

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 119

February 1983

Contents

RESULTS FROM EXERCISE

THE GLORY OF WHAT GOD HAS ESTABLISHED

PROSPERITY

THE CHILDREN'S CONFIDENCE

RESULTS FROM EXERCISE

2 Samuel 24: 1, 8-25; Romans 16: 16,17

H.J.G. We might seek the Lord's help to go over together this experience of David and of Israel and to trace the same route in our own souls, the route that David went in self-judgment and in being subject to and directed by the prophetic word. What comes through is the offering, the burnt-offerings and peaceofferings, what David is able to rise to. He rises to a burnt-offering - the greatness in type of the person of Christ, the perfect One, the perfect Man, the perfect offering of Himself, God's will in perfection; then the peace-offering, what is known among the people, and then what is reached through to - "Jehovah was propitious to the land". A similar touch is "Salute one another" in Romans. I believe it is something that is needed at the present time that each of us might have these exercises that God would be able to use to bring in prosperity among His people. If we come out of these exercises as David did we will bring in prosperity in our localities and that will also bring in prosperity among the brethren in a general way.

J.A.P. A brother in preaching on Lord's day spoke of the sin-offering which was offered in the place of the burnt-offering; it was offered in the same place. Is the sin-offering involved in David's remark, "I have sinned", and then the peace-offering? Are all these offerings here then?

H.J.G. Yes, I think they are. We may not want to be too fixed about it but I believe the problem here was some aspect of pride. It obviously was so with David. It says "the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel"; that is, it was really Israel that God had the occasion against and He uses David to work out this exercise to His own end. David had to come to it, that he had sinned. So that in every matter, our side in failure - man's side really - requires that we be humbled so that Christ is exalted, whatever the offering is. Do you think so?

J.A.P. Yes. Perhaps you had more to say about the burnt-offering and the peace-offering; what do these offerings mean?

H.J.G. I thought we might get to that as we trace through the exercise that David had. They would be the presentation of Christ; the burnt-offering is really the highest offering, all that can be found in a spiritual way as to the greatness of the person of Christ; and the peace-offering is, as I understand it, fellowship with one another, such as we are having today, and we need to be broadened in our affections about that. But I thought we might trace the way of the experience that David had.

G.D.P. In relation to Israel it says "When thou shalt take the sum of the children of Israel according to those of them that are numbered, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul to Jehovah on their being numbered, that there be no plague among them on their being numbered" Exod 30: 11,12. Do you think that might enter into this numbering at the end of Samuel?

H.J.G. That was the numbering that God ordered and that He was pleased with. This was not that, this was not part of what God was doing but was pride in David's heart, was it not?

G.D.P. I am sure that is right, but I was thinking of the people too in relation to numbering in the section read. Every man was supposed to give a ransom for his soul and they seem to have overlooked that and this plague came about.

H.J.G. That is good. One of the things that I had in mind about this is that, although it is a sorrowful experience for David, finally he gives a lead. The scripture you bring in would have a bearing on it; we are very tested as to whether we move in the truth. How defined, we would have to say, God's word to us is! Think of the Lord saying that man shall live by every word that proceeds from God's mouth (see Matt 4: 4). It is very testing, is it not? One of the things that causes so much trouble is that we get an idea in our mind and think that is the way things are to be, but if we allow the word of God to search us we may find they are not to be that way.

H.W.K. Do you think that God knew David thoroughly and allowed him to go quickly through the matter of judging sin? The sin of pride and the sin of lust were the two things that David had to judge, were they not? They are innate in every man and God would have us have a judgment of them and then we become usable by Him.

H.J.G. I think that is good. God knew David; He said as to him: "who shall do all my will", Acts 13: 22. So can we say something like that? Is that characteristic of us? That would be the test if we are going to put ourselves into this exercise.

C.F.D. God uses David in working out the detail of what He intends to get through to, but David emerges as the kind of man that he really was; he not only says that he had sinned but he has feelings for the people and affection for them. He gets through to, I have sinned, I have committed the iniquity, but then he says, But these sheep, what have they done? He took the onus of the whole thing on himself, did he not?

H.J.G. Yes he did; that is what I was thinking about in this section. But that when there are problems - and there usually are some - it is very easy to isolate yourself from the problem and say, Well, that is his problem, or, That is their problem; and it seems as though we can almost say, I think I have the answer. In that kind of thinking there is something of pride whereas what David brings out is that he is prepared to judge himself and to feel for the people and to get through to the end of the thing under the direction of the prophetic word to bring in this prosperity.

