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DIVINE COMMUNICATIONS

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T.N.P. I wondered whether we could consider divine communications and how we are to be affected by them. I suggested that we read Exodus first to bring out the distinctiveness of where all communications come from. We need to apprehend first of all that all the speaking today is in Christ; He is the great Speaker. It is interesting to note in this section that it says "And there will I meet with thee, and will speak with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, everything that I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel". I suppose we sometimes forget that, when it says in the books of Leviticus and Numbers, "And Jehovah spoke to Moses saying", this is where the speaking came from. I think we need to apprehend the Speaker in order that the effect of the speaking or the communication should be taken on by us. I have suggested David and Peter by way of illustration; they would be distinctive persons of course, but I am thinking of the bearing of it on us. David had the communication through the prophetic word, and that may be something we can consider. The effect of the communication was that he went in and sat before Jehovah. Then the rest of his life, I think, he spent preparing for what he had in his mind at the beginning. Peter also is a distinctive vessel but I wondered if the features that came out in him might not help each one of us as to how we make way for communications and how we answer to them, particularly the reference to pondering - turning things over in view of the result that God has in mind being reached. I wondered if we could just enquire on these lines and get help together as to how we would answer to what God says in the assembly at the present time.

J.A.McL. Would the reference "from between the two cherubim" involve a relatively small compass and nearness? He is not speaking from the glory exactly.

T.N.P. No, I think it is within our reach; that would be the point. The mercy-seat was contained, as far as capacity was concerned, by the size of the ark; it was above the ark and in the ark was the testimony. Everything is contained in Christ. The antitype, I suppose, would be on the mountain when the great Speaker is highlighted. Moses and Elias were there, but Christ is highlighted. "Hear him" is the word.

M.G.W. When Moses was there receiving these communications from Jehovah, was he there in the presence of God's infinite delight in Jesus? The ark was there and the mercy-seat. Would that give us some idea of the character of divine speaking at the present time?

T.N.P. I think that is important because the One through whom God speaks is the One in whom He has found His delight. That comes out at the beginning of the gospel; He pronounces His delight in Christ, and I think that is set forth in what the ark and the mercy-seat above it would mean. We keep in mind that the blood was on the mercy-seat, but God speaks through the One in whom He has found His delight. I suppose Peter not knowing what to say would have had three speakers.

Rem. God speaks through the One in whom He has been revealed.

T.N.P. Yes, He has made Himself known in Jesus. That would bring out the nearness that has been referred to, the compass within which He has come; He has come within our range so that we can understand. It is not beyond the reach of the youngest.

Rem. "This is my beloved Son: hear him", Mark 9: 7.

T.N.P. Yes, that was the word: "hear him", no one else. And then it says "they no longer saw any one, but Jesus alone". I think it is to highlight that One, the only Speaker, and that the communications come from Christ. We will see in a minute the ways which He takes to communicate with us. We have to trace everything back to Christ as the Speaker. Is that how you understand it?

J.S. Yes; Hebrews refers to many ways; formerly it came out through the prophets but we are in the days when the speaking is in the Son (see chap 1: 1,2).

T.N.P. That is what I thought. We need to trace the speaking to the source. There are so many voices in the world, and you hear so many opinions even in Christendom. We need to find that the source of the speaking is the One in whom God has found His delight.

J.S. The word on the mount is very instructive: "hear him". It is always imperative, is it not, that our hearing is to be in connection with Him?

T.N.P. I am impressed with that, because Peter would have made Elias a speaker or Moses a speaker, but true speaking is only in Christ, and we have to come round to that; the overshadowing cloud would be the way, I think, that God brings us round to see the one and only Speaker.

P.G. Do you think that is what characterises the present economy? Speaking in Son is what characterises the present time.

T.N.P. I am sure that is right; Hebrews begins with that.

Rem. Later on He speaks from heaven. The speaking continues, does it not?

T.N.P. That is what I would like to get at, the thing is continuing and we recognise this speaking from its true source. Maybe we should look at how it works. I suggested David because of the fact that he was not really a priest and in that sense had no access into the immediate area of the ark, and yet what comes out in his life gives us the impression that he was accustomed to being there. Now we as believers have access to the area of divine speaking. We receive it, may be as with David, through the prophetic word. The prophet comes; David had a right desire and he expresses it to the prophet, and the prophet says, You go on David, that is very good, I would agree with that. But that very night God says, You go and tell David

something else. So the prophet comes with a word. Now I think we get communications through the prophetic word.

J.M. Does it show God's right to interrupt what might be the normal tenor of things, in a normally right way, with something quite different?

T.N.P. I think we are tested as to whether we are ready for things like that. If I have a right desire and God says, No, not just now, how would I react? What effect would God's speaking, God's communication, have on me? Would I resist? Would I object? Would I say to God, But my desire is right? David does not object, he listens to the prophetic word and it leads him to the divine presence.

H.McF. That is submission, a beautiful thing.

T.N.P. Yes, it is something we have to learn. If God says something, if you recognise that it comes from Christ you can accept it. I think David had learned in his experience to understand that things that come this way were right.

Ques. The communications in Exodus take the character of commandment: "everything that I will give thee in commandment". There is nothing optional about that, is there?

T.N.P. There is not, and there is that side of it. I just wondered if we could look at the prophetic side here; it might give some point to our prophetic meetings.

D.McG. Do you think that is the reason we are called upon to wait on a revelation to one sitting by? We would be ready in the normal course of things but waiting for some special touch coming into the prophetic meeting for our help.

T.N.P. I think that would be right; we should make way for that. Of course, do not let us wait too long; I do not know how you get on at Lochgelly but we suffer perhaps from having to wait too long. Time is precious; you wait on one another but I think we need to come more exercised about the prophetic word.

Ques. Do you regard this as the individual state that helps us to receive the word? We have the occasions but we need to go to

them individually in faith.

T.N.P. That is exactly what I have in mind because, when we have a good ministry meeting, we go home and say that it was a grand time. Sometimes we say we did not get much tonight; do you not say that? We can become very critical. In prophetic speaking we recognise that it is Christ who is speaking; He has something to say to us. If I apprehend that, what does it do? I think it makes me (and that takes up the individual side) go home and work out that word; I have to reflect on it. I would say this soberly: sometimes we leave far too much to be done in the meeting.

J.S. David went and sat before Jehovah. What you are saying seems to me very important. There might be what is happening whilst we are in the meeting - "let the others judge" 1 Cor 14: 29, that is that everybody is to be active in that sense; but then the point would be how it is going to have a lasting effect.

T.N.P. What you say is very important because, if I could judge my own heart, I sometimes sit in the meeting a bit passive and things just fall off. But to be contributive, judging, - "let the others judge" - involves that I am livingly in what is being said. I am with the brother as he speaks and am following what is being said, and I go home and work the thing out with God. Now we might ask ourselves how often do we go home after the ministry meeting and get to God about it. Would not prophetic ministry normally lead us to God?

