

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 113

August 1982

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SPIRITUAL CHANGE

THE GREAT ROCK

THE CHILDREN'S SAFETY

SPIRITUAL CHANGE

John 4: 13,14; 7: 37-39; 20: 17-22; Numbers 21: 16-20

B.M.D. We shall need the Spirit's help as we consider Him and His service in these passages. They seem to imply movement, and also they imply change. In our experience we need to become accustomed to spiritual change. The Spirit, as we know, will have to do presently with the physical too, in regard to our bodies. There is much wealth which can flow into this meeting, in which we would surely find joyous liberty together. But what some of us touched a little this morning was the Lord saying to the Father "I have made known to them thy name", and then He says "and will make it known". It just seemed that in between those two statements there is a movement, there is a change of condition, a change of position. What we read may lead us to that, indeed to the very threshold of what is abiding, eternal.

I thought well to begin in the well-known section in John 4 which involves the idea of a moral change. The indication in chapter 7 is to where Christ is now glorified, "the Spirit was not yet", it says, "because Jesus had not yet been glorified"; whereas now in this time we are in, that is the actual position, He is glorified at the right hand of God. Then in the instruction in chapter 20 it is the Lord as out of death teaching them to know Him another way. "Touch me not", He says, "I have not yet ascended". The clear inference is that they were to be associated with Him in another condition, another order of things, death having been removed. Then I thought it would be right and healthy to go back again to review the position reached in Numbers 21, which I think may have a connection with what we trust the Lord and the Spirit may open up to us, because movement is in mind, rapid movement. The land is in view and, pretty much dear brethren, that is our position, is it not? Heaven, the glory, is before us.

A.J.E.W. This woman had a certain background and a certain line of experience, in drinking of the water of the well, which the Lord turned

to account by presenting the change in the most attractive manner possible: "the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever": what an attracting point that would be to get a hold upon this woman in relation to the change you speak of!

B.M.D. So in the Lord's service to each of us we are never left without that holy incentive. He fills us in the skill of His own service.

None of us can escape the edge of His word, nor would we wish to do so. As long as we are here we shall need the searching character of the word, leading us into something which is exceedingly precious. It is leading here in the direction of eternal life.

D.J.H. Do you get leading in that way in these scriptures? In the first one it is "every one" and "If any one"; but then He breathes into them as together, and then there is the corporate movement, it would seem, in Numbers.

B.M.D. That fully confirms what I trust we may get some help about, as leading into the full enjoyment of the collective position, but it is leading to heaven. I mean, what would quicken us more than to think that we are on the very threshold of that change of condition?

D.J.H. That might have some bearing on what you have twice said as to eternal life.

B.M.D. It is leading that way in our first passage, is it not? It is not that we would enjoy that only individually, but it is leading into that sphere where a soul that is finding her object in Christ, the One who served her and met her in all the moral degradation and now fills her heart, cannot find rest save in the company of similar persons.

E.C.B. The Lord does not tell this woman she must be changed, but she was changed.

B.M.D. What He furnished for her in the living water, do you think, effected it?

E.C.B. Yes, she was given a fresh object, was she not? "If thou knewest... who it is that says to thee". And is it a fresh object that changes us, and the Spirit holds us in relation to that object?

B.M.D. Therefore we should not be afraid or ashamed to be fully exposed in the presence of the One who knows all about us in any case. Is it not to every advantage to have that moral change effected that I may be filled with the Person who leads into the area of eternal life?

E.C.B. The Holy Spirit does not satisfy what is according to nature or man, does He? What He satisfies is something which is according to God. "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured", Exod 30: 32.

D.A.B. Is it interesting to refer to the Song of Songs where the beloved says as to the spouse that she is "A fountain in the gardens, A well of living waters, which stream from Lebanon", chap 4: 15? I was comparing it with this section and noticing that the Lord had begun with a request for a drink, as if, while He meets this woman's need, there is that which He is looking forward to by way of assembly response which He would secure this woman to have a part in, for His own enjoyment.

B.M.D. I think it is most affecting that meeting her need discloses a deeper, may we reverently say, a divine, need; in fact He needed to pass that way. And may we also reverently say the Father's need in that He is seeking such as His worshippers. So that it is not a protracted period between the meeting of this moral issue and the introduction into the very greatest things of God.

A.J.E.W. Is the woman's reference to the Lord as a prophet an indication of that?

B.M.D. It seems that way, but you have something in mind.

A.J.E.W. It just occurred to me that the woman comes to something as to Jesus which is on the way to the accomplishment of the change that you speak of. We need the prophetic touch to clarify the element of searching of which you speak. But the woman is covering ground pretty quickly, is she not, giving us an indication of the remarkable effectiveness in grace of the Lord's activity to her?

B.M.D. Yes, it is remarkable how quickly she does cover the ground, and she is not hiding anything; in a way she displays the honest and

good heart that makes way for the word of God and its penetrating effect to become fruitful in her.

C.R.B. Is the Lord's word "become in him" of importance? She says later that the Christ had told her all things she had ever done. Would there be the searching inwardly? Does that result in a vessel in which the Spirit of God can be free to spring up?

B.M.D. I am sure of that. It "shall become in him"; it is something happening in her. Is not that wonderful in our experience, to know, as having to do with the Lord personally, that something is happening inwardly and secretly? No one else would know, but you and I know and the Lord knows.

