, where the matter of leaders comes in, the writer immediately says "Pray for us: for we persuade ourselves that we have a good conscience, in all things desirous to

walk rightly" (chap 13: 18), as though the danger is always there that there may be difficulty with those who give a lead.

E.M.W. Very good. Hence those who do give a lead should be much prayed for. That is what you are saying.

S.D.K.R. What was said as to leading in the paths of righteousness would involve the maintenance of right principles.

E.M.W. Unquestionably. But you were going to add something to that.

S.D.K.R. I feel the importance of it so that the saints are guided rightly. Leadership would be, as I think we said earlier, within the banks of the river. I mean it must not lead over against the maintenance of divine principles.

E.M.W. That would be right. We have to face the humbling fact that many distinguished leaders have led the brethren wrongly. But *that* has exposed the state of the brethren. Following with spiritual discernment is of the utmost importance, it seems to me, if we are not going to be led astray again.

J.A.P. While there are diverse things, the positive side would be that John the apostle supports Paul in the matter of the local assembly. I have noticed that the passage that came before us yesterday (1 Corinthians 1), and what you have read this afternoon, have been much before the brethren in the last two or three years. I believe that that is one of the points that the Spirit is saying to the assemblies; that is, the rights of Christ in the local assembly, and John is supporting Paul in that. What Paul said to Corinth, "with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ", is supported in the letters to the seven assemblies. Would that be right?

E.M.W. Yes. Of course John is conveying a message from the Lord, but you mean it is ministry. I think John brings us back in his ministry to Paul's teaching, so that the Lord has Himself a *direct* word to each local assembly, and the angel, which represent the responsible element as we say in the locality, is directly responsible to the Lord.

He says "I know", and if you do not repent I will do this, or I will do that. He does that in His own time and in His own way. So that while there is one book and every assembly would know what was said to every other assembly, each assembly is directly responsible to the Lord, and the Lord has *direct* rights in each local assembly. Eventually it will be a sad day for anybody that interferes with them, because it is not a sin against that local assembly simply; it is a sin against Him, and an infringement of His direct rights in that local assembly.

S.D.K.R. And that would be iniquity. It is iniquity to interfere with the Lord's rights, is it not?

E.M.W. Anywhere, yes. It is iniquity to interfere with His rights over me, or you. The same thing applies to a servant, he stands or falls to his own Master (see Rom 14: 4). He is handled in his own locality as a *brother* in the locality, but as a servant he stands or falls to his own Master.

E.F.C. In asserting that line of things, there is no thought of making room for local independency, is there? The universal aspect of the assembly is to be in the minds and the affections of the brethren in every place.

E.M.W. So, with *all* that call on the Lord in every place. I think that is one of the reasons that this is written in a book. He says, Write it in a book. It is not a separate book sent to each assembly but one book is sent to each assembly so that every assembly would know what was said to every other assembly; but there is no indication that Philadelphia should interfere with Laodicea. The Lord says, so to speak, I will see to that assembly We are very unbelieving - at least I am - about the Lord's ability to act within a local assembly. I have seen His operations in our own local assembly, so I know that He does that.

D.C.J. If the Lord does have anything definite to say to one assembly, it is woe betide us if we do not follow His advice, is it not?

E.M.W. That is very salutary.

D.C.J. To Ephesus He says, I will remove thy lamp if you do not repent and do the first works.

E.M.W. It is very solemn. I believe we should be sobered by the fact that we are having to say to the Lord. We are not having to say to doctrines or specialised teachings of a group of brethren. We are having to say to the Lord, and we are in a peculiarly responsible position as being in touch with the recovery and having been saved from the system of iniquity.

S.D.K.R. But we do not have to submit to what an assembly says about another assembly outside its own limits of jurisdiction. It has no authority to bind me, has it?

E.M.W. No, the rights of the Lord are exercised in the locality. It has its jurisdiction, and I think that exists in the economy of local assemblies. So that it is a sobering and serious matter to interfere with the Lord's rights in any way at all, because He has His own way of dealing with me governmentally if I do that.