Rem. That is what happens here, is it not? I was thinking of what David says elsewhere; "The Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me, And his word was on my tongue", 2 Sam 23: 2. That follows Jehovah speaking.

T.N.P. Very good. I think that is fine because there he was conscious of God speaking that way - "on my tongue". He was given that communication.

W.D. Does the fact that this is related to the house help? In 1 Corinthians 14 there is the idea of building - edification. Here it is in view of the building of the house that this communication comes.

T.N.P. That is right. You can see that David's desire was a right one. God says, I have never asked for it. He dwelt in a tent, in a tabernacle, but David, in a certain sense, was apprehending what God would have in mind, and the collective idea is something we need to get hold of, that we get these impressions among the saints. I would like to leave that thought with us - that we are looking for communications among the saints. In the temple is the place where we get communications.

M.G.W. The thing that comes through is the wonderful way in which Jehovah loved His people, and how He had in mind that they would be settled and there would be no more disturbance. How David must have learned, as he had never learned before, how much God loved Israel; and then he gets into the secrets of the One who was coming in, how great He would be and what He would do for God.

T.N.P. That is very attractive because, when David went in and sat before Jehovah, he does not say, I am disappointed; what he gets is an impression of Christ: "is this the manner of man...?", 2 Sam 7: 19. Divine communications magnify Christ. Now I am tested as to whether I can get into the divine presence and just go over things with God in order that Christ is magnified in my heart.

Ques. Is there some help in Simeon? The Holy Spirit was upon him, and it was divinely communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, and he came in the Spirit into the temple (see Luke 2: 25-27).

T.N.P. He was. Simeon would represent a man who was making room for Christ and the Spirit is free in a person like that. We need to think a bit more about that; we talk about making room for the Spirit, but the way to make room for the Spirit is to make room for Christ. If Christ has first place in my heart the Spirit will be perfectly free.

W.D. The primary communication is what we get when the Lord comes in and manifests Himself at the Supper; then the Spirit links on with that in the prophetic meeting.

T.N.P. Yes, that is how I understand it. Do you find this works in experience?

W.D. Well, it seems to be the divinely ordered way, that the Lord communicates His mind and His thoughts as He comes amongst us on the first day of the week, and then the Spirit comes in in our gatherings in the ministry meeting and the city readings and other occasions, and if we are subject we always find some connection with the Lord's manifestation of Himself at the beginning of the week.

T.N.P. It is very encouraging to see that and I would encourage the brethren to look for it, because I think that is what sets things in motion with us. Then you get to God and you find that something is working out and He has given you an enhanced impression of Christ.

H.McF. The Lord Jesus is the great Speaker, is He not, and also the great Singer? He can base things sometimes in song, can He not?

T.N.P. That is another line and an interesting one; there was instruction in music in one section in Chronicles. It is fine if the truth can be got over in singing.

H.McF. There are principles connected with singing that you do not exactly get with speaking; for instance the principle of harmony and melody and other things connected with singing which are very attractive and edifying.

T.N.P. They are, because Christ is magnified and that is the point.

Rem. I was thinking of Peter in the doxology in his epistle: "If any one speak - as oracles of God; if any one minister - as of strength which God supplies; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the might for the ages of ages. Amen", 1 Pet 4: 11.

T.N.P. I think that is a good connection because what we are looking for when we come together is that kind of speaking; that is the communication we look for. It is God speaking; it may come through one brother or through another; in a meeting like this it may come through a remark. The Lord may come in oracularly like that and that is the kind of thing you look for, and you say that is the communication for me.

W.D. Could you explain to us what an oracular communication involves?

T.N.P. I think it would be the directness of divine speaking, it is God speaking. You are conscious, though you maybe said the words, that it is God who spoke, it is right. How would you understand it?

W.D. Exodus 25 is the oracle, is it not? It is the cherubim, the ark and the mercy-seat. The same thing in the house that Solomon built was the oracle, was it not?

T.N.P. Yes, where all speaking came from.

D.McG. Is what has been raised interesting in the light of the fact that Elihu is one who reproached Job's companions and said "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night... ?", Job 35: 10? It would seem that the young man, though unable to help Job, must have been communicating or having communications with God Himself during the night.

T.N.P. I think that is a good exercise because in the night, maybe sleepless, wakeful nights, God will speak. God can speak, He can give me some communication from Himself it may be, as has been said, adding to what you had at the assembly time.

Rem. On that line Mr Darby said it was better for us to be awake.

T.N.P. Well, I do not know that we can all say that.

M.G.W. Do you think that in principle David was recognising the cherubim in this chapter?

T.N.P. Exactly, the rights of God. I think that is a good touch because it is testing, when it is not going the way I thought it should go, to learn the rights of God. Cherubim would give that; the speaking was from between the cherubim. The rights of God are maintained. God's righteousness is known at the mercy-seat, is it not?

M.G.W. Was David so thinking about that that he gets past his own thoughts and the good things he wanted to do, and in going in to sit before Jehovah he just wanted the company of God?

T.N.P. That is right, just to speak to Him, and to learn about this Man. Do we go into God to learn about Christ? Do we? I say that soberly because we are tested in our experience as to whether we spend time just to go in to learn this manner of Man.

In chapter 29 David's reaction to the communication was that he accepts it and he goes in to God. He comes out from God and the rest of David's life is taken up with preparing for the house that he had proposed to build. He was not going to be allowed to build it but he says, I will get everything that is required to build this house and let others have it. Now I think that would be a good effect, if we see God's objective and work towards His end. God says, I am going to do it in Christ. You say, Well, I am going to support that line.

J.S. Paul says in Corinthians, "knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord", 1 Cor 15: 58. Do you think it is a good thing to get a sense of direction in regard to what we are occupied with?

T.N.P. I do think it is good. So it says that David had the pattern by the Spirit. I think that would be the direction. Moses did not get a pattern, did he? He saw it.

J.M. What is in your mind in making the distinction?

T.N.P. A pattern or as we might say the drawings are only two dimensional, I think Stephen touches it when he speaks about "the model" shown to him on the mountain, Acts 7: 44. I think the thing was there; what Moses saw on the mountain was real, was substantial; he saw Christ in type. I think that that is why afterwards he says "Let me... see thy glory", Exod 33: 18.

J.C.W. In John 16 the Lord Jesus says "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. But when he is come, the Spirit of truth... whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming" (vv 12, 13). "Ye cannot bear them now": it seems to put a special premium on the present time.

T.N.P. I think that is to bring out that communications continue. The Lord says that the communications Thou hast given Me I have given them (see John 17: 8); the communications, that is the words that

had been given Him, He had given to them. Communication is still going on; would that be the point of what you are saying?

J.C.W. That is what I was thinking; it emphasises the continuance of the speaking through the Spirit; and the Spirit does not speak from Himself, He speaks what He has heard. The Spirit is subject to what the Lord has to say to His people.

