

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THE FOURTH WATCH

Psalm 24: 1-10; 2 Samuel 7: 18-26; Numbers 23: 19-23

R.D.P. We are in the last watch of the night which Mark speaks of. He speaks of the disciples in the ship rowing about the fourth watch of the night (see chap 6: 48). It is a different watch from the others. I think we can see that the dispensation has had certain phases. If we look back to the beginning we see the powerful inauguration of things, a power which was unique. Since then the watches have passed, the great persecutions in the Middle Ages, and so on. These phases have gone and we are now in the last watch. The next event, dear brethren, is the dawn. Whilst it is obviously a time of great anticipation, it is also the time of the greatest weariness. I just wondered if we might see that during the last watch we get these appearances of the Lord on the water. "He comes to them", it says, "walking on the sea". I think Mr Coates refers to His extraordinary movements. That is what marks our day, the Lord is moving on the sea.

I read these scriptures that we might see that we need to be preserved in admiration and wonderment in relation to divine things. Things are not to become ordinary with us or to lose their edge. You may say that persons who are keeping the fourth watch have become connoisseurs of what is excellent spiritually. The repetition of things, even of the Lord's supper, has not made for ordinariness, it has made for distinctiveness. Looking forward to such occasions is growing with us and not dying with us. We might just look at the way in which these scriptures set out how what we have to do with is marked by distinctiveness. The hymn speaks of 'Thy grand conceived economy' (No. 242). Here we are today, just a few of us, in felt weakness, but we have part in this grand conceived economy. The Lord Jesus has entered into glory. I was affected by that this morning, that the gates of heaven were lifted up to receive Him. The question here in this psalm goes out: "Who is this King of glory? " Mr Taylor's hymn (No. 350) says,

Received in glory bright up there,
The Father's greetings, honours rare,
Are heaped upon His Son's blest brow;
He is the mighty Victor now.

Think of all the heavens, every created sphere, marvelling in wonderment at the glory of the One who had accomplished everything for God, and every gate was opened to Him.

In 2 Samuel 7 we have David. He faces disappointment but he does not lose sight of the glory of what God is doing. He says, as it were, I accept the disappointment from His hand. But what kind of man is it who is filling His vision? In Numbers 23 even the enemy, all the concerted power of the devil at the end of the day, has to stand back and admire God's handiwork. He says "What hath God wrought!".

A.A.B-n. Would there be in the last watch the anticipation of the dawn, the One who is the morning star (see Rev 22: 16). It has been said, has it not, that the darkest hour is just before the approach of dawn? Hence the necessity of our being in expectation and constantly stimulated in our affections for Christ Himself, the Supper having a great part in that.

R.D.P. Those who know about the sea will know that the night is divided into four watches. It was the fourth watch, the last watch.

The next thing is the daybreak. They were in the boat, labouring in the rowing. You have to watch what you are doing when you are rowing, otherwise you do not make much progress. They were labouring, but what happened was that the Lord came to them on the sea. We may go on in the fellowship and come along to the meetings every Lord's day, and carry on together, and have our part in the rowing, but do not let us miss the fact that He is moving on the sea. That is what makes everything live. It is the distinctiveness of Jesus that makes things live. It is not even what is in a sense among the saints, precious as that is. It is His own distinctiveness.

Heaven's glory is the presence of Christ, and what makes the testimony distinctive is as we apprehend Jesus in it.

A.McB. What does Mark mean when he says that He would have passed them by?

R.D.P. I wondered whether it is not the challenge of our day. It is a day when He is looking for those who desire Him, who love Him. His work has been done, done for God, and men have come into the blessing of that. I think the fourth watch is a peculiar time when He is looking for the answering affection from His own. He made as if he would have passed them by. It says in the scripture we read yesterday: "he made as though he would go farther", Luke 24: 28.

He wanted them, in that sense, to detain Him. In Revelation He is standing at the door and knocking (see chap 3: 20); He is not opening the door. He could do it, but He is waiting for affection to open it to Him.

A.McB. I think that is helpful. It was not that He was not aware of them, because "immediately he spoke with them, and says to them, Be of good courage; it is I". How He loves to bring Himself before us!

R.D.P. I wondered that. This was prompted by the remark made yesterday as to the truth being all out. We have to see that He is moving, and His movements are distinctive to those who love Him. It is those who love Him who will apprehend His movements.

J.S-r. Does the language that David uses in Psalm 103 fit into the present moment? He says "Bless Jehovah, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" (v 1).

R.D.P. That is very good: "all that is within me". At one point David danced with all his might before the ark (see 2 Sam 6: 14). His wife was disapproving. She said "How honourable did the king of Israel make himself" (v 20). We are taught that that is just mere profession. David said, I am not content with mere profession, "I will make myself yet more vile than thus" (v 22). The ark was before him. What will give the saints distinction spiritually at the present time is to have Jesus before them. I think that the Lord's day is especially a day of stimulation, to see that what we have before us is glorious and distinctive.

J.M. Not only has the Lord been received into glory but He has been received up in glory. Do you think the last watch, the recovery in which we have our part, was due to that word "Behold the bridegroom", Matt 25: 6?

R.D.P. That is helpful; the last watch would be that. The Lord was on the mountain in Mark, and He compelled them into the boat. The testimony in that sense is compelled to go across to the other side without Him. The Lord is moving on the sea. "Behold the bridegroom" is that that Man is expected, not the event but the Person. What you find is that the last watch is the most taxing, but it is the most blessed.

R.S.R. The fourth watch, I understand, is from three o'clock to six o'clock in the morning, when we would be drowsy. I was thinking of the passage quoted: "Behold the bridegroom". We are inclined to slumber and sleep, but would the expectation of the imminence of the bridegroom keep us awake?

R.D.P. There are many scriptures that show that the common thing is sleep. The virgins "all grew heavy and slept", Matt 25: 5. When the cry went out they were all asleep. There are other references too. It speaks of watching and praying (see Matt 26: 41). That applies peculiarly today. At His appearing He will "appear to those that look for him the second time without sin for salvation", Heb 9: 28. We are not going to see Him if we are just content with what is ordinary. It is greater than that.

R.S.R. The title "King of glory" is something very majestic, is it not? Royalty and splendour.

R.D.P. The hymn-writer says

'Great the glory Thou art given,
And the glory Thou hast won' (No.181)

Think of heaven as it had contemplated Him, the Babe in the manger, the 'houseless, homeless Stranger' (hymn 188), and then His majestic movements even into death, and out of death. But He

is coming to fill heaven - the King of glory. There is not a glory that is too great for such a One. He is the King of it.

H.F. When the psalmist gets that impression he cannot let it go; it comes into each verse from verse 7 onwards.

R.D.P. To me there is almost a suggestion of gate after gate of heaven - putting it into language we understand - opening up to receive Him, the King of glory. They say "Who is he... ?" "Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle". You contemplate all that Christ has accomplished. He has paid the price for my redemption. He has met the whole matter of sin as it had entered into the world. He has paid the price for the reconciliation of all things; it is just awaiting the day to come. The scripture says "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid", Isa 11: 6. All the pain and the suffering of creation will be gone, and the price has already been paid in the death of Christ, "mighty in battle". He has taken on the enemy and defeated him entirely. All these things would come into our hearts, I think, at the service as we get some impression of His glory, not only what He has done for me but what He has done for God. The great victory that has secured my blessing is the victory that has brought in many families and secured all things for God.