K.A.O. Therefore do you think there is a great need for priestly persons in each of our local assemblies, that there will be someone who is maintaining the Lord 's rights in that assembly?

E.M.W. That is very good. If there is only one person, the Lord will act through that one person. He can do that.

J.Mcl. Hence the great need for stability, and especially for our young brethren to see such stability, because it says as to the overcomer, "him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God". It speaks somewhere of those being conspicuous as being pillars. Is that what is needed today?

E.M.W. Yes, he speaks in Galatians 2: 9 of those that were conspicuous as pillars. But Paul would not be unduly influenced, in fact he would not be influenced at all by such. He would recognise them, but would not be influenced by them, because his commission was not given to him through blood and flesh. But "him will I make a pillar": what a wonderful promise there is here to the overcomer! I mean there is no point in the Lord speaking of overcoming if things

are easy. What is the point? Things are not easy. The path of discipleship and committal to the testimony of our Lord is a difficult path for whoever commits himself or herself to it; and it will call for overcoming until the end. But what a promise the Lord makes!

J.Mcl. Would it greatly help us in overcoming to see that we are not working up to something but are overcoming in view of what is flowing out? Our place up there gives us the desire to overcome, does it not?

E.M.W. Yes I think so, and the overcomer comes into the present enjoyment of what will later be enjoyed by the whole assembly. So the promise to the overcomer is really the portion of the whole assembly, but the overcomer enjoys it in the position in which he is overcoming; in other words he has it as a present enjoyment. Is that how you understand it?

J.Mcl. I think in that light it becomes very encouraging. In recent ministry in the monthly magazine a brother mentioned that Mr Darby said he *fears* when the brethren become tired of unworldliness.

E.M.W. Yes; I suppose that is the position in Laodicea. The Lord has a solemn word; He says "These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God". Some people say that Laodicea is the end, but it is not the end. Jesus is the Amen; in Him is the yea and the amen (see 2 Cor 1: 20). All the promises of God are established in Him; and He is *the* faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. That is how He presents Himself to Laodicea.

K.A.O. And He says to that assembly "I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich". Would that link on with what we had as to the Spirit, the parted tongues as of fire?

E.M.W. Yes, it is still available. This word to Laodicea has been called Christ's last word of counsel. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest **be** rich" - not profess to be, but be rich - "and white garments, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not be made manifest; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see". We need this

because we may claim to be in the right position, but in what *condition* am I? I might be sitting amongst a company of Philadelphians and myself be a Laodicean.

S.D.K.R. Would the answer to that be "be zealous therefore and repent"?

E.M.W. Yes, I think that would be right. You do not normally connect zeal with repentance, do you? But it is very comforting that the Lord has not given up. "I rebuke and discipline as many as I love; be zealous therefore and repent".

E.F.C. Repentance is a matter of righteousness, is it not? If we have offended God, it is only a righteous thing that we should repent.

E.M.W. Yes indeed, that should characterise us.

D.C.J. Does the Lord normally come in and rebuke first? If the rebuke is not heeded then discipline comes in?

E.M.W. Perhaps you would explain a little more what is in your mind.

D.C.J. In relation to ourselves as individuals, the Lord may bring something to my attention in the way of rebuke of what I have done, and I do not judge myself. Then He uses discipline to bring me round to it.

E.M.W. I think that would be so. We learn either as in communion or through discipline. We would desire to learn as in communion, but being what we are, generally it needs discipline. "I rebuke and discipline as many as I love". It seems to me that, if we are near to the Lord, we shall very quickly catch His rebuke. I think that word 'rebuke' could be 'convict'; / convict and discipline as many as I love.

R.A. Do you think the Lord in His grace would tell us to come and dine before there would be a rebuke?

E.M.W. You speak about coming and dining; now look at verse 20. First of all, "I rebuke and discipline as many as I love; be zealous therefore and repent". Now there is a necessity for us to recognise that we are a company of repenting sinners from this point of view.