T.N.P. That is interesting; and what the Spirit does is to magnify Christ. If Christ has His right place in our affections the Spirit will magnify Him more.

J.S. Do you think this suggestion of "gold for things of gold, and silver for things of silver" is interesting in that way? It would be a question of what the Spirit is bringing forward, a touch of the gold or a touch of the silver, but we want to be in line in preparing what is suitable.

T.N.P. I think that. It is amazing the things that David saw necessary to collect. If you look at the historical reference you find that, after he sat before Jehovah, he came out and smote the Philistines and he goes on a line of tremendous conquest. The Moabites are smitten next and they become contributory. I think this is preparing for the house; he is bringing everything in to be contributive to this wonderful system, that there should be a dwelling place for God.

Rem. You made a reference to John 17; is it interesting that He says "and they have kept thy word" (v 6)? It is the first thing mentioned after the reference to the glory.

T.N.P. You mean that the answer was in the persons. What the Lord found! You might say that there was not much, but He found something in these persons in response to what He had given. I think the Lord is looking for a response in us to the communications He has given. Think of all these years of ministry that we have had, wonderful communications, and yet the Lord has never given up, and He keeps on giving us more; are we ready to take it on?

J.R.C. Why is the emphasis in relation to sonship? Is this the way things are to continue? The thought of sonship is very elevated, is it

not?

T.N.P. It certainly is.

Rem. Does it bear on what has been said, that David is thoroughly displaced, but the person who has displaced him (Solomon) is the supreme object of his affections. So there is no question of feeling upset or uncooperative, he could not be more co-operative because of the person that God has put in his place.

T.N.P. Yes, that is a wonderful thing to come to. He speaks about Solomon being young and tender; he would not have been much more than twenty when he got this job to do. I say that by the way just to encourage our young people to commit themselves to things early, but he was young and tender and David had no misgivings. I think it brings out the glory of the son. It is the glory of Christ; sonship involves the glory of Christ, and here He is shining in all His supremacy and David is working to the end that Christ is going to be magnified.

W.D. What do you make of the preponderance of metals as over against everything else?

T.N.P. You have some impression.

W.D. I am thinking of the durability of metals. What God passed David through brought out something in him that was dependable and reliable.

T.N.P. I like that idea of durability. I think what David produced, and what we are asked to produce, is what is durable, what is going to last. You get a fine touch as to the gold of Ophir in the section we read; that would bring out something of the refinement in durability.

The metals would involve that there is a process to be gone through.

W.D. Paul speaks in the beginning of Corinthians of what withstands the test of the fire; certain things - wood, grass, straw - would not stand the test of the fire, but the metals would (see 1 Cor 3: 12,13).

There is refined silver here as well as gold; it is like an ornamental setting of things in the assembly.

T.N.P. It is; and it is striking that silver comes in for things of silver when you think of the fact that Solomon did not make much of silver; it was of no account. David was not overlooking anything. You go into the presence of God and as you come out you are not overlooking anything, any divine principle, anything that is to contribute to God's service and praise; it is all augmented and brought in and finds its rightful place.

What was read in Acts would be a distinctive setting because it involves the testimony going out to the west, the Gentile coming in.

But in suggesting it what was in mind was just to follow the features that marked Peter. It says "Peter went up on the house to pray, about the sixth hour" - that would be to speak to God - and it says "And he became hungry and desired to eat. But as they were making ready an ecstasy came upon him", and it would appear that God communicated something to him.

D.McG. Would that be the metal? A Christian is not put in a mould.

He is hammered, so that he can stand the pressure and the tension that comes in in his after life. I think you see that here in Peter hungering and yet ready to make room for divine communications first.

T.N.P. I think that is a good connection because there are no two of us alike. That may seem a strong statement in the light of the vast myriads that there are, but there are no two alike; moulds produce any amount the same, but things wrought upon bring out the distinctiveness of each vessel.

Rem. We are all different.

T.N.P. Yes. Here is one person and he is being formed; and we are being formed, dear brethren, by the communications in the assembly. What comes out collectively amongst us is something that we need to give a bit more heed to. I feel that for myself. The danger is that the communication comes and we just ignore it. Peter did not ignore this; he could not ignore this sheet; it says "a certain vessel descending, as a great sheet, bound by the four corners and

let down to the earth". This is not prophetic now, it is ecstasy in a vision. What would you say about ecstasy?

W.D. Well, it requires nearness to God, apart from ourselves and altogether in touch with another Person in another realm. Would you say more as to the distinction. You said the first one was prophetic, but what do you have in mind here?

T.N.P. All I was thinking was that God can approach us in demonstration of the truth. I think that is what He has done in recent years; He has demonstrated the truth among us in persons. They are not always the most prominent, but you go round your local company and I think you will find persons who have demonstrated the truth.

Rem. Have you in mind what Paul said in regard to Timothy, that he will shew you my ways as they are in Christ (see 1 Cor 4: 17), and that in that way there is a communication to the Corinthians in a man?

T.N.P. That is right. Now I think that is what we experience a good deal at the present time, that there are persons who are exemplifications of the truth. I am not saying that any should be idolised - I do not mean that - but what do I demonstrate of the truth? Can't the brethren look at me and say, Well, there is something there that I take account of.

A.T. Is that God's mind for this moment? Lydia gave heed to divine speaking. It says that "Saul increased the more in power" (Acts 9: 22), that was the great divine voice, was it not? It has often been said, the more we go in for the more we get.

T.N.P. That is true, and I do not think we go in for enough; I would agree with that. He increased in power, and as you go in for things you get increase.

J.C.W. I have been struck with that last question that David asks: "And who is willing to offer to Jehovah this day?". He just leaves it that way. You are thinking of our going in in that way.

T.N.P. Yes, and I think we are tested as to what am I contributing?

J.A.McL. Have you some impression as to why it is here recorded that Peter became hungry and desired to eat?

T.N.P. I think that Paul might exemplify it in what he says: "if I am beside myself it is to God" (see 2 Cor 5: 13). To get beyond self is one of my biggest problems. Do you find that? Peter was hungry but he gets beyond that. Now what can I say about an experience like that where I get beyond what is natural and am just occupied with divine things? Then God shows him something.

M.G.W. When it goes on to say "as Peter continued pondering over the vision" he seems to have forgotten that he was hungry.

T.N.P. That was the effect on Peter. It may be I am going over the same ground to some extent, but I do think there is a need for pondering, searching and pondering; the Bereans searched (see Acts 17: 11). In pondering you go over things in your mind; we do not jump at things; when we are younger we would like to jump into things and just get everything all at once, but we do not get things that way. Peter is pondering and is seeing all that is in this great sheet and he cannot understand it. How could God have a vessel like this for His pleasure? It is all the things that I do not want, he says.

W.D. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul says "fourteen years ago" (v 2); he must have pondered it for fourteen years, and subsequently the wealth of it came out in ministry in Ephesus and other places.