A.A.B-n. Should we be in accord with these gates? You speak of these gates and the Lord's great ascending movement. Paul speaks of "the third heaven", 2 Cor 12: 2. The Lord is of course unique, but Paul must have had some experience of this, so close was he to Christ.

R.D.P. He speaks of things "which it is not allowed to man to utter" (v 4). There had never been a man in heaven before. As Christ went in, those gates which had never opened to man were opened to Jesus. He goes in and I think you get a sense that heaven has set on the wonderment, and it is for us to be affected by it continually. Perhaps sometimes we allow ourselves to become humdrum in our expressions, in our response. I speak for myself. We are all made of dust, we are all weak, but I think the Spirit would

encourage us to see that Christ has gone in. Everything for God and everything for man is secured entirely and for ever in that Man. Nothing can fail because it is all secured in Him.

J.S. The double portion of the spirit which Elisha asked for was consequent on keeping his eye on Elijah. "If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so to thee", 2 Kings 2: 10.

R.D.P. That is good; it is the Man who has gone up who affects our hearts. It was the Man who had gone up who affected Paul. It was the Man who had gone up who affected Mr Darby and the others at the beginning of the revival, and it is the Man who has gone up who will hold our affections rightly today. We have to meet the sorrows and the joys of what is down here, but our eyes are higher.

A.A.B-n. You referred to what He has done for God. Would that be the answer of the gates? How far can we enter into that, what He has accomplished for God? What He has removed in its totality, what He has opened up in its totality for God!

R.D.P. It is not without point that in the recovery in Nehemiah there is so much detail given as to the gates as if to indicate the great interest that God has in this matter. The gates of heaven! Who could speak of it? Who could speak of the inner recesses of heaven except to say that Christ has gone through them all: "who has also ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things", Eph 4: 10. As one writer says, There is nothing we need outside of Christ.

Jas.B. Would this question as to who He is come before the heart of each one of us each time we come together? What is He to me?

R.D.P. The Lord said to the woman at the well: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink", John 4: 10. We need to develop in our knowledge of the Saviour, in our knowledge of Christ. The vastness of what is there! We often dwell upon the smallness of the compass into which the Lord came, but it also does us good to contemplate the vastness of what was there.

Mr Taylor has two interesting addresses, one succeeding the other, one on the smallness of the ark of God, then the next one on the

vastness of Noah's ark, the greatness of the ark as taking in every thought of God (see Vol.83, pp.46, 54). As well as thinking affectionately of the small conditions the Lord came into, we should think of the greatness that was there. It was there in John's gospel.

The human veil was there too, but it shone through.

R.S.R. Do you think we could apply verse 7 to ourselves? There is to be no impediment to this glorious Person. Heads, gates lifted up, every facility granted, and the King of glory shall come in. It would start in our affections, would it not?

R.D.P. I think so. I suppose what underlies it would be what we are in the week. We cannot expect everything to fall into place if we have been careless as to how we have been through the week. I think what you say is helpful in that the gates move smoothly. You do not have to drag them open. The gate opens of itself; the mechanism is in order, you may say. I think the mechanism for us would be the moral side of things, so that when the time of His glory comes the gates open easily. There are no long pauses, there is no hesitation, there is no over-occupation with one another. The gates open and Christ becomes dominant.

Jas.B. Is our side in verses 3 and 4? "Who shall ascend... ? He that hath blameless hands and a pure heart". So conditions are suited for me to go in.

R.D.P. There is an interesting quotation in this month's magazine as to a pure heart. Mr Walkinshaw quotes Mr George Ware as saying, A pure heart is a heart that would not willingly hold any motive that is contrary to Christ. We may say, Can I ever say I have a pure heart? But a heart that would not willingly have any motive contrary to Christ, what a fine thing that is! Pure of heart: you could go through the week like that. You may say you often fail, but is your heart given to Christ? Does it feel the breakdown? We feel the way we often fail, but let us never alter our gaze upon the One who is coming for us. David had a great desire to improve the divine dwelling place. I hope that we all have that desire. We would like to think that in some way by our being here in Grangemouth or Birmingham,

or wherever it is, the divine dwelling down here has been improved.

That was David's great thought throughout his life to build a house for Jehovah, but in spite of the fulness of his thoughts and of his vision he is not allowed to build the house. It says "And king David went in". What happens, dear brethren, when we get disappointed, when things happen which cut across even our most genuine desires? Perhaps we thought we would like to bring the family up a certain way and we have suffered disappointment in it. Perhaps despite everything we have been able to do, persons have been lost in the local assembly. Disappointment can cut across things and spoil things, but it says of David that he "went in and sat before Jehovah", and he says "is this the manner of man, Lord Jehovah?" Are we like that whatever the disappointments of the day? Can we fill our gaze upon Christ and find that there is no disappointment there?

R.S.R. Do you think David just went in for the joy of being there?

R.D.P. Yes; that would be a fine thing. I think it is Mr Stoney who says that we are more occupied with usefulness than devotedness.

David did not go in to serve, he just went in to contemplate. You cannot put a measure on devotedness. If someone serves, you say that they served well or they did not serve so well because you can put human measures to it but devotedness is only measured by divine Persons.'

R.S.R. I remember an old brother asking me, Have you ever gone into the presence of God for the sheer joy of being there?

R.D.P. And there is no greater time to do it than when something has come in which, if it is allowed to lie there, might bring bitterness into my heart. We all know that things come into our lives and, if we do not resort to His presence, bitterness might come in. The presence of God will resolve and disperse all bitterness because Jesus is there. So David says "Who am I, Lord Jehovah... ?" He becomes conscious of the greatness of God and the smallness of himself as an object in such a sphere. "Thou hast brought me hitherto. And yet this hath been a small thing in thy sight... And is

this the manner of man". You could almost say that he has had a glimpse of Christ.

J.M. Would this be the normal result of going in and sitting before Jehovah? There are seven different names of God mentioned in this section. We all know what you say about disappointment; being found in the divine presence these difficulties clear away.

R.D.P. I think it is very important that, if we feel aggrieved about something or that perhaps things are not just as they might be, we should take it into the presence of God. Do not seek out someone who thinks the same as you because as you talk it over with them it may get worse. Take it into the presence of God; talk it over with Him. David goes in and sits there and says, Who am I anyway? It is almost as though he sits down in the thankfulness of having a place there and then God puts Christ before him. We do need that, dear brethren, because we all have to face disappointment, perhaps things not working out as we would like. Yet God has a place. He says to Moses "Behold, there is a place by me" (Exod 33: 21) and it is a place we can go to.

J.M. We have the same idea in Numbers, have we not? Moses went in to speak to God, but it says He spoke to him. God took advantage of Moses going in.

R.D.P. As was said, he did not go in there to serve. That is a testing thing. Perhaps we only go when we are going to serve. Perhaps we only go into God's presence in a routine way, pray to God at night, the same prayer that we pray every night. Or perhaps if you are going to preach you speak to God. But how often do we just go in to adore? As the hymn-writer says, 'There only to adore'. I think it would make us more substantial. If we were more occupied with greatness instead of smallness we would not be quite so 'scratchy' as we get sometimes. Little things test us and we may snap back at someone. Someone else says something and you wonder what he means by saying that, and all this kind of thing. But in the presence of God you would be impressed by 'Thy grand conceived economy' (hymn 242).