Then He says "Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking; if any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me". It is a wonderful thing to have the Lord to supper, but it is a more wonderful thing to have supper with Him. But we must face the fact that the Lord is particular as to whom He eats with.

R.A. So it is lovely to think of it; "he with me". What He would set down before us!

E.M.W. I think in His word to Laodicea what the Lord would have in mind is that there is access even in such conditions into having part *with Him* and part in the service of praise in the assembly.

C.F.D. And that seems to be related to "if any one *hear* my voice and *open* the door". There is the hearing and the opening. Do you think that, even under these conditions of lethargy and maybe slackness, there can be the hearing. The Lord is appealing to our hearing, and for energy to move and open the door. The Lord is ready to answer to that, is He not?

E.M.W. He is, indeed.

R.A. Would you include the Supper in "he with me"? "This is my body which is given for you" (Luke 22: 19), what the Lord has prepared for us.

E.M.W. That would need to be considered. "I will come in unto him and sup with him": I looked at that as the Lord coming to us. I think that the Supper and the service of God would be in the Lord's mind there, but when He comes He comes in in the affections of the saints; and then "he with me". What is in His mind is that we should be with Him in His circumstances.

C.F.D. Is this presented to us as a marvellous possibility, that even under these circumstances the way into things is open to us? The overcomer is the one that embraces this line, is it not? And do you think that, at the Lord's supper, it is the overcomer that experiences the incoming of the Lord Jesus and what He would say at a time like that?

E.M.W. That is the truth, I think, and is very challenging. I ask myself how far I am conscious of the Lord's presence at the Supper and in the service of God. It is one thing to have the faith of it but it is another thing to have the consciousness of it, and we would desire to credit every one of us here with being an overcomer. The very reason the brethren are here I think is on that principle. Some have come a long way involving difficult and long journeys and so on.

A.C.C. Is the knocking the persistency of love to get a right of way into one's heart, so that He might have full control there in my inner being, come right inside to the house?

E.M.W. Then when He has that right of way He says "he with me", but then when you get there you find there are others there as well.

R.A. Would you link the woman of Luke 7 with this? "From the time I came in": she could take account of the time He came in.

E.M.W. I suppose you could. She certainly had affection for Him. Now you never want to suppose that you are the only overcomer. You find when you get in to sup *with Him* that there are others there as well; and it seems to me that that is the avenue into assembly privileges and into the praise of God in the assembly. And the Lord, when He says he has sat down on His Father's throne, is holding everything for His Father. He is maintaining the testimony and He is maintaining the service of praise in the assembly, and I think He will do that right to the end and will have those that are with Him in it.

H.W.J. The Lord would be prepared to take up a position of reproach, standing outside and knocking and knocking and continuing it. It strikes me that the Lord has allowed things in the testimony that really brought reproach on His name, but it is no doubt in view of knocking for each of us so that there might be some who respond to this knocking in Laodicean conditions.

E.M.W. Well, let each of us in simple spiritual determination be that one.

H.W.J It is a great test to each of us. I have pondered a great deal why the Lord allowed things to go as He has when it has brought

such reproach on His name publicly. But I was just wondering if this may be an answer; and there may be other answers too.

E.M.W. I think you would be right there. It is an opportunity for the enemy to say that Christianity has failed. In fact that is what is said. Christianity has proved itself a failure. But in point of fact it has not failed but has brought out overcomers.

TORONTO

21 July 1979

Key to initials

R.Adams, Toronto; A.C.Clapham, Manchester; E.F.Cary, Los Angeles; H.Coleman, Windsor; C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; T.E.Druckenmiller, Plainfield; H.J.Glass, Toronto; D.C.Johnston, Woodstock; H.W.Jensen, Los Angeles; G.T.McCrone, Toronto; J.McIntyre, Woodstock; L.MacFarlane, New York; K.A.Oberg, Villa Grove; J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon; A.G.Spooner, New York; G.W.Sutherland, Windsor; E.M.Walkinshaw, Gillingham.