T.N.P. I think that is true. I suppose you have found that as to many a thing you have carried for a long time and turned over prayerfully. Peter went up to pray; this prayerful attitude would go alongside the pondering of things. You get something, something is shown you and you prayerfully go over it with God.

Rem. It says "and he beholds"; the note says 'view with attention'.

T.N.P. You mean he is held interestedly. I think that is important; when God is showing something you concentrate on it.

J.C.W. Paul seems to draw attention to the importance of pondering; he says "think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee

understanding", 2 Tim 2: 7. He is quite sure of the result, but he says "think of what I say".

T.N.P. Yes, that is the pondering. Mary pondered things too (see Luke 2: 19). Certain things she shows she did not understand, and I think we are pretty much like that; there are lots of things we do not understand, but just ponder them.

J.C.W. Jacob too heard what Joseph had to say but he could not understand it, but he pondered them (see Gen 37: 10-11).

P.G. Verse 10 is "desired to eat" but verse 14 is "slay and eat". "Desired to eat" was natural, but the voice says "slay and eat".

T.N.P. Yes, that is what God is saying, that is the communication - "slay and eat" - and Peter says "In no wise, Lord". It happens three times, the thing is repeated, the communication is unquestionable.

Peter had said the wrong thing: "I have never eaten anything common or unclean", but he pondered. I think divine light comes in as we ponder; what is of Christ comes into view.

M.G.W. Daniel was addressed as greatly beloved because he had set his heart to understand (see Dan 10: 11, 12). He seemed to come under the eye of heaven as greatly beloved because he purposed to follow things out, think about them, ponder them, understand them.

T.N.P. I think that is right. We will be promoted on spiritual lines as we take up that attitude.

W.D. Would you say something about the fact that both the Lord and the Spirit communicate in this matter?

T.N.P. Well, you had better open up what is in your mind.

W.D. It definitely says "the Spirit said" in verse 19; a voice in verse 13. Had you thought it was the Spirit speaking?

T.N.P. No, I had not thought of that. It is the idea of divine speaking. What would you say as to the voice, the prime Speaker - "there was a voice"?

W.D. I thought it was what you were saying earlier in the meeting, a communication comes through Christ and then the Spirit comes in.

In the addresses to the churches in Revelation the Lord speaks to the assembly, and then He says "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies". It started with the Lord and finishes with the Spirit.

T.N.P. I think that is a good point because the Lord's speaking makes way for the Spirit's speaking, or adding, we might say. The voice had said "Rise, Peter, slay and eat" and he is pondering.

Maybe that would agree with Revelation 3, because if we reject the speaking we do not know the Spirit's touch. The Spirit would come in where a thing is accepted. I think the pondering here would involve the acceptance of what is said; you are holding it, looking enquiringly at it maybe, and the Spirit just comes in because Christ has His place. Would you think that is right?

W.D. Yes; I have often heard it explained this way, that the ministries - for example Mr Darby's Collected Writings, Mr Raven's Notes and Lectures and Mr Taylor's ministry - are in a sense historical because they were spoken at a certain time; but the voice of the Spirit is to give the current application of what the Lord says through these ministries. So at the present time that is what is happening. Do you think so?

T.N.P. I do think so. If Christ is made way for the Spirit is free to bring in a present living touch. It is not that the communications are new, I mean in the sense that there is something different from what there ever has been before, but it is a fresh touch in the power of the Spirit.

A.T. Do you think it is a great matter that we have living relations with divine Persons?

T.N.P. They are living. A conscious sense of Christ alive makes things different to you. I think that is what held Peter here; the voice, this communication, held him; he is pondering it, and as he is pondering (I think this is important) the Spirit joins on. The Spirit will

link on where there are persons subject and making way for Christ. He does not link on otherwise.

Rem. Do you think that Peter had been adjusted in that regard as to the rights of God?

T.N.P. I think he was; maybe he did not understand at the time what was happening, but he afterwards looks back. The next chapter brings out how he came to understand the thing. "Behold, three men seek thee; but rise up, go down, and go with them, nothing doubting, because I have sent them. And Peter going down to the men said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek". He did not say, Who are you? He said "I am he whom ye seek". He had accepted the word in its totality. We are tested often as to whether we accept the thing in its totality and let the Spirit come into it so that it is worked out.

J.S. "Because I have sent them": do you think that, along with the fact that the Spirit is speaking, what He is saying is related to what He is actually doing in divine authority in His service?

T.N.P. It opens up a tremendous range of divine operations. What is being communicated, what is being done, the Spirit's work in another area, coordinating things, bringing two persons together in the right state at the right time: I think all this opens up a tremendous range of thought, how things are coordinated in divine love in view of getting the objective that God has in mind.

J.S. What the Spirit is saying to the assemblies is helpful in that connection. Is He bringing about universally, through what He is saying, one thing that will finally in its completeness be the answer to the heart of Christ?

T.N.P. That is what the Spirit's service is. So the Lord presents Himself and then the Spirit links on with the presentation of the communication given. I think that is how it would have worked in each of the churches. Rem. In the last four addresses the Spirit's voice comes after the reference to the overcomer, which would bear out what you are saying.

T.N.P. Very good, that is interesting.

Rem. In this broken day in which we are the overcomer, that is persons who are exercised as to the truth that has been brought out by the Lord, find the Spirit's voice coming in to help such, do you think?

T.N.P. I am sure that is the truth and in small measure we know something about it. If we have had any experience at all we get some sense of that.

J.B. Is Peter, in pondering, allowing the word of the communication to have effect in himself?

T.N.P. I think that.

J.B. We see something of the depths that came about in Peter in his epistle.

T.N.P. We need to let the thing work in us. I speak for myself, we are too superficial; depth comes out through pondering.

DUNDEE

16 August 1980

Key to initials

J.Boyce, Dundee; J.R.Cumming, Edinburgh; W.Dickson, Edinburgh; P.Grant, Dundee; J.Mather, Dundee; H.McFarlane, Dundee; D.McGregor, Lochgelly; J.A.McLaren, Dundee; T.N.Pye, Kirkcaldy; J.Strachan, Dundee; R.Taylor, Kirkcaldy; J.C.Walker, Dundee; M.G.Wood, Dundee

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

T.N.Pye

Psalm 132: 1-7; 1 Samuel 17: 34-36; 22: 1,2; 2 Samuel 1: 1,2; 2: 1; 5: 1-3; 6: 12-15