R.T. Does that change that is happening relate to something that is eternal? - "shall never thirst for ever" and "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water".

B.M.D. That is very fine; it is leading so quickly into the idea of change, into the change that will be permanent.

R.T. How often we go back, but in the way the Lord puts it here she would never need to go back; it changes to something that can go on.

B.M.D. "Shall never thirst for ever": think of being in the presence of One who can satisfy the desire of everything living!

J.C.E. Why is it that the Spirit is spoken of as in the Lord's gift here? It is not so much that He comes or will come, but the Lord says twice "the water which I shall give him". I know you mentioned that it was a transaction, which I can understand, but is there more in it than that?

B.M.D. It is a wonderful thing that the Spirit is being administered by Christ; it is the wonder of how divine Persons operate. In a way you marvel at it; you cannot but adoringly contemplate one divine Person taking a third position and given by Christ to indwell this woman, to lift her out of all that degradation. What an advantage it is to get the whole history cleared! Why do we struggle against it so long when

the greatest things are being held out to our advantage and still more for the pleasure of God?

C.B. We just need to say "give me this water". The desire comes from the work of God, does it not? She wanted it.

B.M.D. I am sure it was an evidence of the work of God that created that desire, and no such desire voiced will every find a disappointment.

E.C.B. Is that request a sign that the change had taken place?

B.M.D. It is beginning, is it not? As our brother is saying, it "shall become in him", something developing, and with her it is rapid. With most of us it has taken years, which is not to our credit. But the Lord is ready to lead us immediately into the greatest things connected with the service of God.

D.J.H. Is the slowness, perhaps, because we do not drink? It is "whosoever drinks of the water".

B.M.D. Well, our slowness would be that we are not appropriating what He in such liberality is furnishing.

C R.B. Is there a sense of the urgency of divine love in the Lord's reference later to the Father seeking worshippers? And is it the Spirit working within us to bring about something that corresponds with that?

B.M.D. I think that. There is a divine urgency. Think of the Spirit of God hovering over the whole scene, as at the beginning. What was there for God in a scene desolate and waste? So He is hovering over human hearts. Who will answer to the divine provision? Soon we will be preaching the glad tidings; in a way we are doing it now. I mean, a divine need is far greater than the sinner's need: in a sense that is incidental. So in chapter 7 it seems to point to a change of position, that is that Christ is glorified. "The Spirit was not yet", it says, "because Jesus had not yet been glorified". Now we know that in this dispensation the Spirit has come from a glorified Christ, sent of the Father and the Son. It says "the day of Pentecost was now

accomplishing" (Acts 2: 1), and it is still accomplishing. I do not know what the brethren think about that.

E.C.B. The feast is not spoken of as having an end. It is presented in the Acts, as you say, that it was accomplishing; there is no indication of an end given to it there. It is a question whether we are entering into the accomplishment of what the Spirit has come for Jesus says "I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it", John 17: 4.

B.M.D. One thing is certain, that is that Christ is glorified and the Spirit has come; those are the facts, we might say, governing the position, and it is still accomplishing. In Deuteronomy 16 (see vv 9-12), the feast is beginning, it runs on; it gives the idea that we are still in the time of the accomplishment. I think it helps us to see that this dispensation stands in its own blessed uniqueness in a living sense, that the Spirit is here in a living, vital presence.

E.C.B. In a certain sense the end of the feast is in the Father's time, is it not? What you are saying corresponds with what has been ministered in the past, that that feast is not presented as having an end, but it goes on. The Father's time according to Acts 1 will bring in a complete change and a termination of what has been accomplished.

B.M.D. Yes, I think so. It seems to me as if Paul himself always had that in mind. He remained at Ephesus until Pentecost. Why does it say that? He was not just thinking of Pentecost historically. I think he was thinking of the feast being accomplished, going on.

E.C.B. Are you suggesting that the accomplishing of that feast has in view the saints arriving at what is presented in Ephesians, which does not have in view just accomplishing but arriving?

B.M.D. And a full result. The type in Genesis 24 would bear out, I think, what we are feeling after; that is, Rebecca is brought to the heavenly Man and He takes her. In type the Spirit drops out of sight, His work is complete, but that work is not complete until the assembly is replete and ready for presentation.

A.J.E.W. So it is very attractive that what is presented here shows how fully and richly the Lord is looking on to this time of the Spirit.

The idea of 'not yet' which John brings in by the Spirit is very attractive; that is, the thing was in view - it was not yet - and what the Lord is presenting is really to call attention, is it not, to the immense fulness of this wonderful dispensation in which we are?

B.M.D. That very much helps. You might say there is a divine need, a divine longing, entering into this passage. Similarly in chapter 20, when He says "Touch me not, for I have not yet" - that is another 'not yet'; as much as to say, you have known Me once here in the days of My flesh, but not now; there is a change. Our associations now are in another and new condition, and that condition is such that will never be shadowed by death.

T.B. Is it not interesting that Elijah says to Elisha, "if thou see me when I am taken from thee", 2 Kings 2: 10? We have to keep our eyes open for the change, do we not?

B.M.D. That is a very telling remark which would have many bearings: keeping our eyes open, and the eyes of our hearts open, too. You would have more in mind.

T.B. It impressed me as this scripture was read, as to the importance of what flows from Elijah's ministry through Elisha. He is in the gain, as we might say, of the risen man.