LIVING WATER

F.E.Raven

John 4 1-26

There is a good deal of interest in seeing the progress in the unfolding of the truth in these chapters. In the second chapter the Lord brings to light how everything is established on earth on the ground of resurrection. What could be established after the flesh? Nothing! How could He ally Himself to Israel? They were under death and the curse, and it was only on the ground of resurrection He could come in as the Bridegroom. Israel will have to pass through death in figure and come out in resurrection, and He will establish Jehovah's pleasure in them. So in regard to the temple, the Jew would destroy it; He would raise it up.

In the third chapter there is an advance; we come to God's love, and how it has found its expression. It is the establishment of a point of contact in a risen Man, a Mediator between God and men, and man may touch God and know the love of God. There was no light here until Christ came, but He was the true light, a perfect standard, and hence all is brought to an issue by the light coming into the world. Every man is tested by the light of Christ; because the true light has come in we have a standard by which we can judge everything, and good and evil are disentangled in the mind of the believer. I refer to that to connect these chapters. I dare say some may ask, What is God's mind? Well, it is "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal", and the point of contact is there.

In the fourth chapter we have the power by which the mind of God may be reached in the believer. Among believers I have no doubt a great many accept God's mind, but there are many who have not gone much further. I want to get the good of it. Faith was there in Old Testament times. The promises made known God's mind, but the time was not come for them to enter in to what was

promised. I am not content with resting on a text. It does not give me God's mind, it does not give me anything but the statement of it. You would not get it if you did not believe, but believing will not give it. The revelation of the thought will not give it. There must be a power to enter into the thought. The third chapter brings into view what God had purposed for man. The fourth chapter brings to light the power by which the soul may enter into the mind of God with regard to man. The fifth and sixth chapters unfold what the thing is. Living water is the great point in the fourth chapter. All for us depends upon our appreciation of Christ. It is bound up with our knowledge of God and our appreciation of Christ. It has been said there are two things which a Christian has - forgiveness and the Spirit. I have nothing else, but still I have all in the knowledge of God's love and the appreciation of Christ. There is no limit to the blessing. In Christianity all depends on knowledge, and therefore it depends upon the Spirit. Christianity is different from the time past; what the Spirit enables man to enter into is the knowledge of God and the appreciation of Christ.

The light in which Christ is presented here is two-fold, *viz* as Prophet and as Priest. In the fourth chapter He is the object of faith and point of contact. The woman said to Christ, "Sir, I see that thou art a prophet". He told her all things that ever she did. Everyone has to make acquaintance with Christ as prophet. We could not go on if we did not know that He knows all about us. He could not be a Priest unless He were a Prophet, for He must know all about those to whom He is Priest. That is where Aaron failed as a priest, for he did not know the workings of the people's mind. I would not confess to a priest in this world. He does not know all about me. It is the lamest thing possible to confess to a priest. It is going back to Judaism. Very few people can confess their inward workings, but if you have a priest who knows all about you, you do not want, in a sense, to make a confession; you feel like the woman, He knows me perfectly. We have to confess our sins, but what gives us confidence in doing so is the knowledge that He knows all about us. All will be bound to admit that for a high priest you must have a prophet. A

prophet is a seer, viz. one who sees, and for a priest to be effective he ought to be a prophet. He is priest as being a prophet. The woman found herself in the presence of One who knew her perfectly. She said to the men, "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done". It is a great comfort in our relations with Christ that He knows all about us. We confess indeed, but we feel that He knows all about us, and confession takes its proper character in the soul from the fact that we feel the One to whom we confess knows all about us. Many may be puzzled about my connecting the priest with the fourth chapter, but it is the priest who gives living water. Living water is symbolical of the Spirit. We read in Isaiah, "Come ye to the waters" (chap 55: 1), and in Revelation, "I will give to him that thirsts of the fountain of the water of life freely ", chap 21: 6. It is a symbol of the Spirit; it is the gift of Christ. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water". In the third chapter you get the point of contact, and when that is apprehended you ask Christ, and He gives you living water. Christ never gives living water without being asked. The soul comes to Christ and He gives living water - the gift of the Spirit.