I would like to say something, dear brethren, about growth in divine things, and to use David as an illustration. Psalm 132, I think, relates to David's beginnings; it is a very interesting Psalm, a very encouraging Psalm. It is one of the Songs of degrees, the going-up Psalms, all very interesting to follow up. But this one brings out David's beginnings. He says "Jehovah, remember for David all his affliction; How he swore" - how he did it - "swore unto Jehovah, vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob". I am going to ask, Have you desires for Christ? I think David here expresses a man with desires for Christ. Christianity is given to us for desire. I think we miss a good deal because we do not seek after things, we do not desire them. Paul refers to "all indeed who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3: 12); that desire will bring about something. It will involve suffering of course, but I am not speaking about that at the moment but just to bring out the point that the force of the word is, Have you the desire for it? David had the desire for it; that was a good beginning. Who creates that desire? The Spirit of God; He works in us to create desires for Christ. He stirs up the feelings that you want to have Christ and nobody else. Is that not wonderful, when you find that and have had some experience of it, a time when you just wanted to get more of Jesus? David was like that; these desires came out and he committed himself to them. I call attention to these things because I would like to encourage all of us, from the very youngest; if you have a longing after Jesus the Spirit of God will promote something in you. So have a desire for it and then commit yourself to these desires. A good many of us can say from sad experience that we did not commit ourselves to these right desires; there has been a lot of time lost and we would not want anybody to lose any more time. Commit yourself to your desires for Christ. That is what David did. He says "I will not come" - I will not! - "I will not

come into the tent of my house, I will not go up to the couch of my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, slumber to mine eyelids". I think it is to bring out the ardency of affection for Christ. One feels how small one's measure; love for Christ is our measure. What is going through into eternity is just what is formed of Him, and it all starts this way. I would like to encourage young ones because it is so simple; things begin simply; it is not outside the range of anybody, it is within your range.

I understand that David was about seventeen when he wrote this Psalm - you may be about seventeen. I never forget Mr.H.F.Nunnerley saying in meetings in Edinburgh (in 1950 I think it was) that Mr Taylor said that he was conscious of having the Spirit when he was eight years old. Nobody is excluded; even at that age, there was a lad who was conscious of having the Spirit. You do not have the Spirit if you have not a link with Christ. Your affection comes out as David's affection for the ark comes out. Another thing you need if you are going to grow is affection for Christ, desires after Him. Commit yourself to such desires.

David says he will not do certain things. It is a good resolve to make, that you are not going to go this way, that you are not going to go that way, you are going to go straight forward: that was David. He had in mind to find out a habitation. At seventeen years old he was thinking of a house for God to dwell in, a dwelling place for God. Yes, you can think about that no matter how young you are. So he says, we heard of it: "we heard of it at Ephratah". I understand that is Bethlehem-Judah; that would be just the local meeting. We heard about it at Ephratah. Oh, you say, Yes, I remember the meeting when a certain thing was said in Dundee, just a local meeting - Kirkcaldy, Edinburgh, wherever you come from - we heard of it at Ephratah. I think in the local meeting you get an impression of Christ that stimulates desires to seek after Him and to find Him; they heard about the ark there. I suppose he heard about it in his father's house too; that would be in Bethlehem-Judah as well. What is spoken about in our houses is a very important thing, that we talk about Jesus. They heard about it; as the brethren speak about Christ it

stirs up desires, stirs up longings. Then, "we found it in the fields of the wood". I suppose this would be a reference to Abinadab's house, but "we found it in the fields of the wood" an obscure place but we found it. It is not that he was looking for something and never found it. How many people are longing for something and they cannot find it. David says "we found it". O! have you found Christ for yourself?

I never think of this scripture without I think of the ark coming back. Who was concerned about the ark? It had been given up into captivity, it had been in the Philistines' land, but the ark comes back, not because somebody brought it but because the Lord is able to see Himself through. I think He comes Himself into your life; that is how you find Him; in His own glory He projects Himself. In the fields of the wood; the milch kine, lowing as they went (see 1 Sam 6: 12), represent persons who are not thinking about their own things but thinking about the rights of Christ and the rights of God. So the ark is brought into its own place. It had a place in David's heart. I would say, has Christ a place in your heart? How much place does He have? How much room have you given Him? Could you give Him more? Could we today stir up desires that Christ, being so attractive, so well worth having, you want to give Him more room? That is what David is doing here, and as he is doing it he is growing in his longings for God; he says "we found it in the fields of the wood. Let us go into his habitations". This is a wonderful theme; it goes, you might say, from initial impressions to final conditions - worship. I know it refers to his footstool, but it is the idea of going right through, into the whole thoughts of God. You get Christ, shall I say the Babe in Simeon's arms, and you have everything secured for God and everything settled. I think that is wonderful. We have found it. I think Simeon found it, the Babe in his arms; he found it in the fields of the wood.

I referred to the historical side just to call attention to some of the things that come out in David's life and experience. Where I read in 1 Samuel 17 it is another thing in spiritual growth, the question of our secret links with Christ which are vital to our spiritual

formation. Nobody would ever have known about this experience if David had not told us himself. Now I do not think there would be one here who has not had some experience with God that he has never told anybody about, at least maybe not for a long time. He was a young man, feeding the sheep; his father had given him a job to do and he got on with it. He says a lion came up. If you are exercised about Christ, the enemy will be busy; if you are trying to protect the rights of Christ, what belongs to Him, the enemy will be at you. That is what David found; he had this desire to find a resting place, to find a place for the flock and a lion was there, was in the way, a lion in the street. How many of us have been turned aside because there was a lion in the street! Not David! It says it came and took one of the lambs, but it says, Thy servant smote both the lion and the bear - smote them both - "And I went after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I seized him by the beard and smote him and slew him". In your experience it is simple exercise but you meet opposition and what do you do. David says he went after it. Why? because here was something at stake, there was a lamb going to be lost; and so David goes after this lion and smote it, and when it turned round on him he just took it by the beard; he seized him by his beard. You think of the power of God that is for you when you take up things for Christ! Well, to be very simple, you are helped to confess His name and you find that somebody is against you, you find there is opposition. The name of the Lord is a strong tower; all the power of the enemy represented in a lion is nothing for David. You confess His name and you will find that power comes in to meet it; the lion has no power against the King of kings; he may be the king of beasts, but there is the King of kings! I only contrast the two expressions so that we go in wholeheartedly, committed to things; just make way yourself, as you are working out your exercises day by day, to protect what is of pleasure to Christ - a lamb is always a pleasure. Someone says something about the brethren; how do you react? David met it here and he says he seized him and slew him, he slew both the lion and the bear. Secret history with God is most important. Another thing I would like to suggest is that after a victory get to God because it is a

moment of danger. I think you and I would have come home and said, A lion came today and I slew it - a tremendous sense of triumph; but not David, he kept it to himself. Your secret links with God are vital to your spiritual growth.