R.S.R. Is this what we call the holiest? And is not that for contemplation because Christ is there, the ark is there?

R.D.P. I think as we look back we would have to say that we have not contemplated enough. We might have acquired a certain amount of knowledge and a certain impression, and we have tried to eke it out too far instead of constantly contemplating. John says "which we contemplated, and our hands handled", 1 John 1: 1. That was distinctive to the apostles' day, but the principle is there, and John is the man for the last days. He is a man who basks in the greatness of things, and the difficulties of the day somehow recede and are not so dominant.

A.A.B-n. Does David expand in the presence of God? He goes on "And who is like thy people, like Israel".

R.D.P. That is why I read part of the rest of the passage. It is not exactly formal service; it is the outpouring of a heart that is affected by what God has done - "to redeem... a people to himself, and to make himself a name". I would encourage especially those who are younger to ask the Spirit to help you to see the greatness of things, to see more than just the outward. Even though Naomi was, as she says, an embittered woman because of all she had gone through, yet there was something inward that Ruth was able to see. We need to be able to see beyond the outward.

R.S.R. Is it not so that, as we go into the divine presence, we get an impression of the greatness of God, the greatness of Christ, and then the greatness of the saints? "Who is like thy people... ?"

R.D.P. David speaks of God redeeming them; then he says, Who is like them. David had known something of receiving things at their hands. At one time they were ready to stone him. He says "Who is like thy people... ?" Then he says "let thy name be magnified for ever". The greatest disappointment that I could ever experience is small compared to God's name being magnified for ever.

J.S. Would the knowledge of what Christ has done for God establish us in the thought of His purpose?

R.D.P. I think so. I have often said we need bigger maps. It is a quotation from Sir Winston Churchill. He said, I like to use big maps. If you use big maps you can see the whole campaign. On a little map you may figure largely, but on a large map it is God's planning that is seen. When God unrolls the canvas: would that we could see the expanse of the canvas more and less of the stitches! We need bigger maps so that we can see that God is operating not on a small scale but on a vast scale. It involves the whole of His purpose in time, the whole of its working out through Christ. There will be one hundred per cent success in what He is doing.

J.S. In Matthew 11 it is the time of the Lord's great disappointment with the cities which rejected Him. It says "At that time, Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father" (v 25). It is just to confirm what you are saying. At a time when there would be natural disappointment the Lord turned to His Father. The Lord would be a pattern in that, do you think?

R.D.P. I think so. In the same chapter John the baptist says "Art thou the coming one? or are we to wait for another?" (v 3). There had been no apparent result from his work. It is almost as though the Lord turns and faces the accusers. He says "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? a reed moved about by the wind?" Think of the glory of the Lord as He turns and faces all that! What you say is important; we need this refuge. If we are honest we like to harbour some of the unworthy thoughts that come into our minds. We let them grow, we let them breed, and suddenly there is bitterness there and you find that Christ is shut out.

R.S.R. At one time in Jacob's history he says "All these things are against me", Gen 42: 36. But was not that the making of a man who died as a worshipper?

R.D.P. It is remarkable that so much of the content of the first book of the Bible should be taken up with one man, a weak and failing man as most of us are, yet at the end, as you say, he comes to be a worshipper, morally great. He comes into the presence of Pharaoh

and blesses him. All the trivialities of the day mean nothing to Jacob. He is great in God's sight.

J.M-I. Would you say something as to verse 21: "For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness". David seems to get a view of God working for His own glory.

R.D.P. That is good. There are some remarkable passages of scripture in this part of Samuel. God says to David at one point, "I went about in a tent and in a tabernacle" (v.6). You think of the local assembly. He says "I went about" with them. It was not the straight line that we read of in Timothy (see 2 Tim 2: 15). Where they went He went. He was content to dwell with them. "According to thine own heart": the heart of God is really behind it; behind His hand is His heart. It is as we understand that that we are helped as to things down here.

In the scripture in Numbers 23 we see that the gathering up of evil has to give way ultimately and acknowledge the greatness of what God had done. The conflict between Balaam and God was not known by the people. It was above them. It is like the powers of wickedness in the heavenlies (see Eph 6: 12). It was not conducted in their presence. But Balaam has to say at the end: "At this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!" The devil says, as it were, I will take you to where you will see them at their worst, to the extremities of the camp where the stragglers are, those who do not feel so good, those who are ready to give up, I will take you there to the place where Amalek gets them, and curse them there. He goes there but he has to say at the end: "What hath God wrought!". It is a very fine thing to contemplate that God is over all, and not to think too much of my importance but to see that God is working things out according to the counsel of His own will.

W.H. In the fourth watch of the night we may feel weak. Is that where we are today?

R.D.P. As things go on we tend to feel our weakness. Naturally speaking as life goes on we feel our weakness towards the end.

The enemy would attack then. It is at the end of the fourth watch of the night, not at the end of the inauguration, that he says "What hath God wrought!". He might have done it at Pentecost when three thousand were converted in one day, he could have said - then "What hath God wrought!". But no, this is after the dark ages, after the reformation, after the death of the martyrs, after the great declension in Christendom, it is after the revival and it is despite the great character of apostasy that is sweeping in at the present day.

At the end of all that he says, "What hath God wrought!". You find that God has brought out of it in completion everything that He has looked for in man.

R.S.R. Do you think it is because of who God is that it will be so? This is 'El' meaning 'the Mighty'. It is good to see that nothing that has been in the divine mind has failed.

R.D.P. That is important, nothing has failed. We look around today and we see failure everywhere, but nothing will fail of all that God has purposed; He has and will carry it right through. I think what we overlook is that He is going to complete the work and not me. What grace began, grace shall crown. You look at the building and you think, I would love to finish that building. But no, 'Till grace, what grace began, shall crown!' (hymn 138). The finishing will be God's.

W.W. Jacob's history takes up a good deal of the book of Genesis and there is a whole book devoted to Job. At the end of it Job says "I know... that thou canst be hindered in no thought of thine" chap 42: 2.

R.D.P. And the place to find that out is in His presence, in contemplation. You go in to God with all your worries and your disappointments and you find He is not worried at all. You find that in the face of the greatest disappointment you might have, He is going on with His purposes. He would say, Are you disappointed in man? I never expected anything from him anyway.

R.S.R. Job says "I know that thou canst do everything" - everything. It is the whole scope.

R.D.P. That is good. Balaam was a man who was employed by the devil to say the worst he could. God says, I will show you what it is to be. Balaam says "I have received mission to bless... and I cannot reverse it". God's people were going through the wilderness in weakness, yet despite all the adverse conditions that attached to them he says, I have to bless them.

A.A.B-n. Both Jacob and Israel are mentioned. It is not simply the objective view but it is in Jacob.

R.D.P. So not only what is true of us in purpose will go through but there will be a subjective answer. At the end of the day, after all the devil's efforts, it will be the Spirit and the bride who will say, Come.