C.F.D. In the end it is the prophetic word that governs, that brings in the light, does it not? You can have authority in the way that God might move but what is prophetic brings in the light as to the situation and David is fully amenable to that.

H.J.G. I think it is wonderful. His arriving at it was not too fast; it says it was nine months and twenty days but finally his heart smote him. And then it says "And when David arose in the morning"; what he went through in that night! And then the prophetic word comes in. God in His faithfulness brings it in. It says "the word of Jehovah

came to the prophet Gad David's seer". We have had ministry about "David's seer". Have you a seer? I think it is something we could question ourselves about, have we a seer?

L.MacF. So the need of the moment is to take on responsibility. I think it is the answer to a good deal of our problems. In my spirit I take on the responsibility before God, and then, do you think, God will come in for us as we are in this attitude of mind and spirit?

H.J.G. That the brethren might be helped and prospered, not exactly only the side that I have to own my part in what is not going well but that I might have in my heart that the brethren might be prospered, do you think?

L.MacF. I think that the attitude David takes pleases God. "These sheep", he says, "what have they done?" I have sinned: I wonder if we are saying that or are we blaming someone else.

G.H. Could you say some more about, Have I a seer?

H.J.G. It has a link with "David's heart smote him, I think. The same happened in the other occasion, when Nathan came. If we are prepared to have a good conscience, God comes very near to us and I think, in that sense, we would have a seer. God is prepared to come near to us in His word but it requires that we are prepared for it. Do you think that is right?

C,F,D. Yes I do. The brethren locally read in Luke 24 this week where you have reference to Moses and the prophets; the Lord brings that in Himself. Moses would bring the authority of the word but the prophets would bring in the opening up and the application of things for our hearts. Is it in that sense that we need the element of the seer? What the Lord opened up at that time would have been unique; who could have opened up Moses and the prophets and the things as they applied to Himself as He could? I think it is instructive that the idea of the prophet comes in because there would not only be the authority of the word to them but the prophet would have opened up its application. So what happened was that, when they got a touch further on, they immediately returned to Jerusalem; they really had the people in view in their hearts then, did they not?

H.J.G. So when we are ready for God to help us He brings before our gaze the features of Christ. That is really the antidote to any poor conditions there may be.

A.Macd. Do you think that the seer under the direction of God gets at the heart? Nathan got at David's heart, a shepherd heart. Do you not feel that we need to have our affections right? When God spoke to Job it was more a matter of his mind, do you think?

H.J.G. Yes, I understand that the heart here, in the sense in which it says "David's heart smote him" is the inward side of things. But for us it is also the conscience. Mr Darby used to go over both matters that things had to be established in the conscience and he pressed that side, and then he would also bring out that they had to be in the affections too. So a Christian could take up both things.

A.Macd. It was both in connection with Saul of Tarsus. "It is hard for thee to kick against goads" (Acts 26: 14). I would judge would be Stephen's martyrdom which would never leave him, but then on the road to Damascus the Lord really reached his heart, did He not?

H.J.G. I think it is good to bring Saul of Tarsus in because that is a very close link with David here. That touch that Saul got there he never forgot and every bit of his energy and service went to help the Lord's people, and that is really the line David is on.

J.A.P. Would John's ministry be a seer? There is much about sight and what he saw. Does he help us as to that side?

H.J.G. Yes, and the epistle: "every one that has this hope in him purifies himself", 1 John 3: 3. John's epistles go into us deeply that way.

A.G.S. Would the Spirit of God take the place of the seer for us now?

H.J.G. Yes, that is right. I wonder if we really look at it that way. We may think that the service of the Spirit is to help us in the service of God or in a meeting like this, but we must not overlook the personal side, how He is prepared to help us in our personal exercises. I

think what you bring up is good, that the Spirit really takes the place of the seer.

A.G.S. So we should rely more on the Spirit of God because He is ready and willing to help us always.

H.J.G. Ready to guide us in the truth.

C.G. There is a word on 'seer' in 1 Samuel 9: 9; "In former time in Israel, when a man went to ask counsel of God, he said, Come and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a Prophet was in former time called a Seer". Evidently it is not the same thing.

H.J.G. All I can say about it is what I have read, that is that a prophet is somewhat more dignified. The seer is more a homely thought but what would draw very near to us. I wonder if that is not seen in this section and what has been referred to as to Nathan too, how near they draw! But it is something we can prove in the Spirit, as our brother said.