In chapter 22 reference is made to the stronghold. This scripture is very often used of David as a type of Christ and all gathering to Him. But what I want to call attention to as to the stronghold is that you have loyalty for Christ. The persons that came to David were in debt and distress and so on, but they were loyal, they gathered round him. David was a great gatherer. In Chronicles you get the three gathering points: Ziklag, the stronghold and Hebron. He did not gather in Jerusalem, but he gathers in these places. Christ is the great gathering centre. Here David is in the wilderness; it was the time of his rejection, and persons are coming up in loyalty. O! take your place in loyalty to Christ; come under His authority. You say, That is going to be a test. It will mean you cannot have your own will. "And he became a captain over them"; it is like the lordship of Christ. The first book of Samuel is a very interesting section to follow through. I think it involves the teaching of Romans. When you come to the end of 1 Samuel you get the going up line, going up in the light of Colossians, but this is Roman teaching and it is the lordship of Christ; you come under His sway, you come under His authority. This is vital to your growth. If you resist the authority of Christ where will you land? Is anybody seeking to go outside the bounds? Salvation is with David. With Christ is the only safe place. That is another thing you will find, that there is salvation in the company. So it says ".and he became a captain over them". O to submit! If we would only submit! My will is always the problem; it is always the difficulty; the assertion of my will hinders my growth. I think what is represented here is that growth comes through the rights of Christ being upheld and the power of God comes in on your behalf.

I come to 2 Samuel because in the passage we read there it says "that David abode two days in Ziklag". This is another highlight in our experience. Chapter 30 of the first book was a very sore time;

David and his men had been away and the Amalekites had come up and had taken away everything, but David recovered all: that is Romans, I think, Christ coming in and recovering all, and persons wholeheartedly committed to Him. But "David abode two days in Ziklag": consolidation of the truth in our souls is vital to our growth.

We said in the reading that we often want to get everything at once; but we need to wait in Ziklag. It says two days. I think what has come out in chapter 30 is that evil has been overcome by good: "Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good", Rom 12: 21.

Now you have to stand and consolidate that ground. I think we sometimes pass over exercises very quickly, we do not get the gain that the Lord has in mind for us. So David remained two days in Ziklag. What is going to happen in these two days? Are the Amalekites going to come back again? No, it is not that. It is just that the victory won is consolidated in my soul. In any victory, as I said, get to God and have the thing consolidated in your soul in His presence, wait in His presence. The Lord was saying that in the reading; David sat in His presence, he waited. Sometimes I find I am in too big a hurry. You go in to God and go out again; in the morning perhaps particularly you are thinking about getting off to work, and there is not much time and you are in and out again. Do make time to stop, to spend time; that is how things get consolidated. That is how things become real and vital in me.

Now, as things had been consolidated, along comes a man with some news. You see, it is one exercise after another; the Christian's pathway is full of one exercise after another. If you are not having exercises I would suggest you have a look to see what is wrong. Here a man comes along and says, Saul is slain. If that had been you or me we might have said, Aha, he has been pursuing me all my life. But what did David say? He is Jehovah's anointed. I think this is the spirit of Christ coming out. As a man has been formed, as he is growing, what is coming out is not his character, not his personality, but Christ, Christ over again. So you get this beautiful song of the bow. It is very attractive to see the spirit of Christ in David as he sets out divine feelings. To get God's feelings

and to understand just what He is wanting is what David represents here. The Lord is looking for that spirit in us. Do we feel for our brethren? Many of them we cannot walk with, but do we feel after them? I think these feelings are coming out here.

But then David is going up; Hebron is in view. I just refer to that in chapter 2 because he is anointed first. I think it is a wonderful movement when we get, shall I say, on the up line. After Romans, what is next? I think it is Hebron and that is Colossians. It was a wonderful time at Hebron; some knew that David should be king so they crowned him king. It says "and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron. And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah". I think it links a good deal with the present time - when Christ is enshrined in our hearts. Colossians has beautiful touches, has it not? It is where you get the personal glories of Christ in all His attractiveness, in all His greatness. I love these verses, to see the glory of one who holds the very heart of Hebron; but be on your guard, you have not gone the whole way yet. Hebron in a certain sense is a testing place because it is all up and down. Of course in an epistle where there is a call for prayer and combat, things are not easy. Hebron is a wonderful place because there is something opening out there that was built before Zoan in Egypt (see Num 13: 22).

The purposes of God relate to Hebron and things are beginning to open out to us but it is a dangerous place because at this stage all are not united. It is in Colossians that it says "For I would have you know what combat" (chap 2: 1) - combat; that is what is needed this constant prayer, prayer without ceasing. You have a man in Colosse who is representative of that (see chap 4: 12). Paul speaks about combat and then says, "to the end that their hearts may be encouraged. But then alongside of that it says "being united together". That is a great rallying thing; when the saints are united together they will all come up and crown Christ King - like all the tribes of Israel crowning David. In Hebron as it is repeated in chapter 2 exercises are going on - philosophy, vain deceit, it is all around; somebody might divert you from the objective, the glory of

Christ might be eclipsed with something else; be on your guard, but make full use of all that is available. That is something worth thinking about: make use of what there is at Hebron but be on your guard, working at constant prayer, combating that the enemy does not get in; do not give him a chance; if you give him a chance he will be in. If you let down the defences for one minute the enemy has an advantage. Is that not true? Just a careless moment and the enemy has got in. I want to encourage you, dear brethren. Read through the epistle to the Colossians and then go on to Ephesians, get the light of the whole thoughts of God opening out to you. I think that is in mind when David went up.

It says finally, in chapter 5, that they all came to David saying, "Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh". Here we are coming up united together. When there is unity among the saints there is an atmosphere in which Ephesian things can be enjoyed; that is Jerusalem. So the king and his men go up and they take the stronghold. And then it says "And David built round about from the Millo and inward" (v 9). Are you on the constructive line? Paul's commission was for building up not for overthrowing (see 2 Cor 13: 10). Do not let us be on the overthrowing line. That does not mean that there is not exhortation; we need exhortation, dear brethren, and we will till the end, but building up, putting the saints together, binding them together, that is the Colossian exercise - that we reach out to the height of God's thoughts for us. It says "the king and his men went to Jerusalem" (v 6) and there is the very element there that would keep them out: "the lame and the blind hated of David's soul". Persons like that would stop you from getting the best, but David took the citadel, he built inward. Well, it is a good thing to get on to a building line.

I refer to chapter 6 to get a touch as to the ark coming up because I think it is another thing that is most essential. If you start building inwards you want Christ in His place. The ark had been long unrecognised, but David says I am going to bring it up. He had exercises to learn and, dear brethren, we have exercises to learn until the end. There is always something fresh, there is always

another test. I think that is what this scripture would mean: you arrive at Jerusalem but there is constant conflict. Paul says "our struggle is not against flesh and blood" (Eph 6: 12), that is the Ephesian conflict, that Christ is to be enshrined. David had attempted to bring up the ark but not according to the due order.

You may say he has taken the citadel, he has arrived at Jerusalem and he is building inwards, everything is secured. O! be on your guard, the conflict must go on all the time, there is constant exercise, there is constant growth. We will never be, as long as we are here, beyond the area of growing. Paul himself says, I stretch out, not that he had already obtained (see Phil 3: 12, 13); he was still reaching out. Growth will always be necessary as long as we are here; and then, of course, there will be no more growth, we shall be with Him, and what we are as here will be as we will be known then: no more, no less.