B.M.D. Elisha's ministry points to the time of the Spirit and it corresponds with the very moment we are now in. It greatly helps, in reading that prophet, to realise that it bears upon the time of the Spirit.

E.P. Is it right to think that the resurrection of Christ would be the resolution absolutely of the moral question you spoke about in John 4? But does His being glorified open up a sphere of things that we may enter because He is there and the Spirit is on our side to make it so?

B.M.D. That is exactly the truth as I understand it. We can enter it now by the Spirit because He is the earnest of our inheritance; but

He is also the means if the brethren will accept that word, of our presently entering it actually. I just wonder whether it sufficiently affects us that the imminence of that is at our doors.

E.P. I wonder why we get held up. Some of us get held up, or have been held up, and I wondered whether we might see what scope the Spirit has consequent upon the place that Christ has.

B.M.D. Yes. I think we should hasten to what you are saying, because that is Numbers 21, and my own feeling is that the Lord helped us to reach that point maybe nearly thirty years ago. I would be very careful what I say, as we are only feeling our way enquiringly and I would value what the brethren say. What should impress us in John 20 is that there is a change of position and condition with the Lord. What they saw in that empty tomb must have been exceedingly impressive, that there was something absolutely different, that a great change had been effected and He was absent; there was no disorder, the handkerchief that was upon His head was not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a distinct place by itself. What does that mean if it does not point to order and completeness in what was effected? He is not there, He is about to ascend, a living Person, having removed for ever the condition that was governed by death, that is in us, assuring this beloved woman that she would no longer know Him or touch Him as she once had. "If even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer", 2 Cor 5: 16. He is really assuring her that her association with Him was now in another scene altogether.

C.R.B. Would this be the experience of new creation?

B.M.D. I think it is leading quickly into the sphere of new creation. I am glad you said that because that also should quicken a holy desire to touch what belongs to new creation, where 'Sin-soiled feet have never trod' (hymn 206).

C.R.B. Do you think it is to bring into our hearts some deeper appreciation of the wonder of the service of the Spirit, that He can, at the present time, bring us into the experience in reality of a sphere of new creation?

B.M.D. I think that. I believe, if in greater depth we entered into these things we are speaking about, it would help us now in how we address Him rightly, worshipfully, in the service, giving us greater depth and scope, because what scope enters into His service and into His operations, still more the blessedness of who He is in His Person.

D.A.B. You said yesterday that Christian experience is really on the level of a man in Christ. Paul says "if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation", 2 Cor 5: 17. Does it help us to see the level on which Christian experience is properly viewed, lifting our minds from many lower things that we tend to engage them with?

B.M.D. I think there is great importance in that. I would not attempt to explain it but to know a man in Christ is needed to understand Christianity. I think I can see that you look at things from the top.

That experience that Paul had, I suppose, was special, whether he was in the body or out of the body he could not tell, such a one caught up to the third heaven; then he said it was paradise and he heard unspeakable things said which it is not allowed to man to utter (see 2 Cor 12: 2-4). It must have left an abiding impression that would have coloured his ministry.

D.A.B. When he refers to paradise, does he suggest that it is not only being in Christ but being with Him? The Lord says "with me in paradise", Luke 23: 43. We have the sense, as Paul says in Ephesians 3: 19, "to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge". We are in contact with that Person Himself, are we not, in that sphere of things?

B.M.D. So it opens up a sphere available to all of us; that is, the secret side of that holy intimacy that is untouched and unaffected by circumstances. I would not care to say too much - it is easy to say those things - but I believe what you say is the truth, that it is something that we each should be concerned about, to find an inward communion that is unaffected by circumstances. In a way we see things then in a perspective as heaven sees them. We are out of all the turmoil and trouble. Maybe I am only speaking abstractly,

but I believe it is open to us in the Spirit to touch such a realm that is not affected by all the turmoil that is going on.

E.P. Does not Paul in 1 Corinthians 2 contrast that spiritual order of things with the natural? And do you think the Holy Spirit would serve us that we might get a bit more liberated from the natural to enjoy the spiritual?

B.M.D. Yes. Well, He does not set that aside, does He? In fact the more spiritual a man is the more able he is to take up the natural and, you might say, enjoy it as is perfectly right. We remember that conflict over being dead to nature; that is, of course, a lot of nonsense.

D.J.H. That seems to be, as you said, what is in view here in John 20. And it seems that it is that inward link even with Mary that comes to light. He says to her 'Mary' and she turning round says 'Rabboni'. It seems that there is a link there which is above the sorrow and all that had previously oppressed her spirit.

B.M.D. She still feels the need of the Teacher, but a teaching in the sphere of intimacy. Then the remarkable quality of devotion in this woman should affect us all. She in full feminine affection and subjection is able to answer to this new position that the Lord is presenting. She is not fully intelligent yet; she apparently would have touched Him as she once had, but she is quickly amenable to her Rabboni.

A.J.E.W. Could I come back to your point of communion? The Lord says here "as the Father sent me forth, I also send you". The sending forth of the Son by the Father was accompanied by the constantly sustained intimacy of communication between the Father and the Son, and the Son and the Father. It was not just, you might say, the imparting of a commission, it was something far far more than that. Now does not the Lord's word, "I also send you", involve a level of sending which brings in the side of constant, could I use the word, intercommunication in the way of communion?