There will be a subjective answer to what is done. "There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel". When you think of all the things that are against the saints it is small wonder that we feel the pressure. It is the fourth watch and the devil has very little time; he is concentrating every effort to destroy what is for God.

W.H. Jacob speaks of "the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day", Gen 48: 15. Jacob says that, not Israel.

R.D.P. So it is not the initial carrying of the sheep on His shoulder (that is the gospel), but it is shepherding me every day. It is the use of the rod and the staff and the crook, and the Shepherd's distinctive call. It is the day by day way in which God has been with us. You look back and say, If I had gone another day in that direction it would have been disastrous. But He did not let us go.

H.F. Stephen speaks of the God of Jacob (see Acts 7: 46). David wished to prepare Him a tabernacle, but it goes on to say, "where is the place of my rest?" (v 49), whereas Stephen was going on to be stoned. He seemed to keep the objective before him and God saw to it that he saw the God of glory.

R.D.P. Stephen was only a few minutes from death but he sees something of the God of Jacob. What he sees really is that things are going through subjectively, even though he is going off the scene. We need to see that God is going through. I may have a

small part to play here, and if I keep with God and with the Lord and with the Spirit, I will be helped to fill out what He has in mind for me.

But the 'grand conceived economy' involves that He is going through every generation securing a subjective answer. "What hath God wrought!"; not exactly what He has purposed but what He has wrought.

A.McB. "The shout of a king is in his midst". Would that involve a subjective work?

R.D.P. It is royal, is it not? I think the Supper is the celebration of the royal rights of Christ. Soon He is coming in His glory and His glory will fill the earth, but at the present time I think the kingly rights of the Lord Jesus are celebrated at the Supper. That is what we mean when we say that if the world knew what was happening they would not allow it. His royal rights are celebrated. As He went into Jerusalem, in the midst of the Roman occupation of the country, everything had to stop while the King went in mounted upon an ass.

They kept on strewing the branches before Him. That is like the Supper today. You stand upon your feet and you make your contribution so that He can pass.

W H. The children sang His praises in Matthew (see chap 21: 15).

R.D P. You cut down a branch and strew it on the way, that is you get the impression of Him coming and you stand up and speak to Him and it makes way for Him. It is not dry and dusty, not last week's response. They kept cutting them down, something of the living stock was cut down. There are a lot of young people and we know how they feel about taking part; it is not easy for most of them. But it is a wonderful thing to get a vision of Christ. You say, I cannot do much, but I will cut that down and lay it before Him. In one passage there are an ass and a colt and He is sitting on both of them (see Matt 21: 7). In your spirit you are conveying what it will be when He comes in in His glory. We do not have to make long thanksgivings at the Supper; we could give thanks very briefly and perhaps take part more than once.

R.S.R. I was impressed when I was in Cape Town in 1974. Mr Richmond said, I do not get up and pray for everything; I pray for one thing and sit down; then I get up again.

R.D.P. There is something in that. You cut it down; you maintain your interest in the movements of Christ right through the service and if you take part again, well you take part again, and again! Maybe we could be briefer and it would be all the fresher for it.

Perhaps we have said enough to encourage us to be maintained in admiration in relation to Christ.

GRANGEMOUTH

21 September 1980

GOING IN FOR WHAT IS SPIRITUAL

Exodus 20: 20-26; Acts 3: 1-11; Judges 1: 12-15

R.D.P. What is in mind is the importance and the challenge of going in for what is spiritual. I am aware that that is often the point where many of us switch off, thinking that that is for the older brethren, and perhaps for Lord's day morning, but I think it is time that we came to see that what is spiritual is what is worthwhile. I think that what is happening amongst us, and the sorrows amongst us, are intended to affect our hearts to see that what is down here normally, naturally we may say, at best ends in death. At worst - and I say this for those who are younger - it ends in crushing disappointment and bitterness. God has in His goodness spread before us the vast sphere of what is spiritual. I do not think we need to be afraid of the word. It may not be a classical definition, but for me it means that what is true about me, what I have learned about myself from the divine viewpoint, becomes ever increasingly true in me. It means really that Christianity becomes substantial. We look at one another here today, and it is surely worthwhile, because what is spiritual is what will go through into eternity, and we shall enjoy it in increasing fulness and freshness for ever. I have not read in Ephesians and Colossians but I have read, as you might say, the initial stages of going in for what is spiritual. There are many young people here today and I appreciate that on Saturdays some of us might like to be doing something else, but perhaps our affections might be stirred, for a moment anyway, to see that what is spiritual is well within our grasp and well worth having.

So I read in Exodus where there is this reference to the altars. There are the two altars, the altar of earth and the altar of stone, and between the two you get the word 'if'. I think the challenge today is whether we will take up the 'if'. Everyone here is standing, you might say, at the threshold. We are in the last days, beloved; the world outside is running its course and the testimony is heading up for its completion, and the challenge and glory of the moment is that it is open to each one of us to go out of this scene in power. The

power will be the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not something exactly that God has made obligatory upon you. He has laid it before you attractively. He says, as it were, If you will do it.

In the Acts we have Peter and John and the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple. Perhaps that could be Grangemouth meeting or Edinburgh, or elsewhere. He was a liability in the place. He expected to receive something, we may say, at every meeting. But he gets something far beyond what he ever expected. He goes farther than obtaining relief. It says at the end of the section we read that "he held Peter and John". Beloved brethren, it is time for holding things. There are too many of our dear brethren who have given things up; they have let them slip. It is a time for holding things. I think we have been taught that here Peter and John represent the dispensation in its wholeness. They represent the side of authority and the family, and this man is now going to hold them and to enter really into what is spiritual.

In Judges there is the reference to Achsah and Caleb, who we know are a wonderful study in the Scriptures. Caleb's day was nearly over, and it may be in the Lord's time that some in this room will be taken before He comes. Caleb is promoting what is spiritual. He says "He that smites Kirjath-sepher and takes it". He lays before the brethren, especially the younger ones, an objective, an incentive. I think the incentive today is what is spiritual. Let us make no mistake about it, if we want to enjoy the best, the best involves what is spiritual; it involves that we not only talk about things and know about things but that these things are becoming true in us. It begins with persons who are ready to go in for it.

A.A.B-n. I am sure it will be to profit. The first altar is an obligation, but is the expression you refer to, "if thou make me an altar of stone", by way of attracting us into this? We have to recognise that what is spiritual is not first but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual (see 1 Cor 15: 46). Do you think that if we set our face in this direction, then afterwards we become spiritual? Is it something that follows?

R.D.P. I think so. He attracts our hearts into it. It says "An altar of earth shalt thou make unto me". I believe that everyone who receives the gospel and receives the Spirit is one who in some measure responds to God. He responds from the appreciation of redemption and of the way that God has met his lost condition when he could not help himself, and in some measure his thanks go up to God. That is the altar of earth; it is basic, we might say. I hope everyone here is like that, that the gospel is not just academic with us. It is not just a question of an event that happened but there is something rising to God as a result of the Lord Jesus entering into death to undertake all my lost condition and load of sin. It is the responsiveness of every heart that has been touched by the perfection of Christ. Of the altar of stone, however, He says, if thou shalt make it. How are our hearts today? Are we content with what is around, content with the way things proceed, content with an outward religion, content even with a certain piety, which I think underlies spirituality, or are we ready to go in for something that is permanent in relation to Christ where He is?