I tell you what makes me believe that you get the priest in this chapter, because Christ when He ascended up on high led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. Another thought is that Israel received the law under the Aaronic priesthood. I refer to the seventh chapter of Hebrews. Now, what is the antitype of that? I have no doubt it is the reception of the Spirit, and we receive the Spirit under the Melchisedec priesthood. The Melchisedec priesthood has come in because Christ has ascended on high on behalf of His people and has sent down the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit was not given until Christ went up on high and was saluted as High Priest at God's right hand, so that I am justified in saying the Spirit is given in connection with the Melchisedec priesthood. What you have to apprehend is this, that there is One who represents men in the face of God. The Apostle is High Priest; therefore Man is in the presence of God for us; that is our comfort. It matters not what we are, but we

are perfectly represented in the presence of God. We are imperfect, but such an High Priest became us. Being made higher than the heavens He sent forth the Spirit. It is perfectly wonderful. He was Himself sealed by the Spirit and anointed, but He ascended on high, having accomplished redemption on the part of man, that He might send the Spirit. There will be an outpouring of the Spirit on the same ground in a future day. Christ is the One who baptises with the Holy Ghost. He appears now in the presence of God for us, and He has sent down the Spirit. It is the day of the Spirit. "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink", John 7: 37.

I want to refer to the virtue of the living water. The woman had tried, no doubt, a great many things. She had tried the pleasures of the world but it had not produced much. Underneath this exterior there was a thirsty soul; appearances are deceptive, people keep up appearances to the last moment; even often after the collapse has taken place inside the outward appearance is kept up. Many evangelists can corroborate this. One very interesting thing in connection with the Lord was that He looked at everything in a moral way. "Every one who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst". People, and especially the young, look for pleasure in reading, but I do not see them satisfied by it. Many a young Christian is not satisfied, they do not take the right way but they pursue objects that do not lead to happiness. They may give momentary excitement but not happiness, and no person is happy who is not content. Content is an extremely important element of happiness. Peter and Paul were in trying circumstances outwardly, but there was happiness because there was content. "Whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst... springing up into eternal life".

The object is that the believer may reach God's purpose, and I have no doubt it is by the power within. "Whosoever drinks"; how is it brought about? God is revealed, and the revelation of God is made good. I am not content with the revelation but want it made good. The revelation lies in the death of Christ, the making of it good lies in the Spirit. The living water makes good the revelation. This is

the point in the fourth chapter. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us. It is not a sentiment, but His love is made good to us. The love of God is unfathomable, there is no reaching the bottom of it, but it is shed abroad in our hearts. Do not look at things in relation to the present time but in relation to eternity; measure your riches by what you have for eternity. I have heard of a man who has forty millions but all must be left behind him. Do not measure yourself by the twenty or thirty years you may have to stay here, but by eternity, and see what you have. If you have the love of God shed abroad in your heart you are rich for eternity and you have nothing to desire.

Only the love of God can be riches for man, and if you have that you have inexhaustible riches and you should never thirst. I can say honestly I have nothing to desire. What are riches worth beside the love of God! "Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart, which God has prepared for them that love him", 1 Cor 2: 9. How did we ever come to love God? Because He first loved us. Millions of money have entered into man's heart but these things have never entered his heart, therefore they must be very great things. I trust all here are rich in the light of eternity, and perhaps some of the poorest amongst us in this world's goods may be the richest. God has chosen the poor in this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him. We are rich in the love of God and in the possession of the Spirit. We are delivered from the world's pursuits and objects and brought into a scene where every desire is satisfied.

"The water which I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life". Evidently that indicates an energy in the believer. One virtue of the water is that a believer is to be satisfied; another thing is its energy, it springs up into eternal life. It is an energy in the believer which is ever attaching us to Christ that we may appreciate Him. This is the Spirit's work, giving us liberty of access to God and salvation from the influences of things here so that Christ is increasingly appropriated and

appreciated. We are married to another, to One raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God. Our power in drawing near to God is in proportion as we appreciate Christ. It is not by the Spirit but by His work in us, enabling us to appreciate Christ and thus draw near to God.

Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, and He now appears in the presence of God for us. He is our Forerunner, and we have the hope as an anchor of the soul. It is very wonderful to think the Forerunner is there. We are getting nearer and nearer, but the Forerunner is already entered.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, and there is salvation from all that is antagonistic to God. "Through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father", Eph 2: 18. Two things go together, the enjoyment of the love of God and the appreciation of Christ, and it is by this we learn the secret that God intends to bring to pass. These chapters do not tell us what eternal life means; for that we have to go to the fifth and sixth chapters. In the third chapter we have the person described who has eternal life. In the fourth chapter we get the power by which we reach it. The apostle Paul in another language says, "he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life", Gal 6: 8. If you go in that direction you must have the links distinctly formed which connect you with Christ. They do not exist enough in our consciousness. There must be a link in the heart with the One who represents us there. This is effected by the living water - the Spirit - which springs up into eternal life. The Spirit is here to strengthen our links with the Forerunner who died for us, and who has formed an eternal link in our hearts to Himself by the Holy Ghost. You will not be here much longer in the world. We shall soon pass away, but the great thing is to be rich for eternity. Every penny must be left behind; so survey your riches this way, and it is very likely, as I said, that the poorest here may be the richest of all. The Spirit is a well of water springing up, so that a believer may never thirst. It is riches for eternity. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

If Christ in heaven is my treasure, my heart will be there.

CONTINUANCE

D.J.Hutson

John 13: 1; Daniel 1: 21; 12; 13; Ruth 2: 7 (last sentence)

I just want to speak briefly, beloved, of continuance, seen so blessedly, and of such comfort to us at this time, in the continuing, changeless and unchanging love of the Lord Jesus: "having loved his own who were in the world" - referring there to the few who had been a comfort to Him in the days of His flesh, but extending, I believe, to those of us who are left in the world at the present time in the testimony - He "loved them to the end", or as the note tells us, 'going through with everything is implied'. Think of what 'going through with everything' involved for the Lord Jesus, what it meant to Him to go to the cross and there to suffer for sins, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God", 1 Pet 3: 18. Then there was that cry of His: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt 27: 46) and then He was buried, as He could say, "thus shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights", Matt 12: 40. But then the glorious resurrection, the glory of the Father entering into the domain of death and bringing out the

One who had gone through it all in love, love for His God and Father, love for His assembly and love for each one of us, as Paul could say, "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", Gal 2: 20. And still His love is the same. What a comfort this would be to our beloved brother and those who mourn particularly! indeed, a comfort to us all, for we all mourn the loss of one from our midst in this city, though for her we rejoice that, as we have already sung, her portion is with Christ, which is very much better. And that indicates, too, that His love has not only taken Him through death itself, and all that it meant, to the glory, but He loves through everything and He still loves our sister. I say He loves her at the present time, for while she was here with us in the flesh she was in the conscious enjoyment of the love of Christ. We cannot think that a portion which is very much better would be without the enjoyment of that love; although we know little of what that portion is, we do know that it must be in the enjoyment of that love, and that death which has come in in relation to our sister has not separated her from the love of Christ, for He loves through everything. O, the blessed continuance of the love of Jesus! What a comfort it is to us at this time to rejoice in the portion of our sister as she is now with Christ which is very much better!