B.M.D. Yes. Think of the Lord in John 11 when that voice came! He says "I knew that thou always hearest me" (v 42). There was

perfect, unbroken communion between Himself and the Father, and yet He as Man feeling the pressure of death that was upon humanity. I believe this is probably the most precious food we can feed on, food that will lead us into what will sustain us in the troublous times we are in.

C.R.B. Is that why the Lord breathes into them before he says "Receive the Holy Spirit"?

B.M.D. Yes, I wondered if there was a link with that. The intimate side would be in His breath - nearness, is it not? It is not the formal side. I suppose it links with Pentecost in its actuality, but it brings out the warmth of such nearness.

C.R.B. And to bring into them, would you say, something of His own feelings in relation to the Father, the feelings of that Man, the Son, in relation to the Father.

B.M.D. It seems as if He is urgent to open that up. I mean the way He speaks of His ascending and His opening up the great truths of the Father and God: you can see there is a great ocean of things ready to be unfolded as we are ready. I think there might be a touch of that in the fact that the handkerchief was folded up in a distinct place by itself. What would you say about that?

C.R.B. I do not know. You have some impression though.

B.M.D. My impression is that it awaited the Spirit. I think the unfolding of His headship awaited the time of the assembly.

C.R.B. Is it related to Jesus being glorified and the opening up of the truth of it awaiting Paul's ministry?

B.M.D. That is what I thought; it awaited Paul. What would you say as to that?

R.T. I think what you say is good as to a distinct place by itself. It connects very much with Paul because he was not connected with the twelve, but he was brought in as commissioned from Christ in glory.

B.M.D. That is very confirming.

E.C.B. I am sure that the headship of Christ, in the sense in which we speak of it, is related to His being glorified and the Spirit coming. 2 Corinthians 5 has been referred to already; I was wondering whether this folding up of the garments and of the handkerchief does not bear on Christ after the flesh known no longer. And in that setting Paul says remarkably, and even prior to that, he knows "no one according to flesh" (v 16). Then he goes on to new creation.

B.M.D. Yes. They must have got the point of it in John 20 because it then says in verse 8: "Then entered in therefore the other disciple also who came first to the tomb, and he saw and believed". What did he see? What did he believe? I believe just what you said.

E.C.B. That is a very interesting thing because they do not really appear to have entered into the tomb as a place of death; they really entered into it as a place of triumph.

B.M.D. Yes, and therefore they would have been filled with the spirit of expectation. While, alas, they two went to their own home, this woman does not, and she represents a true subjective answer that the Lord is looking for; and to her He unfolds this wonderful secret connected with the ascension.

E.C.B. Our real learning can only be in communion, can it not?

B.M.D. I believe that.

E.C.B. I think Mr Stoney said that the natural mind is useful only for repeating what it has learned, but the actual learning is in communion.

B.M.D. I think that is very salutary. Of course, we do repeat a lot, but perhaps we quote too much. It is best to quote ourselves. If we have made it good in our own souls we can quote it with confidence.

B.W.W. You referred earlier to Genesis 24. Would there be a connection with that and what you have said as to the handkerchief and the unfolding of it?

B.M.D. Yes, I would think so because Isaac, as we know, is a type of the heavenly Man; there is no record of his coming back after they went up the mount. So it would be our links with Christ where He is.

Our Head is in heaven; that is indeed the distinctive light that governed the beginning of this recovery. The Head is in heaven, so the body must be here, and that position has not altered. It will not; it will be like that until the actual change. And, dear brethren, that actual change is near.

B.W.W. It says at the end of that chapter that "the servant told Isaac all things that he had done". That would be a very comprehensive telling, recounting, would it not, if we relate it to the actual service of the Spirit of God through the dispensation?

B.M.D. It certainly would; and as He brings out the treasures of His master I think He would just drop a few around in a meeting like this. They are inexhaustible.

R.T. When Mary goes to the disciples, the first thing she says is "she had seen the Lord, and that he had said these things". It would emphasise what you were saying about communion, the things take on their character because she had seen Him.

B.M.D. Yes, that was her distinct impression. What she had she received from Him. And you cannot shake a person who has something direct from Christ.

E.C.B. To refer again to your remark about Pentecost, 1 Corinthians 16 to which you referred, Paul, staying at Ephesus till Pentecost, says "a great door is opened to me and an effectual one". Is that what you would suggest we need to be coming into in the accomplishing of the day?

B.M.D. And in a certain sense stay there. He said he is staying there; he did not go to Corinth, he wrote from Ephesus right from outside of all the mists of the battle. No general would conduct his battle from the ranks, he would not know what was going on, all he would see was dust, I suppose. He conducts it from a point of vantage. And Paul says I am staying at Ephesus, there is a door open to me, and it is effectual. But then he adds something else - "the adversaries many" - and we might as well be on our guard because there will be plenty of adversaries. As we are committed to

the heavenly line we should be on our guard because the devil is out to lower the standard.

E.C.B. What you draw attention to as to "the adversaries many" is interesting because in Ephesians Paul speaks about spiritual wickedness in heavenly places which is against us, but he points to the armour against it.

B.M.D. Yes; well, he fought with beasts there too. Maybe we have seen in recent times a little of that character, not that we want to be engaged with that now, but it is only to alert us to be on our guard and the more committed to the heavenly light to which we have been recovered.

W.J.R.B. Is that why it speaks of combat in Colossians? It was no small matter, it was not just prayer, was it?