J.M. Would the speaking from heaven suggest what is spiritual? The same idea is conveyed in 2 Corinthians: "the things that are seen are for a time, but those that are not seen eternal", chap 4: 18. I wondered whether Paul's reference in Romans 7 to the law being spiritual (see v 14) would have this which you have read in mind.

R.D.P. That is good. The speaking was from heaven. It is a remarkable statement in this part of the book. The law had just been given and in the next chapter we have the Hebrew bondman, and in between God said "I have spoken with you from the heavens". I think it was in His heart that they would make Him an altar of stone.

It is almost like an appeal from the heart of God, as if He would say, I have come in for you in all your need and there is a response to that, but will you go in for more, will you really set your heart upon the purpose of God? I think there is an appeal from heaven today that the testimony is not to be impoverished in persons who know the terms but are little formed in the truth. It is not to be that we just enjoy the fellowship and its distinctions but that we go in for it in

depth. There is a danger of us settling down in what will in future be millennial and not eternal, that is settle down in what is down here.

We might just accept things as a pleasant song; but as to formation, when the crisis comes, when the wind blows upon me, I am ready to fall. But God says "if thou make me an altar of stone".

A.C.C-g. The altar of earth is within the reach of all, is it not? But does the altar of stone involve what you are saying as to formation?

R.D.P. Yes, I think it is formation which involves displacement. It involves that things are experimental. The altar of earth is without size here. The smallest boy or girl here today who has a love for Christ can have an altar of earth to God. In the service of God someone may break through for the first time, perhaps a young person, and all the saints are moved by it. It may be small, but there is a response to God. That is a very fine thing. The altar of earth, dear young brother or sister, does not have a size, it does not have to be as big as that of the brother who has been in fellowship for fifty years. Can you make one? The only qualification is whether you have love for Christ, and whether you have traced the goodness of God as it has come out to you in Jesus, and you return thanks to Him. I suppose one of the first evidences we see is that a person thanks God by remembering the Lord Jesus. It is one of the first tangible evidences of it. Let us not forget that, dear young people, that there is something joyful to heaven in persons who lay their hands to the loaf in affection for Christ.

R.S.R. I suppose we have little idea of what it is to God, in such a day as that in which we are, to have a response from His creature.

R.D.P. I am sure that is right. If the reception of the sinner causes joy in heaven, what does the response of the lover of Jesus cause? Think of the joy of heaven as there is response from the earth where Jesus died from the place where man has always dishonoured God, from such a place there is a response, however small, in purity, to God Himself.

W.D. It is a sacrificial response, is it not? What makes room for growth in spirituality is some affinity with the action of Christ in

sacrificially going into death to secure these great thoughts.

R.D.P. I think that is right. It grows larger, does it not? There is the sheep, then the oxen, and as you say, it is linked with what Christ was when He was here. Paul, the great apostle, having the whole truth of the assembly revealed to him, could say "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me", Gal 2: 20. What an offering that was upon the altar of earth! It was not Paul the apostle there exactly, it was Paul the lover of Christ. In the gift of Christ and in believing, we have status before God, status that qualifies us eternally in relation to His presence; but the challenge is whether we today, and whether the next generation, will go in for what is spiritual or settle for what is outward.

R.S.R. Why does he mention only the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings in connection with the altar of earth? There is no suggestion of a sin-offering. It is a very high standard, is it not, especially the peaceoffering, which is the prosperity offering!

R.D.P. It brings in what Christ is to God, so it is not just my relief. There is almost a wonder about the gift of Jesus. David says "And is this the manner of man" (2 Sam 7: 19) - the glory of what was there for God. So there is the peace or prosperity offering. You realise how much better off you are as having given your heart to Christ, and knowing what it is to be redeemed, ransomed, and given the Holy Spirit.

D.M. Would Luke's gospel be like the altar of earth, whereas Acts would be like the altar of stone?

R.D.P. I think the gospels bring out what is basic, they provide what has been called 'strong meat', but the epistles open up what there is available to us in spirituality. There are those two sides.

H.F-r. Is it instructive that the burnt-offering is the required standard, that is Christ? I was thinking of what it says regarding the turtle doves and young pigeons. It is a burnt-offering. Would this encourage even the youngest of us to offer what we have, because it is a burnt-offering?

R.D.P. I think that is right. We have been thinking lately of the generation that is passing. The generation that has gone through the best part of this century is passing. That is in the natural course of things. They have known the whole course of Mr Taylor's ministry, the richness of the opening up of the truth. They have gone through times of privation in two world wars, through a depression. What experience and wealth has been derived from that! Most of us who are younger have grown up in times of comparative ease where dependence has not been a great feature. I think it is a challenge now whether we will go in for what is spiritual. Let us be experimental in the truth and prove its goodness.

J.M-r. Elijah's altar was an altar of stone. It is doubtful whether we could imagine a more depressing day than Elijah's day. Many of us would have said that if we could establish an altar of earth it would be wonderful, but he took twelve stones with the twelve tribes in mind. Although the day was so bleak he was laying hold practically of the finest and best, was he not?

R.D.P. Elijah's day was a day of great pretension. The altar that the prophets of Baal made was not said to be made of stone. It was really made of pretension and superstition and all the things that mark Christendom generally. But Elijah's altar was made of stone, something that was formed of God. You do not have to be ashamed of it; you do not have to be ashamed that the governing principle of your life is from heaven; you are not governed from earth. When all the pretension is gone what is substantial will remain. Will it remain for us? Is there an equivalence in me with what I profess? God is very gracious with us, and I do not suppose any of us here today could say that we are equal inwardly to what we profess, but may there be a greater measure of it and may we turn it to enjoyment. I believe the truth is for enjoyment, not only for knowledge but for enjoyment. I love to hear some old brethren who speak of the truth as if they are enjoying it. They put something together and link it with an experience they have had, and they are enjoying it. We are not here with our backs to the wall. God has given us everything richly for our enjoyment.

R.J.C. It says "thou shalt not build it of hewn stone". Does that show that man after the flesh can contribute nothing to what is spiritual?

R.D.P. Yes, it really means that just as it comes from God is how it is built. They would have loved to have hewn some corners off the Lord Jesus, would they not? The devil says, You just say this and I will leave you alone, we shall just take this edge off and you will fit in perfectly here. But the Lord never fitted in here. The stone, speaking reverently, remained as it was; there was no change. The saints are here but they do not belong here, they will never fit in.

The stone is not hewn. Persons may be trying to hew you down at work, or the children at school, trying to get you into their shape, to get some of the edges off, trying to take some of the distinctiveness away and make you into something that is just ordinary. But Christianity is not ordinary. It is distinctive, and you are distinctive, dear young brethren here today. God's interest in you is particular, and He is constructing something in you substantially which is for ever.

J.N. Is there a divine recompense for any little measure of sacrifice on our part? It says "I will come unto thee, and bless thee".