H.W.K. The prophets did not always understand what God gave them in the way of prophecy. They could speak it, but I wondered if the seer was able to help the people in the working out of what God gave in the prophetic word.

H.J.G. That is good. I think 'seer' has some link with the word 'see'.

A.R.S. Do you think there is constant need for readiness to be adjusted? The seer might bring the word but there should be with us a readiness to be adjusted. We are so much inclined to be set in what we feel is right.

H.J.G. That is one's exercise, that we might just trace this experience of David's and say to ourselves, Are we prepared for this route? are we prepared for Christ to have His place, not only honoured for what He is and for who He is but honoured too among His people in the peace-offering? Or do we just accept things that go on day after day and year after year without a concern as to prosperity among the Lord's people?

C.G. I think what you say about the dignified aspect of the prophet would be brought out in 1 Samuel 3: 20; "And all Israel, from Dan

even to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel was established a prophet of Jehovah". "Was established' is a striking expression, it has to be recognised.

H.J.G. Yes; yet in the midst of it all conditions were not good in Israel, but the Spirit of God says that he was established a prophet.

H.W.K. Samuel in that way had a unique place as presiding over the prophets: "Samuel standing as president over them", 1 Sam 19: 20.

H.J.G. I thought here that God was not behindhand. David had had that night, his heart smote him, and it says when David arose in the morning Jehovah sent His prophet - God is not behind. One of the greatest things is to think about a goal. Locally we were reading 1 Corinthians 9 where Paul brings in different things, what his objective was in the glad tidings; to preach the glad tidings was his reward. He had a goal and he brings in about running. He was trying to get the Corinthians into that. Think how David could meet this exercise in self-judgment and God is there right away, He sent His word. It would be an encouragement to us to be prepared for things like this.

L.MacF. So it is an exercise as to how the prophetic word comes to us. Amos is asked "What seest thou?" (Amos 7: 8) and he had to say what he saw. So our vision needs to be clear in what is proceeding locally. In our localities might the prophetic word be linked with such an exercise so that God would give a word maybe to meet what might not be generally seen in a place?

H.J.G. I think so. It is like what was said about Samuel, he was established a prophet but how many really followed it up?

T.E.D. The psalm speaks of "Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name", Ps 99: 6. Is that a feature that is to be taken account of, calling upon God - a priestly matter?

H.J.G. In 1 Samuel 8 the people raised the matter that Samuel was getting old, his sons were not satisfactory and they said they wanted a king. But God was not pleased with that, they rejected Me, He

says. Samuel was still there, he was still a prophet and he was still calling on God; what more did they need?

T.E.D. Is it the lack of our individual exercise before the Lord that has contributed to the low state that there might be at any given time amongst the people of God?

H.J.G. I think so. I just thought we might find some help in going over this that we might get through and rise to what David does. It is a wonderful matter that the chapter ends, the book ends, that God was propitious to the land.

A.S.H. I wanted to ask you about verse 14; "I am in a great strait: let us fall, I pray thee, into the hand of Jehovah; for his mercies are great". I wonder if I personally would take that on as to being in a great strait and that I would fall upon the mercies of Jehovah, not moving into any other area of taking the matter into my own hand but falling upon the mercies of Jehovah which are great. His loving-kindness endures for ever, the psalmist says. We want to be marked by such features, do you think?

H.J.G. Yes. We do not like to get into a great strait, we like to figure out some way to keep out of it, but I think this shows we are to be prepared for it. What a man David was! Let us fall into the hand of God for His mercies are great; but let us not fall into the hand of man. That is the problem, is it not?

A.Macd. Is that usually the test with us as to whether we grow in the knowledge of God in a crisis? He knew what it was to be in the hands of men before and evidently he has grown as a result of the exercise.

H.J.G. I think so. I suppose we are right in saying that David was getting old here. I do not know whether the chapters are necessarily chronological, but I would think he is getting well on in his life. What prosperous times there were in the reign of David! From Dan to Beer-sheba what prosperity there was! Then these calamities come in. How he would feel that as being an older man! It would bear in upon him. But too I think it brings out what he is. As we have had referred to already, God knew David.

T.E.D. In the final result it is not the word of the king prevailing but God's word spoken by the king, is it not?