B.M.D. Nor is the present combat a small matter. Thank God for the power meeting of Monday night. How we need it and value it! We are in times when the enemy is attempting to spoil the finish. He cannot touch Christ glorified, he cannot touch the precious work of redemption; but, as he sees Christ here in testimony, that arouses him to attack. Now let us see that Christ is here in testimony - "so also is the Christ", 1 Cor 12: 12. The Spirit will maintain that living testimony of the Christ in that anointed vessel until we are taken above.

C.R.B. The expectation of the Lord coming today would bring great urgency into this matter of change and movement, would it not? It is not a matter of what we may do tomorrow or next week. It is a matter of change and movement in the Spirit today, is it not?

B.M.D. Momentarily we should be expecting it. So is it not then right to become accustomed to spiritual change? What can happen in a meeting! More happens here than anywhere else, does it not?

A.J.E.W. Genesis 24 has been quoted. It is interesting how Rebecca had said "Who is the man that is walking in the fields to meet us?" (v 65); that is, she was alert for the man, and that, surely,

is part of what we are saying. Are we alert for the Man who is to receive all this for the delight of His own heart?

B.M.D. Yes. What communion she must have enjoyed! What treasures must have been unfolded! The Spirit leads to Christ; all true ministry leads to Christ. If a minister does not lead to Christ he is not a minister.

T.J.B. Do you think that there should be a responsive state that is able to move in response to divine promptings, the promptings of Christ? We speak about discerning His voice, but then do you think we need the side of responsiveness, too, so that some effect in movement is produced? I thought that would link with Numbers 21 where what is responsive is in view.

B.M.D. Yes, we should go on to that scripture. In Genesis 24 there was the response in her springing off the camels, response in the energy and power of life. But then it does not say that Isaac saw Rebecca, but he saw the camels coming, he saw the means of her transport. But perhaps our subject is getting too big for us. If the brethren think well, can we go to Numbers? I would very much like the brethren's feelings as to this, but my own are that we were led to this, if we can speak simply, at almost the close of beloved Mr Taylor's ministry. Why did we not go in? There was another voice.

The death of Aaron comes a little earlier, that is the official side of things changed, and the death of Miriam, a kind of mysterious, protective element. She died and Moses is told he will not go into the land, that is, the authoritative side, so important and to be retained, but it was not authority that was going to take them into the land. Mr Taylor referred to another voice. (N.S. Vol.52, p.153).

That would be, would it not, the Spirit's voice, and the well comes in just at this point: "Rise up, well! sing unto it". There is a response to the springing up of the Spirit. Now it would be amongst the brethren. Why, dear brethren, were we not ready to go in?

W.J.W. So whilst we are looking for the Lord we do not want to overlook the glory of the present moment. It is the time of the Spirit, and it is this living response that our brother refers to that the Lord is

looking for in the meantime, this rising up. In Genesis the wells kept getting stopped up, did they not?

B.M.D. Yes, with earth, and there is still a great danger of earthly-mindedness and wealth; and the world is always knocking on the door. We need to be on our guard; it will rob us of the joy of the finish; compromise is always close. Dear brethren, we cannot lower the divine standard.

W.J.R.B. One of the major attacks on Mr Taylor's ministry was against 'Wells and Springs', was it not?

B.M.D. Yes. These things have significance because the enemy saw their import. Now it would be that the Spirit of God would lead us back, because we did an awful detour. At least I perhaps should speak for myself. Instead of going forward there were these two big kings that rose up; I suppose they are still around a bit, alas! They have to be slain. Then there was a brilliant ministry that had the element of what was prophetic in it but it led to corruption. Do you follow?

E.C.B. Just as in this part of the history of Israel.

B.M.D. Yes, at this point when, you might say, they were poised to enter the land. As I say, it is not authority that gets us into heaven, it is attraction and it is affection. Now I am not weakening authority, in no way would we do that, but it is when you see the ark, go after it.

R.T. Is taking on and maintaining royalty important - the princes digging and the nobles? We fell from sonship and royalty in these things you have spoken of, but the Spirit would maintain this royalty and dignity among us in view of dwelling conditions and the singing.

B.M.D. Do you agree with what I just remarked a moment ago?

R.T. Very much so. I thought that now perhaps we come to the top of Pisgah. We can look back and have another view of these things and we can see right into the land.

B.M.D. Yes, that is good. We should perhaps just get there and we could close the meeting: to have a sober, humble review of what happened over the surface of the waste, not to become occupied

with it, because that is depressing, but to learn its lessons through self-judgment and gather up the fruits of the battles of the Lord. And now are we ready, under the Spirit's voice and guiding, to be directed to the Ark?

A.J.E.W. It is very noticeable that whilst the word of the lawgiver is, in a certain sense, an initiation of things, the lawgiver does not dig the well; it is the princes and the nobles of the people.

B.M.D. That is very fine, and thank God for them! Let us keep close to those accredited ministries. Is it all right to say that? They are accredited ministries; we can trust them. And the precious truth has been unfolded and recovered, or rather we recovered to it, through them, and it is reliable, it has been hollowed out through deep, intense exercise. I mean, these men laboured feelingly, with tears, to bring about an answer. There was much that had to be hollowed out: do we not know it? Let us maintain in fidelity what was reached through those beloved men. But now movement is in mind.