R.D.P. That is a fine thing. I have often thought of that at the Supper. "In all places where I shall make my name to be remembered, I will come unto thee, and bless thee". To me that means that the altar is to be made where He comes. The places where He makes His name to be remembered are the places He has chosen for this to be. It is almost as if He says, Will you follow my movements now? He has graced us with His presence; He has come in with His blessing. In answer to responsiveness to Himself He comes in and causes blessing to be there. Then He would say, Will you follow me now? "If thou make me an altar of stone".

J.N. In John 20 the Lord breathes into the disciples and there is an effect. It says "The disciples rejoiced therefore, having seen the Lord" (v 20).

R.D.P. That is characteristic of the day we are in, the breathing of the heavenly Man, the influence of that glorious Man spreading through. "If thou make me": it is almost like the cry of the day: Are you going to be with me? are you going to follow my movements? We know that His movements are in the sea, they are very great, and they are in the sanctuary, but are we exercised enough, are we lovers enough of Christ, to follow Him in relation to where He would lead us today? Or are we content with relief and enjoying what is down here outwardly for the rest of our time?

A.McB. There is a kind of self-consciousness in going in for what is spiritual, is there not? There would be almost a reproach if you tended to break from certain companions perhaps and go in for what is really life.

R.D.P. What you say is very helpful and should encourage us. There is a self-consciousness with us as to what is spiritual. It should not be of course; what is spiritual should be the normal course of things, but I think it does need, and always will need, a definite step towards it. You will get nothing in divine things unless you take a definite step in faith. Someone has said that in the gospel you get everything for nothing - the gift of Christ, the gift of the Spirit - and then after that we do not get anything for nothing. We need to take a definite step towards what is spiritual. We should first of all ask ourselves whether what we know of the truth is true of us; then in the measure in which we have the faith and grace for it to go in for it.

W.D. The first definite step you take is that you change your man. As you said in prayer, we should keep the Lord before us as our object. If you do that you have changed your man.

R.D.P. Very good; you have changed your man, turned away from the kind of man that is down here. Usually our ideal man is ourselves. You change your man, not only from a sense of relief but from joy, and find in Jesus everything that God has ever looked for in man. Think of the extent of the knowledge of Christ which is open to us and which we have not explored. It is vast. I often think of that

hymn-writer who said, 'Jesus! our Saviour, Shepherd, Friend, Thou Prophet, Priest, and King, Our Lord, our Life, our Way, our End' (No.54). You change your man. Perhaps we have not got past the first one or two of those titles, but to prove Him in His fulness is what I think is in the 'if' here: "if thou make me an altar of stone".

D.R. Does not spirituality mean that you judge yourself? We may think that self-judgment is not a very spiritual thing, but is it really a spiritual thing to judge yourself?

R.D.P. I think so, because formation involves displacement. The way of displacement is by self-judgment. We can do it today. If we have wasted all our life until now, if the Lord is attracting our hearts in any way now, we can do it today. It is not too late, and all the wasted years can be made up in a moment. It will always be in one way that we shall have to look back in regret, but really in some way God will make it up to us if we take a step towards what is spiritual today.

D.R. Is the significant turning point in John's gospel when the Lord begins to speak to the disciples about going away? I wondered if that might correspond to what you referred to as the passing of the older brethren. Maybe we have leaned on them, but we have to prepare ourselves for the testimony if the Lord chooses to continue it.

R.D.P. I think so. In Kings it speaks of the torrent drying up in Elijah's day. Maybe it was all that he had come to rely upon, the power and freshness that was there, yet the time came when the torrent dried up and he had to prove that God's resources were not reduced; they were in another direction. The testimony is being completed in power. God wants me to be in it, but it is not going to be in persons who can just talk about things and repeat the truth parrotfashion, or even to take part and give the right hymns out. It is in persons who are being formed, who will know the joy and fulness of it, and it begins simply. That is why we might look at the Acts. There you get a man who had missed it all. He had been lame all those years. He was content just to be brought there every day, to the Beautiful gate, to ask for alms. He depended on other people;

he contributed nothing but he drew from them. There came a day when I suppose the greatest sight on the earth at that time came before him, these two men who represented what God was going to do through a whole generation in power and affection. Dear brethren, that generation is today. It has not gone. Can we hold it? He is lame, his need is met, but then he holds on to it. I think we need to hold on to the dispensation today. It has not gone. We do not have to give it up.

D.McG. 1 Tim 6: 12 says "Lay hold of eternal life". The note says 'seize, or catch hold of'.

R.D.P. It needs that urgency today. The days just slip by, do they not? You say, I really must do something about that. I must stop doing that, or I must be more committed. Yet the days slip by. The older you get the quicker they go, and before you know where you are, beloved young one, your life will be over, and you will not have proved the substantiality of what God has for you. We need to seize it. He has come in for you in your weakness in the time when you had no strength to help yourself, in the due time Christ died for you.

While you were without strength He died for you, met you in your lost condition, came exactly to where you were, healed you, redeemed you and gave you the Spirit. But if you want to hold on to the best, you have to seize it. There is an opportunity today, maybe in this room. Maybe for the first time you will see that the meetings are not just an outward religious occasion; but the glory of what God is doing vitally today is maybe passing you by. You need to seize it.

J.M. Would this represent what is substantial? We learn later that this man was above forty years old. You spoke of wasting time. We do not need to wait until we are old before we go in for what is spiritual.

R.D.P. That is a very important thing. I suppose there are many persons here who would say that they wish they had gone in for what is spiritual and what belongs to Christ earlier. We always seem to have to gain experience for ourselves. Somehow we never seem to be able to learn from the experience of others. Even the things

you have learned the next generation seems to want to learn them for themselves. We have all been the same. But how much we have missed by not going in for what is spiritual early.

D.R. Do you think that the believer's thumb is an important member? In Judges there was one who cut off people's thumbs so that they lost their grip (see chap 1: 7). It seems to me that we are in such a time in the testimony, when the devil is cutting off the thumbs of believers and they are losing ground and falling away. The thumb was one of the members that was anointed. Does this man have an anointed thumb?

R.D.P. I think that is very good, the grip. I suppose you cannot grip anything without a thumb; the strength to hold things is gone. The devil puts into your mind the suggestion that things are not what they were, and that because of man's unfaithfulness things have been lost. He will take your thumb off. Has anyone here lost their thumb? There are persons in this area who have lost their thumbs, and maybe we have come close to it ourselves. But in His mercy God has preserved us so that there is grip, power and yet humility, and the anointing is there.

W.D. Perhaps you could enlarge on your thought as to what he held in holding Peter and John.

R.D.P. We have been taught that these two men represent the dispensation. There is authority there and also the family side. This man held them both. He did not prefer one to the other. But first of all he had stood; he knew what it was for strength to come into his feet and ankle bones. He knew what it was to stand up in a world where everyone was lying down, and it is such a man who holds on to Peter and John because he has come to value what is coming in from heaven.

W.D. Would it involve that what these two men represent is known in the Christian circle at the present time and is a great asset in acquiring spirituality?

R.D.P. I think what you say is right. We need both; prominent, I suppose, towards the end is the family, but the great authoritative

principles that govern the dispensation have never changed. If you want to hold the family you must hold to John, and yet if we want to enjoy the fulness of what the spiritual family is today, then we must hold Peter as well, otherwise we shall end up with what is merely social and that ends with death.

W.D. There is a pretence to spirituality which thinks that everything and everybody can be dispensed with but their own links with the Lord, as they say. But Scripture does not support thinking of that character.