So David brings up the ark. It says "And David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom".

Somebody told David that a house was being blessed. In your exercises it is amazing the hints we get and let slip. Somebody drops a word and we fail to catch it. The Lord is very gracious and He gives us the same word over again, and the same again, and then finally you catch it - the Lord is blessing this house. David had been so disappointed that things had not worked the way he wanted them. It shows how we can drop so quickly, He even used a Philistine idea - a cart. Verse 6 is interesting: it says, "And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah reached after the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen had stumbled". Oxen! even the Philistines did not use oxen. It shows how we can deteriorate so quickly, taking on a Philistine idea and then adding our own ideas to it. But David had a lesson to learn, and I think we all have lessons to learn, and so the ground is gained, David says, according to 1 Chronicles, "None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites", chap 15: 2. He has come to something now. So he is bringing up the ark, and it says, "And it was so, that when they that bore the ark of Jehovah had gone six paces". He did not wait any longer than six

paces, and then he sacrificed. Not there yet, he says, six, it is not a complete number, but almost there, one step and I think it will be the rapture. That is when it will be complete, finished. But six steps and he offers sacrifices, an ox and a fatted beast, and he danced with all his might. I think that is the present time; we are in the sixth day, things are almost completed, dear brethren, we are almost there, the journey is soon to be over and we shall be with Him and enjoy things with Him then. But in the present time am I committed just to carry things through for Him in the time of His rejection, to be here for Him and committed to Him and to be for His pleasure, so that there is a response and joy in my heart for Him? May it be so, dear brethren, for His Name's sake.

DUNDEE

16 August 1980

GIVING

T.N.Pye

Romans 5: 15-17; John 4: 10; Luke 21: 1-4

I would like to say something about "the free gift in grace and the free gift of righteousness" in Romans and "the gift of God" in John, and then we might say something about our giving. A gift is something we just have to receive, there is no merit for it; you do not qualify in that you do something to get it. What God offers in the glad tidings is a free gift, the free gift of grace. It says "much rather has the grace of God, and the free gift in grace" - what a God we have to do with! He is not demanding; He could have demanded. He did demand in another dispensation and history proves that the demands were never met: But God is not demanding today; it is the grace of God. The grace of God, it tells us in another scripture carries salvation with it (see Tit 2: 11). So we preach the glad tidings of the grace of God which carries salvation with it. What God has in mind for men is salvation, that persons should be saved. That is a big statement but that is what God has in mind, saved from your sins of course, but a good deal more than that. The grace of God in the glad tidings carries salvation, and so God proposes to give a free gift in grace. What could there be for a guilty sinner but a free gift in grace? I want to illustrate it from Luke 7. The Lord said to Simon that there was a certain creditor who had two debtors; one of them, He says, owed five hundred pence and the other fifty; there would be no doubt about the degree of debt, one ten times more than the other. But what He says is, when they had nothing to pay he freely forgave them both (see vv 41,42). I would like to suggest that that is the free gift in grace, God's forgiving, that is His attitude. You may say, but how can God forgive me when He constitutes me a sinner? He is freely forgiving by the One Man Jesus Christ because the debt has been paid. There is a Creditor; He has seen to the debt before He ever approached the debtors. That is the glad news of the gospel. God has met the whole question of our debt before He ever sent out the glad tidings. The work was finished, Jesus had gone

into death, and the death of Jesus was when the whole question of sin and sins was settled; on the cross Jesus paid the debt, He paid the price. Could any debtor have paid that price? It says that no one can give a ransom for his brother, no one (see Ps 49: 7). No one could have paid the debt, but Jesus took the debt on. He was made sin for us, Him who knew not sin; that was Jesus (see 2 Cor 5: 21).

He took it on and He paid the price. God settled the sin question when Jesus died; on the cross the price was paid, but Jesus went into death and He removed the whole question of sin. But He has come out of death, a triumphant Saviour! He has gone into heaven itself, glorious Saviour! What glad tidings! And then He has sent down the Holy Spirit, and the first preaching was the free gift in grace. What did Peter say? He said to the very persons who crucified Jesus - what were his words? - an outstanding preaching of Peter's - "Repent, and be baptised each one of you, for remission of ye will sins, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit", Acts 2: 39. I think Peter's preaching was the free gift in grace, God's forgiving the sinner who believes in Jesus. Well, do you believe? Are all here believers? Have we all placed our trust and our faith in Christ? There is no other solid ground; God is not giving any other; Peter says, neither is there salvation in any other. There is no other name; it is by the one Man, Jesus Christ, that God is giving this free gift in grace. Have you received it yet? You could not pay for it, no, but God is giving that gift freely; it says, he freely forgave them both". God is not stinted in His attitude and He can be perfectly free in the gift of forgiveness, How God delights to dispense! He freely forgave them both.

Well, you say, that is fine. But it goes on here to speak about the free gift of righteousness. The gospel is so full. It would be fine if God could just turn a blind eye (if I could speak that way of God, not that He could), if He could just ignore your sins. If He ignored them they would still be there, would they not? If you have done something that you should not have done, and we all forget such things, you are sure to find out that somebody a long way away recalls it at an inconvenient moment. We find we cannot forget

things. But what God in the gospel has given is a free gift of righteousness. He establishes things on a basis that is perfectly just, and God can forget sins, *righteously* forget them. He says, your sins and your iniquities I will never remember any more (see Heb 8: 12). God is the only person who has the right to forget, and He does it because righteously He has met them, and the cross of Christ is the righteous basis on which God is dispensing this gift. It is a gift; it is for nothing, the free gift of righteousness. It says earlier in Romans that the righteousness of God is towards all (see chap 3: 22); that is God's attitude in the gospel, He is disposed to bless everybody. He says, I can righteously do it because the price is paid in full, there is nothing for you to do, no, I am giving this free gift in righteousness, but it is upon all those who believe. So we are back again; are you a believer in the Lord Jesus? Have you put your faith and your trust in Him?

In the gospel we always come back to this challenge. The gospel is a very individual matter; God has to do with us one by one. We can sit in a company like this - a fair number - but God speaks to us individually. He makes grand proposals, but He leaves one thing for you to do - just believe. He is not asking you to do a thing about your sins, no, He just wants you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It says at the end of chapter 6 that the wages of sin are death; but the act of favour of God - it is like a gift - through Jesus Christ our Lord. Everything for the believer is in the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who has accomplished the work of redemption and He is the One through whom God is presenting glad tidings. Have you accepted them? Have you? If you accept Him you get the blessings that God gives.

The next gift that I wish to speak about is in John 4 - the gift of the Spirit. The Lord had approached this woman at Sychar's well; she had been accustomed to a certain order of things, she had always gone to this well, she had found her resource in it and she thought there was nothing else. But the Lord Jesus comes into this woman's life, and He speaks to her, and He says Give me to drink.