T.B. I have been thinking quite a bit, since you have been speaking, as to the importance of quickening. Would that come in? "The Spirit quickens", 2 Cor 3: 6. Do we need to be more ready for that?

B.M.D. I think it could happen in this meeting. Each of the Persons quickens.

T.J.B. So it is not here so much a question of drawing water but "I will give them water". It is the well rising up.

B.M.D. Yes; it means an inward response; there is a subjective answer rising up in the people that is ready for movement. So I just soberly ask the question, because we each have to search ourselves as to why we were not ready. And would not the Lord bring us back now, as learning those lessons, looking back over the surface of the waste, with the anguish and sorrows that each one of us here carry? O, let us learn those lessons and get back. And now where is the Spirit's voice? It is another voice. I do not think we have ever been in a time that calls for such sensitivity.

E.C.B. After the prophecies of Balaam and the consequences amongst the people of their being taught fornication, and the number of people who died in the plague is stated, immediately you get Israel numbered in view of the land, and the daughters of Zelophehad. Is that what is to be looked for subjectively?

B.M.D. Yes, I believe that is something we could well leave with one another to look into in that section that follows, and particularly the daughters of Zelophehad who valued the inheritance above all else and had a judgment that their father died in his own sin. Their view from Pisgah was accurate; they had a true moral judgment, but their heart was in the land.

E.C.B. In one of Balaam's parables he goes to the top of Pisgah, the watchmen's field (see Num 23: 14). Is not that where we should be, in the watchmen's field?

B.M.D. I think so; that is most significant.

LONDON

19 July 1981

Key to initials (*all local unless otherwise stated*)

C.Beale; C.R.Byng; D.A.Burr; E.C.Burr; T.Broughton, Richmond;
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THE GREAT ROCK

R.Hibbert

Isaiah 32: 1,2; Song of Songs 2: 3,4; Psalm 23: 4

The reference to "a great rock" is the link with the subject in our reading... stability. The reference to "a man" is very affecting to me: "a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm". How wonderful that is, beloved brethren, that God has provided a Man! We speak reverently; He is God and yet He is a Man, a Man in heaven, and He is a Man who is there on our behalf, available to us and active towards us. I think this links with the priesthood of Christ in Hebrews, but of course it is a very big subject. I would like to hear a preaching on this; it is a fine gospel subject.

The brethren will have to forgive me if I forget that this is supposed to be an address and start preaching the gospel, because when we start thinking about this Man and all that is available in Him, and all that He is, what it says about Him here, what it means to His lovers, how we love to speak about such a Man! Surely He is a King reigning in righteousness, but that a Man should be as a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the storm, well! what is included in all that would take a lot longer than we have time to deal with in one occasion. It would include all His work in redemption, all that He accomplished on the cross: "a covert from the storm", our Deliverer from the coming wrath. So no believer ever needs to have any worries about his sins - never. I do not say that all believers are free of worrying about them, but if they are not it is because they are not intelligent. There are lots of persons who love Christ who are not at all clear about their sins. Some will say, Well, I realised after I was converted that those sins committed before I was converted are all settled, but what about the sins afterwards? O, some will say, You are going to suffer under the government of God about that. I do not know where they get that from, I cannot find it in Scripture; it says, all our sins, iniquities, all of them. So that a believer, one who has real faith, has faith in the blood, for him the question of sins, all of them, is settled. I do not mean to say he will never sin again, but the blood

of Jesus covers them all. You say, Perhaps they will suffer governmentally. But if you suffer governmentally that is not punishment for your sins. Which one of us does not suffer governmentally? But that is the Father's chastisement because He loves us. It says "And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind"; you are conscious of that. We sing about our sins being met by Jesus when He died on Calvary; that is, the whole question of our sins is met. It is a wonderful matter to be conscious of that; that is, there is not a cloud above; and there is not a spot within either.

Well, that is another subject but it is all included; that is, the moral question for the believer. The believer will never come into condemnation. Why? Because of this Man, this wonderful Man who has taken on the matter of our sins, the one Man Christ Jesus - that is a wonderful expression. There is another expression - I am going to quote Mr Darby - he is speaking about men's history, and then after he has detailed it all, the hopelessness of man, the incorrigibility of the flesh, he says, But, there is another Man. There is another Man and this is the One. So it says, He "shall be as a hiding-place from the wind". If you have a conscience about sins of any kind, if you have a link with Christ you should get to Him about it, because it says "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness", 1 John 1: 9. That is part of the glory of this blessed Man, the sin-bearer.

Then it says "a covert from the storm; as brooks of water in a dry place". So that He is up there, beloved brethren, on our behalf sympathetically in relation to every burden; everything that comes upon the believer the Lord is ready to help in relation to, every sorrow. What sorrows there are! All the matters of divided homes, children leaving their parents, husbands leaving their wives, all these sorrows the Lord enters into perfectly. We do not want to be stoical; stoicism has no place in Christianity. It appeals to our pride to be stoical, but Christianity is a system of sympathy and feelings. While the word of God, as we have often noticed in Hebrews, tries us and convicts us and reaches our consciences as it should, immediately you get that we have such a High Priest who is able to sympathise