R.D.P. This man could have been healed of his lameness and have gone into the temple and gone home, but he held on to them, and he held on to them through suffering too, later in the chapter. He stood with them when the reproaches came along; that thumb, you might say, was strong. We need the strength of our grip to be maintained, and we need God's help to do it.

A.C.C-g. Does that raise the question with us as to whether we hold what the Lord has given in the ministry of the revival? That is necessary in view of salvation, is it not?

R.D.P. Yes; what is authoritative has come out over the years, and I think it would involve that we hold to it and do not attempt to modify it. You do not take a word or a sentence from ministry and stress it in an abnormal way, but the substance of what has come out by the Spirit in the revival has authority.

A.A.B-n. The word to Philadelphia is "hold fast what thou hast that no one take thy crown", Rev 3: 11. Peter and John are together and what they have is substantial. Peter says "Look on us". You referred to what is distinctive, not distinctive in the world, but what can be seen and witnessed.

R.D.P. Distinctiveness is a spiritual feature; spiritual distinctiveness should mark everyone. No one in this room, according to what they are after Christ, is exactly the same as anyone else. Every one is distinctive, every one is a star. They will shine in a day to come, but are we shining today, in the local meeting? "In all places where I shall make my name to be remembered" - that would be our local

place - "I will come unto thee, and bless thee". That is where the star is to shine; that is where we grow, in our local place.

R.S.R. This man found his part and place in the testimony along with Peter and John. It says in verse 14, "And beholding the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to reply".

R.D.P. What could they say? They had seen that man there perhaps for years. Now he was a living testimony; they could not but notice that there was a difference. We can believe the truth as to the gospel and the truth as to the assembly publicly, and yet nobody know it. But here was a man whose life was affected by it. That is open to every one of us. If we could only experience the distinctiveness of what it is to take immediate deliberate steps in committal rather than leave it to later years when the devil will bring in every hindrance he can to stop you!

A.A.B-n. I was thinking of the scripture, "those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Ps 50: 5): would there be a definite step implied in that, which in a sense has to be taken by each one of us if we are going to be anywhere in the testimony?

R.D.P. It is so easy just to be casual about everything. The whole world is full of casualness, the easy way out, the easy option. The schools are the same. If you cannot measure up to this standard of examination we will give you another one. And if you cannot do too well in that we will put several grades in it so that it will not look so bad. "A covenant with me by sacrifice": the expression 'making a vow' may have slipped out of our vocabulary. We may be almost afraid to do so; and yet it is love for Christ that will stir us up to make a vow in relation to Christ and His people and the testimony at the present time.

W.G. Do you think that by holding on to Peter and John, these features of life that marked this man, "walking, and leaping, and praising God", would mark us?

R.D.P. Yes. Life is always a test, is it not? Sometimes we may have to say that the reading was not as fresh as it might have been; that was probably because of me. This man entered into life; it was for

his own enjoyment. Think of his feelings! He may never have been in the temple in his life. Now he goes in walking and leaping and praising God, and it is as if he says, I am going to hold on to this for ever. Oh that brethren had held on to what there has been! Think of the tremendous opportunity there has been and is still, and yet so many have lost their grip. How is our grip today? We all know in our own hearts where we are, whether the grip is only tenuous, only slight.

D.R. Do you think the word in Philippians is very good; "holding forth the word of life", chap. 2: 16? It is not that you are giving it away; you have it so as to hold it forth. That is better than merely repeating terms. I wondered if that is the test at the present time, the development of the life of Jesus in men and women.

R.D.P. What you are saying is good. That is far more testing than sending tracts through the post to someone. "Holding forth the word of life" is in the place where God has been pleased to place you.

They always knew where Abraham was, he was dwelling by the oaks of Mamre (see Gen 13: 18). In that sense when the crisis came he was holding forth the word of life. Is that how we are in our places? When I was a boy there were persons who always seemed strong and rock-like. They have gone, many have lost their way.

Are you like Abraham? No matter what the crisis or what storms may blow, it will be known that you will be there holding forth the word of life.

A.McB. Paul says to Timothy: "knowing of whom thou hast learned them", 2 Tim 3: 14. Is it an encouragement that, if we go in for what is spiritual, there is a reliable line from which we can get help?

R.D.P. I think that is right. We were speaking recently of the man of God in Kings, and saying that it was characteristic. Someone said we would not use that title. That may be right, but we have received what we have received very largely through persons who have had an impression of Christ, and who have been characterised by that feature.

R.J.C. It says of this man in the next chapter that he was an evident sign (see chap 4: 16). He would be something substantial through his experience here, not moved about.

R.D.P. And then I suppose he merges into "their own company" (v 23). There you do not get his name, you do not get the exploit again, but you have the sense that the wealth of the company is built up of such persons who, if you were to test them, each one in the company would still stand, because they were substantial individually by reason of what they had inwardly.

H.F. Would this experience stand this man in good stead? Later when times of trouble came he would always be able to go back to what had happened in himself and to the fact that it took no time to go from healing to praising God, and he would say, That was real in my experience and can be built on.

R.D.P. It is like the altars in Genesis which, we have been taught, are largely individual. At some point in your history you have erected an altar and there has been a response to God from some particular circumstance, and it is there permanently. We can refer back to these things. Persons here today can refer back to milestones in their lives, where God came in distinctly in relation to them, and there is a response to Him from it. We are poor and impoverished if we cannot. The sorrows and the pressures, the joys, the round of life, should have yielded its altars where God has been responded to.

R.S. So that our leaping is very important. Luke refers to leaping; first of all, "as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped", chap 1: 44. Perhaps that is going on in some hearts today as the ministry is coming to us.

R.D.P. We must not be surprised if somebody leaps. You might disapprove if somebody 'leaps' in the meeting, gives a hymn out that is not quite in line you may think, and you frown at the 'leap'. But perhaps it is from a 'heart divinely pressed'.

R.S. The Lord says in Luke 6 that when they were persecuted for the Son of man's sake they were to "rejoice in that day and leap for

joy" (v 23).

R.D.P. I do not know much about that. What about you? These things are very real. We are tested by these things and yet we find some comfort and solace inwardly at such times. Now let us develop that. If we ask for the Lord's help and the help of the Spirit, perhaps we will learn what it is to leap for joy when the persecutions come.

A.C.C-g. In the next chapter there is a reference to the man who had been healed standing with Peter and John (see chap 4: 14). He may have been through the prison but he was still holding on.

R.D.P. That is good. The prison might cause you to lose your thumb. That is how they tested them in the Middle Ages, was it not? They put them into prison and to death to see whether they would lose their grip, and some did. But most did not.

D.McG. Is it not a threefold cord? It says he entered with them; so it sets out the practical nature of the threefold cord.

R.D.P. So what have the prison and the difficult circumstances produced today? I think they have produced in the main persons who have a firmer grip than ever upon what God is doing. Let the dear young people here see that. You have a grip and you say, I am going to hold it and I am not going to let it go. He is not gloomy, he is not wavering and shaking, he is holding on, and there is a victory and a joyfulness about him. There is a note of triumph in his life. That is a person who is marked by a tight grip upon what God is doing today.