The Lord approaches us individually, just to ask us for something.

He would ask you: have you ever had a sense that the Lord was asking you? So He asks this woman: "Give me to drink". The Lord is looking for something, looking for some response in your heart. The woman says that Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. How often in the gospel reaching do you put up the barriers? You say, no dealings with me. That is what this woman did; as the Lord approached her she just put up the barriers and immediately she does that the Lord says "If thou knewest the gift of God". I think that is a wonderful thing. This woman did not know the gift of God or who it is: "and who it is that says to thee Give me to drink". The secret of *who it is* is how we get the gift of God; the gift of God is the Holy Spirit of God.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians, as he breaks out at the end of chapter 9: "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable free gift, a divine Person who is with you and in you. When the Lord Jesus was leaving His own He had been with them for three years; everything they did Jesus was with them, everywhere they went Jesus was with them, and then Jesus was going away. He was going to take up the sin question and He was going back to heaven, and He says to His own it is profitable for you that I go away. They were sad when He said He was going away, and you maybe think that if you accept the glad tidings it will be all right in a nice company like this where everybody is sympathetic, but what is going to happen on Monday morning when I go back to school or back to work, what will the workmates say? How will they react? God gives you a gift in the Holy Spirit which is power within you a Person in you that gives you power, power for confession of the name of Jesus, power to lift you above all the circumstances around, power to occupy you with Christ. The gift of God: "If thou knewest the gift of God". His unspeakable free gift; you always get the impression that the apostle could not get words to express it - an unspeakable free gift, another divine Person, and scripture says He will be with you for ever. He gives the Holy Spirit, it says, to them who obey Him (see Acts 5: 32). The persons who obey the Lord Jesus have the conscious sense of having the Holy Spirit. And so the woman is very interested in this. I

am sure if you have longings after Jesus you are interested to know about One who can support you when you have not the strength; that is the Spirit of God. She says, Give me this water that I come not hither to draw; but the Lord says, There will be a fountain of water in you springing up into eternal life. The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and He is giving it by the Spirit

You can know the reality of what eternal things are by the Holy Spirit, an unspeakable free gift. Well, have you received the Spirit? This woman, typically speaking, received the Spirit; I am convinced of that. She went to the men of her city; she did not have to make any apologies; she did not need to go over her history and explain everything, the difference was obvious; "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?" (v 29). I suppose everybody in Samaria was looking for the Christ. She says, Is this not He? Could you go out in Dundee and say, Here is the Man you are looking for? It is Jesus; He is available and this woman received Him; and more than that, she had the power to confess. I believe we are tested as to our confession, confession of the Name. We miss a lot of opportunities, but I think the power of the Spirit of God is what would give us ability to confess His Name.

Now I would just like to say a word as to the scripture in Luke.

We have been speaking about gifts, the gifts we get, but I think the Lord looks for something from us. A brother used to say that at the beginning of our Christian experience we get everything for love. I believe that is how we start; but then the Lord looks for something from us, He looks for an answer. So here He is and it says "And he looked up and saw the rich casting their gifts into the treasury". The Lord takes account of what you are giving in return. You say, What can I give? Well, the first thing that you can give is your body. So you are back to Romans 12 where it says "I beseech you... by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice" (v 1).

Now the only person who can present his or her body a living sacrifice is one who has this unspeakable power of the Spirit of God in you. Paul tells us that you can put it down and say, Lord, here is my body, it is all I have and it is yours. That is the widow of Luke 21.

The Lord commends her as having cast in all the living which she had; she gave her all at once. We are not speaking about worldly possessions; we are not speaking about pounds, shillings and pence. Men today are building everything up round money; the world has become so commercialised that everything comes back to money. God is not looking on a man because he has a pound, and He is not looking on a man because He has not a pound; God is not looking on things that way; He is looking on you and me as forgiven sinners; that is how He regards us. God divides like that; sinners and forgiven ones. O the grace of God! And He looks for a response from us. What are we giving Him? Are we giving our all? What a gift that is - your body! You have what you can give, what can be serviceable to Him, come under His touch, come under His sway, come into His service. The service of God is a wonderful thing; it says, They that dwell in Thy courts shall be constantly praising Thee (see Ps 84: 4). You have a body in which you can praise God, and that is what God is looking for, He is looking for a return in our lives to what He has given.

Well, if we have proved the gift, do we hold back? That is all I would say. This woman was acting unpretentiously while others were casting in a lot; I suppose the persons who put in a lot would make a demonstration of it. The Lord saw them; it says "And he looked up and saw the rich casting their gifts into the treasury". He does not come into that; but it says "he saw also a certain poor widow". The Lord is very discriminating as He looks. Is He getting from me what He should get? Is He getting from you what He should get? God is looking for an answer, for He has given, and given and given again. What is He looking for now? He is looking for response from hearts like yours and mine, affected by grace, brought to know: the power of God working in us, and He says, You Just give. I suggest that you can put your body on the altar tonight. May you be available for Him for His service and praise for His Name's sake.

DUNDEE

17 August 1980

(Preceding three meetings revised by the editor and not by Mr.Pye - with Christ, June 1981).

THE CHILDREN'S BAPTISM

Most children who read this page have been baptised in their infancy and will have no memory of the occasion. Perhaps some have not even seen a baptism take place, but all will know that the act itself simply involves being taken under or through water. Whilst this is only a sign, it is a sign of going out of sight and then being seen again because the Lord Jesus was buried and then was seen again as a risen Man. For this reason, before the act of baptism, the name of the child or grown-up person is called as being baptised to His name and also "to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". This in a very distinct way has the whole light and wonderful privilege of Christianity in view.

Believing parents, in the exercise of faith, recognise that it is right to have their children baptised, leaving it in confidence with God that He will work in their hearts to bring them into the true confession and enjoyment of Christianity. You will remember instances in Scripture where households have been baptised, such as that of the jailor at Philippi and that of Stephanas at Corinth. Parents themselves protect their children from everything that might be harmful and would deny the claims of the Lord. This explains why we have often, perhaps unwillingly, had to give up things we would like to do. Our heavenly Father knows that obedience costs us something and He will repay it in His own way. The commandment to obey parents is "the first commandment with a promise". Many of us have witnessed the baptism of grown-up persons who have confessed the Lord and desire to be known as belonging to Him. I have seen a photograph of a believer being baptised in a space cut in a frozen river in Russia. He was converted in prison and this was the first day of his release, although mid-winter! It may well be that he desired to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread as one would expect. Over fifty years ago Mr James Taylor wrote in a letter that, as household baptism became more recognised, the proportion of children turning to the Lord and accepting the fellowship of His death became much larger. Baptism is not essential for the eternal

salvation of the soul. It seems that the twelve apostles were not baptised but were sent to baptise others into the public profession of Christianity. It is for us a means of practical daily salvation to be 'true to our baptism' as it has often been expressed. Are you true to yours?

J.C.Evershed