(see chap 4: 15). So what a thing it is to have this Man as a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the storm! We all know what the winds are; there are always going to be these winds as long as we are left here. Satan is against us and he will never leave us alone for very long, that is if we are going on with the truth. So we need a defender, and the Lord is the defender of His people, especially confessed sinners. Luke 7 is a fine example of that; that wretched proud Pharisee talked about this poor sinful woman in her tears and the Lord defended her. Great as He was, the King, yet He came down, you might say, in wonderful condescending grace, not only to comfort her but to defend her. He does not have much to say to her; He says "Thy sins are forgiven.. Thy faith has saved thee; go in peace" (vv 48,50). But He has a lot to say to Simon, and it is to defend this woman. He says "Seest thou this woman?" (v 44); He brings her right under Simon's attention, and He says she treated Me like a lady (you will excuse that expression), she gave Him proper hospitality, from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss My feet and you have not treated Me like an ordinary guest. The Lord defends His people; that means that they do not have to defend themselves; that is quite a relief because defending yourself is a very onerous job; you do not get much edification out of it even if you are wrongly charged. Taking up your own defence is not a very happy job; and not only that, it is a waste of time because there is Someone else who is able to defend you far better than you are yourself.

Well, I hope the brethren will agree with what I am saying about this Man; we cannot really say enough about Him, we certainly cannot say too much; but this is all true, and it is not just true abstractly but it is true experimentally, and I can humbly say that what I am saying I have to some degree experienced, I know that it is the truth. It says "as brooks of water in a dry place". Well, this is a dry place. That poor woman in John 4 found that; she was thirsty and the water she was getting was not helping, it was really a dry place; and this is a dry place. If we become thirsty we have a source of constant refreshment in Christ - the rock that followed them was Christ. That is the humble service of Christ in following His own, so

that He is available right there. He says, am I a God afar off, or am I a God at hand? (see Jer 23: 23). He is a God at hand; we just have to reach out and His service is available, you just avail yourself of it.

So "the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land"; what a fine thing that word 'great' is in there! - "a great rock", not just a rock. That great rock: what it must have been in those eastern countries in the desert and the sun beating down! There was no water and they came to an oasis, the shade there, a great rock and springs - that is Elim really.

Time is going and I do not want to weary the brethren, so we will go on to the Song of Songs. You might say, What has this to do with stability? I can tell you from experience because I know what it is to be shaken and not to be stable. Things that have occurred, tragedies and all that, shook me, but do you know where I found stability? I found stability where the Lord is, and that is what holds me now. You say, You have a few troubles in your area: does that trouble you? Well, in a way it does but it does not shake me a bit.

What I am held by, what keeps me steady, is the consciousness of the presence of Christ. That is the one thing I look forward to every week, the time when I shall be together with the brethren and the Lord will come in. Some brothers may be a bit out of line with their hymns; that does not trouble me either. The point is the Lord's presence, you are conscious of that.

Then it says "In his shadow I have rapture and sit down", just restful and settled, overshadowed by Christ. It is like David anointed amongst his brethren; he is signalled. Of course that is only a weak illustration; it is more than that because it is "So is my beloved among the sons; In his shadow have I rapture and sit down". I would like to ask the brethren, how many experience this? Because if you are missing this you are missing the best; the best is to have rapture as sitting down under the shadow of Christ; there is nothing to equal it. It might not be for very long and you might say the meeting was not such a good meeting, but if you go there with a true heart for Christ, I do not think you will ever miss a sense of rapture, ecstasy. Ecstasy is not a common thing, but then Christianity is not a

common thing either, and we must not be afraid to face what is special. You may say, You are talking now in a sectarian way, but I am not; the fact is, beloved brethren, that we are special. I do not mean in any way of pride, but what concerns me is where the Lord is, where He comes. That is spoken of in 1 Samuel 30, the places where David and his men were wont to haunt (see A.V. v 31). There were certain places where David went and he sent a present to the elders of those places. That was after the victory; place where David and his men are; that is the place we want to be. We do not have to argue as to where else He is so long as I am satisfied to be where He is, and that is what cheers. Here it says "In his shadow I have rapture and sit down; And his fruit is sweet to my taste"; that is more, it is His presence and He is a wonderful entertainer, you know; He provides the very best fruit. This book is full of what is exotic; it was not like a soup kitchen where you get just enough to keep body and soul together; it was the very finest quality because it was the king's table. King Solomon imported stuff from all over the world; I suppose there was no table to match Solomon's, though Nehemiah's was pretty close to it, and we can be at each. Then it says "And his banner over me is love". How fine that is, the personal love of Christ! This, mind you, is collective, it is His love for the assembly, His personal love for the assembly, that is His banner. So that is what she finds under the shadow, but not the shadow to shade us from the heat and the trials and sorrows - He is available as the Great Rock in the thirsty land in that regard - but this is the compensation and there is really nothing like it, it is really heaven; there will not be anything better in heaven than to be in the presence of Christ, to be in His presence with rapture.

And He speaks too; that is something we sometimes miss; we should have our ears open. We sing about having our ears and hearts open (see hymn 131); that is to the cry of the rapture; but this is rapture too, and do you think the Lord would come to us and not have anything to say to us? That would be a peculiar greeting for a relation of love, would it not? And that is what this is, so that He speaks: "The voice of my beloved!" (v 8). Note the exclamation; it is

an ejaculation, it is the movement of emotion. "The voice of my beloved!": there is no voice like that and there would not be any mistake about her recognising it. "Behold, he cometh Leaping upon the mountains, Skipping upon the hills".