I was thinking as to Caleb that when he says "He that smites Kirjath-sepher and takes it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife" he is setting an incentive before them. He was a man who knew a lot about God. He had learned what patience was. He had learned what it was to go on when the most were disbelieving. Here he is towards the end. He has overthrown the giants and he is going to take Hebron, and standing in the way is this city. He says, Who is going to take it for me? It is almost as if Caleb's history could not be completed until he had seen the way in which the next generation

was taking on in a powerful and real way the overthrowing of what stood against the purpose of God.

R.S.R. Are you thinking that Kirjath-sepher, the city of the book, is something to be overcome? We change our tastes, do we not?

R.D.P. I think so. It could be all sorts of books - the world's literature; but it might be a history book. It might be the history of Edinburgh. Someone is going to grasp it and find out not just the failure and the sorrow but the way in which God has gone on His purposeful way right through until today, and He is still going on.

R.S.R. You have found, I am sure, that the more you read the Scriptures and the ministries, the more you want to do it, and the less you do it the less inclination you have.

R.D.P. You have to set yourself to do it initially, to read the ministry or the Scriptures, or to pray, and it is as you do this that you find God comes in and encourages you in the doing of it. You certainly find that an appetite for it grows. These are very real things, beloved. There is nothing to be had on the line of casualness. On the line of committal and interest and challenge we shall find that what is spiritual opens up for us.

J.Mcl. Othniel seems to be one who answers readily to prompting. Instead of something coming to light in him forcefully of his own, he needs a prompter, a push.

R.D.P. You sometimes feel an overpowering deadness coming upon you. It would be so easy to let the meeting roll on and just say the same things. Maybe when we are older we could easily settle into imparting what we know. Who is looking for God? Who is looking for the place where Christ is at the present time, the prophetic word, the power of life? It is as if Caleb says, I cannot finish my course until I have seen the way that things will continue. Paul is the same with Timothy. And I think that at the present time the older ones amongst us would be urging the next generation to take up what is spiritual; not just the territory. Achsah says, Not just the southern land, "give me springs of water". The southern land is a wonderful gift, yet the blessing is greater, the upper springs and the lower springs. I am

not going to say it is Ephesians and Romans. It is what you find they are as you are with God.

W.D. Why do you think that Achsah is the incentive? The springs of water and the southern land come in additionally, but it is Achsah that is the incentive.

R.D.P. She may suggest the assembly, I suppose. In some way the assembly is an incentive for us. He gives Achsah as wife to the one who takes the city of the book. Do you think having some impression of what the assembly is to Christ is something to be coveted today?

W.D. Yes, and also the affections that are peculiar to that relationship. Was not the essence of Mary's spirituality in John 20 the affection she had for Christ?

R.D.P. Very good; the affection she had for Christ. Dear brethren, it is nearly the end of the day and there is more affection than ever before amongst the saints. We are seeing today in small conditions some of the best features there have ever been in the revival. You are able to know all the brethren. It should be within the compass of most of us here to know the names of nearly all those we are in fellowship with, and to know about each other and to have affection for each other, and to have affection for what God is doing.

D.R. Why do you think this is recorded in both Joshua and Judges?

R.D.P. I wondered whether Joshua links on with the height of the truth, Ephesians, and Judges is in the setting of dreadful breakdown. Whether it is in the realm of privilege and glory or in the scene of adversity and breakdown, this feature has the same results.

D.R. While there is declension there is no decline in the standard. Would Paul's word help us; "one and the same Spirit", 1 Cor 12: 11? There would be the same Spirit today as there always has been.

R.D.P. Yes; the power for the holding forth is still there. May we have the heart for it!

D.R. We were reminded recently that possibly the recovery has brought out fuller truth than the brethren knew even in the beginning

of Acts.

R.D.P. That is very interesting. I think what you say is right, that there is a development, and there is still what is opening up today.

Someone referred recently to the oft quoted statement that 'the truth is all out'. Yet the Holy Spirit is here, the power of the Spirit is still to be known. We know what is meant by the expression 'the truth is all out', but it does not mean surely that the door is now shut and it is merely a question of turning over old facts. At the end there is the river of life, "bright as crystal", Rev 22: 1.

W D. Does the double reference to this incident allude to the fact that the quality of it was pleasing to the Spirit?

A.C.C-g. I suppose Caleb's daughter would be worth having. I was thinking of the overcomer and the promises to him.

R.D.P. Yes. She says as it were, I do not want the land without the springs; give me springs. She had seen a man who had gone through every kind of pressure and who had held on to the purpose of God and she really says, I want the springs that will help me to be like that.

GRANGEMOUTH

20 September 1980

Key to initials

(Grangemouth unless otherwise stated)

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THE SUPPER

J.N.Darby

How can a Christian stay away from the Lord's supper? It is to excommunicate oneself. The Lord's supper is a token of pardon; the memorial of the love of Jesus. Christ is spiritually present with His own, but He is also absent, and we wait for Him. By partaking of one loaf, we show that we are one body, and I cannot cut myself off, excommunicate myself from the body of Christ. In the Lord's supper Christ desired to express His love, to remind us of His love; it is a necessity of His heart. The token of the love of Christ - the Friend who has died for us - the absent Friend - must be precious to us. He deigns to be one of us, separated from us for a little while, but finding His joy in making us happy.

From The Christian Friend 1887

THE CHILDREN'S SHEPHERD

The sight of sheep following their shepherd may still be often seen in the East. Also it has been frequently tested and proved that in such cases each sheep has a name and knows the shepherd's voice.

Sheep have always been much valued and were usually mentioned first in connection with wealth in the time of the patriarchs. All this is very suggestive of the relation between the Lord Jesus and those whom He calls "My sheep". Our value to Him is shown in the fact that, as the *good* Shepherd, He laid down His life for us so that we should have life abundantly. Christians form one flock; some of them are Jewish believers and others are from the various nations of the world all belonging to *one* Shepherd. The flock is thus one of the great 'unities' of Christianity. We know Jesus as the *great* Shepherd raised from the dead by the God of peace, and wise and strong enough for every need even if we should stray!

At the coming again of Jesus He will, as the *chief* Shepherd, honour everyone who has cared for His sheep during His absence.

The apostle Peter was one such who, besides being made a fisher of men, was made a shepherd of men too. When Jesus told Peter how he should prove his love for his Master the first word of direction was "Feed my lambs". We can see from this how the Lord was concerned that children, like the lambs of the flocks, should be cared for. Peter's first epistle mentions the "pure mental milk of the word" as being necessary for growth. Many country children have reared little lambs by bottle-feeding in cases where otherwise they might have been left to die. The lambs and those who feed them become very fond of one another as we would expect.

You will have read that when Jacob and his family went down into Egypt during the famine they took with them all their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. To the Egyptians however every shepherd was "an abomination". It was not so much that they detested sheep, but having had to submit for many years to the harsh rule of so-called 'shepherd kings' - foreigners from Syria - they hated the idea of a shepherd. God turned all this to account for good

as He is able to do for us when we are doing His will. The people were allowed to settle in the good land of Goshen where is the delta of the river Nile and no doubt plenty of water for the sheep and the pasture. Do you enjoy the safety, satisfaction and serenity of being in the flock of Jesus?

J.C.Evershed