But then there is the gathering up of what is left behind. Our sister's portion, that blessed portion, is as it says here on the plate on the coffin, 'With the Lord'. "Blessed the dead who die in the Lord", Rev 14: 13; but then the Spirit adds "for their works follow with them". There is something which follows on, something which, may we say, is left behind. Our brother has already referred in prayer to continuance in the testimony over this span of years, and I believe the brief reference at the end of Daniel 1 shows how pleasing this is in the sight of heaven. Much is recorded afterwards in the book - Daniel's experiences, the experiences of his companions, his experiences with God, and prophecies yet to be fulfilled - but, as it were, all is compassed at the end of this chapter, that "Daniel continued unto the first year of king Cyrus". Not in an easy day indeed, but in a day something like our own when things publicly, we

may say, are in captivity, it is said that Daniel continued. That is put on record for us; and at the end of the book it says "thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days". Our sister has continued and now she rests, asleep through Jesus, and yet in the consciousness of His love, with Christ which is very much better. But it is for us, the living who remain, to continue. Our sister has continued through the various tests and crises in the testimony, being preserved in the truth right through to the end; she has continued when many have not continued. May it be, beloved, that as we gather this up from this occasion, we all continue, continue through to the end with the Lord in the testimony.

Then as to Ruth it says that "she came, and has continued from the morning until now; her sitting in the house has been little as yet"; that is, there was that which was quite legitimate which might have detained her, but she continued with the reapers, gleaning in the field. Our sister has done this, in weakness of body which some of us have not realised, and perhaps the Lord only knows besides our brother who has been with our sister; she has continued. What an example she has been; rarely have we missed her from our comings together in this city. She has continued with the reapers, she has continued in the field, and this, again, beloved, would be an encouragement to us, for that same love of Jesus which loves through everything would love us through our weaknesses and would strengthen us for "*He* is Saviour of the body" (Eph 5: 23), so that we might be able, according to the strength He gives us, to continue in the support of what is here in the assembly for His pleasure at the present time and to continue to glean in the field which is being reaped, to receive the present truth and to answer to it.

This was all one had in mind, our continuance in the testimony; her continuance in our gatherings together in this city, from which we shall miss her, is not spoken of in the way of eulogy, but we are thankful for the example that has been left. May we all be stimulated so that there is no lack in the testimony, although there is loss through the departure of our sister, and may what she has left behind

be gathered up and continued in each one of us until the Lord come,
for His Name's sake.

Word at a burial

LONDON

26 June 1980

THE CHILDREN'S HANDFULS

One instructive detail in the record of the seven years of plenty in Egypt in the days of Joseph is that the fields brought forth corn "by handfuls". For such enormous quantities of grain as were reaped at that time the scripture-writer might well have used some such expression as 'waggon-loads' or 'barnfuls'! The corn was as "sand of the sea", yet it was all gathered by the hands of the reapers and the gleaners. The lesson for us is that we must apply ourselves each one diligently to gathering up the blessings that are so freely given. Actually the produce of those years was taken from the lands around the cities and stored in the cities themselves so that the food was immediately available when and where needed. All was under the hand of Joseph, to whom everyone had to go to meet their needs. He was a type of Christ Jesus our Lord through whom alone our spiritual needs are met.

In the well-known story of Ruth in the fields of Bethlehem we read that, in addition to what was dropped by chance, some ears of barley out of the handfuls being cut by the reapers were allowed to fall especially for her to glean. In one day's gleaning she gathered and beat out a whole ephah of barleycorns. In our reckoning this would more than fill six gallon containers - enough and to spare for herself and Naomi. That amount of manna in the wilderness would be enough for ten persons for a day. For Ruth, however, it was a greater favour still when she came to know the wealthy man Boaz, also a type of Christ. She became acquainted with him, accepted by him and associated with him. She belonged to him by right of redemption just as the Christian belongs to the Lord Jesus.

In the days of the tabernacle in the wilderness the priests were "consecrated", a word meaning 'having the hand full'. They offered to God with their hands that which looked forward to the perfections of Jesus. Before this they had to be bathed with water, sprinkled with blood and anointed with oil. As believers on the Lord Jesus we serve God as priests who have been cleansed, set apart by the blood of Jesus and who worship by the Holy Spirit. You will

remember that the boy Samuel was serving in the simple way of opening the doors of the house of Jehovah as it was in his day. Are you finding useful services to render to the Lord?

J.C.Evershed