Well, much more could be said by others who are much more able than I am, but that is the impression I would like to convey to the brethren, that what holds me stable - stability is our subject - is the experience of the coming of Christ to His company, that is to His assembly. You might say that we do not claim to be His assembly, but the assembly is there in character, He comes to the assembly, and we are conscious of it, and, as I said, if we are not conscious of it we are missing something. We should go back over the track and see where we missed the cog because this is normal; this is not special in one sense, it is in another, but it is normal to lovers of Christ.

Just a word now about Psalm 23. This verse, along with Psalm 90, has been much in my mind since I had my seventy-fifth birthday about two weeks ago. I began to realise that I am getting an old man, and there are a lot of old men amongst us. The prospect of an old person is to have the Lord's company in the valley of the shadow, "the valley of the shadow of death". Most of us are getting up there; Moses only gave us seventy years, and if we are over that we are in the valley of the shadow. We might be in the valley of the shadow much younger than that because we are all mortal, but what a great privilege to be accompanied in that! It says "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me"; that is the clue, the Lord with us. I do not think any genuine Christian would fear the article of death because it is just a change, just going to be with Christ; but the valley of the shadow involves the weakening of our bodies, these bodies of humiliation.

You begin to feel that way when you get older; your knees start to wobble, especially when you are giving an address. But not only that; Scripture speaks about the feeble knees and of strengthening them (see Isa 35: 3). Anyone who is getting up there has some of these symptoms. The great thing is that they are not just reminders

of our mortality, they are reminders that the Lord is committed to us and He will carry us right through to the end. So in the valley of the shadow of death He is with us, and in the final article it is Jesus that puts us to death; it is not just a struggle of mortality, it is a divine Person with a touch of love that puts His own to death, those who are put to sleep by Jesus. It does not say 'put to death', it says 'put to sleep', put to sleep by Jesus (see 1 Thess 4: 14). What a thing to have a sense of the Lord's company! I remember a well-known brother in Winnipeg saying, I hope I am going to die before the rapture because I would like to have that experience.

I would not say that, and I am not commending it to anyone else, but that was his thought, that he so valued the experience in that moment of extreme weakness that he would have the company of this One. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me". This is a very practical matter. I was speaking to a brother from not far from here a few weeks ago; I said to him, Are you retired yet? He said, No, but I am just about to, and you know what Mr Taylor said, that what we have to face at retirement is dissolution. So I said, Well, I am ten years older than you are so I guess I will have to face it. I recommend to the brethren Mr Taylor's remarks on dissolution (see Vol.40, p.212).

It is a very helpful and important thing for every old person to read. The point of it is that, when you realise the symptoms of dissolution, you do not give up, you do not retire, you do not say, My time is done and I will just wait for the call; you carry on. I remember our brother at Chicago having a cable from a brother in England which said, Go on, go on, go on; and that is what he did, and that is what we are to do. Mind you we have to have a little bit of prudence; some of us try to do too much; we have to be sensible about our bodies. But then we do not want to give up, we want to go on because this is through the valley of the shadow; it is not actual death, it is the valley of the shadow of death. We can count on the Lord to support us. You may be invited to do something and you think you could not possibly do it, your body is not equal to it. Then you turn to the Lord and you find He gives you strength to get through; He is with you in it too. David

says "By my God I leaped over a wall" (2 Sam 22: 30); not scrambled over but leaped over. So you find that you do not just scramble over but the Lord gives you strength to leap over. Well, beloved brethren, I just leave these thoughts with us that it might be an encouragement to us to avail ourselves of the resources we have in this wonderful Man as the Rock.

SOUTHEND

13 October 1979

THE CHILDREN'S SAFETY

A Christian convert in India found a unique way of showing to a scoffer how Jesus had saved him. He picked up a quantity of dried leaves close at hand and made a thick ring of them on the ground.

Then, having found a worm, he placed it inside the ring and set fire to the leaves. Because of the heat the poor worm began to writhe but could not escape from the smouldering circle. Then the man darted his hand through the smoke and fire, picked up the worm out of its dangerous situation and placed it on the grass beside him. The happy native had a God-given sense of the way in which the Lord Jesus had come into his very circumstances to rescue him from judgment and give him a place by His side.

No incident can do more than illustrate one or two of the many facets of the perfect work of Christ. The story does however help us to share the triumphant cry echoing in heaven for each saved sinner, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?". A great preacher of two centuries ago was able to say that he had twice been a brand plucked from the burning. When a boy of only six years old he had been rescued from a house on fire by being lowered from an upstairs window into loving hands ready to receive him. The memory of God's mercy must have remained vividly with him. He grew up to be a religious young man, but it was a good many years before he had the faith to know that his sins were all forgiven and that he was free from judgment by the *finished work* of Christ and safe in the hands of One who loved him.

There is safety in being hidden when danger is about. Just as the infant Moses was hid and nourished in the house of his father and mother, so our parents seek to protect us as baptised children from moral and outward evil. Joash, one of the kings of Judah, had been hid from danger in the house of God - surely a safe place - for six years before he came to the throne at the age of seven! One precious promise as to the Lord Jesus was that "A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm". This refers to the *continuing work* of Jesus and we have the benefit of His

protection as we confess His name. Long ago a lover of the Lord wrote the well-known hymn 'Rock of Ages! cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee'. During a great storm he was sheltering in a hollow in the rock-face and this reminded him of the protection provided for his soul by a living Saviour. Do you prove it too?

J.C.Evershed