H.J.G. Is that not good - God's word? "The word of Jehovah came to the prophet Gad", and then it goes on, "And Gad came that day to David, and said to him, Go up, rear an altar to Jehovah". I think there is something special in that. There is the one side in which God would bring forcibly before us what the situation is and the need in it, that is the need of self judgment and to be with Him about the situation; but then we get this: "Gad came that day to David, and said to him, Go up, rear an altar to Jehovah". I think that is more of an exercise. What can we reach through to? God has His place among His people and the people are ready for the peace-offering.

T.E.D. It gets to what is for God in a matter, does it not?

C.F.D. And does David's own relationship with God shine? He says "neither will I offer up to Jehovah my God burnt-offerings without cost ". Then there are the fifty shekels of silver. I was thinking of the expression 'm y God'.

L.MacF. So the building should go on, what is constructive, despite state and all that has come in. Do you think that those who are privileged to serve should be encouraged to keep to what is constructive? Paul says his ministry was for building up.

H.J.G. Yes I think so. The Lord delights in His people.

C.G. It says "And again the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them saying, Go, number Israel and Judah"; in 1 Chronicles 21: 1 it says "And Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel". I have often wondered about that; here in Samuel we have Jehovah moving David to number the people and in Chronicles Satan stood up against Israel and moved David. Do you have anything in mind about those two verses, practically the same thing?

H.J.G. God's occasion was against Israel because of their state and He used Satan; God can do that. But still David accepts what took place, he accepts the failure in himself. He has to go through the

experience of having to go down; the people needed to go down but David has to go through the experience to help them. That is something we need to think about. We may say there is this and there is that, if only that brother or that sister could get some help, but I think we had better go through this experience of David's ourselves.

H.W.K. We really cannot help anyone unless we are willing to be identified with the persons we are seeking to help. Persons who are going on with sin are not able to judge it as not having a knowledge of the sin. It says "by law is knowledge of sin" (Rom 3: 20); that is as you have light you are able to judge sin. David had light from God and God uses him in a remarkable way here to take on the responsibility of the sins of the people, not only what he had committed himself. We are in those times now, do you not feel? We are not to be aloof from those we seek to help and serve but be identified with them. The Lord Himself is the supreme example; He was identified with men in His baptism.

H.J.G. I think it is good to bring that up. Daniel, too, confessed his sins and the sins of the people (see Dan 9: 20).

G.H. You mentioned about the importance of the word of God coming in to help us. I was going to ask you about the well-known section in Hebrews 4: "For the word of God is living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and penetrating to the division of soul and spirit" (v 12). 'Soul' would be the feeling side and 'the spirit' the intelligent side. But then it says "both of joints and marrow": what do you understand by that?

H.J.G. I do not know whether I can say very much except that what it points out is that it reaches in deeply and defines things, and we really do not get the gain of that unless we go down like David did. The word of God is the *word* of God. You might say that that is an abstract statement; it is always that but it may not be that for me.

G.H. As to joints and marrow, the blood stream has a lot to do with the marrow, the blood would indicate life. I wonder whether there would be something in that.

H.J.G. I think there is, because life is needed among the brethren.

G.H. That word 'operative' is a remarkable expression. In the King James translation it says 'powerful', but 'operative' is a very fine word, operative in the whole being by the Spirit.

J.A.P. The remark made earlier about what was constructive should encourage us particularly in regard to the peace-offering which is the practical enjoyment of fellowship; currently there is sorrow amongst us as to fellowship; what interferes with it is sin somewhere. The pattern here is helpful as to how we may get through to fellowship; not just to say, 'I have made a mistake', if I have, 'but I have been wrong'; that helps the brethren too, that is very constructive. The flesh says, Do not admit anything. Men in the world will not admit anything but in Christianity we have to say, I have sinned. It is hard to do.

H.J.G. Yes, we know that. But God keeps at the prophetic word; Gad came again and said, Go up, rear an altar. It is not without point that this all happened at Araunah's threshing-floor. The sovereignty of God shows itself in Araunah; and he had everything needed. When God does things He shows that He has a moral basis for what He does, and here Araunah says "see here are oxen for the burnt-offering, and the threshing-sledges and implements of the oxen for wood." He says, Here they are, you can have them all. What sovereignty and what work of God in a man in the midst of this! And yet David is going through the exercise. How it would affect him to see this in Araunah! But David is going to pay for it nevertheless. I think it goes back to the exercise raised about Exodus 30, that there is to be a ransom.

L.MacF. Why is an altar involved in this crisis? Is it a question of approach? David came to it earlier that it is to be in the due order.

H.J.G. David would not forget that he had to come by the due order, he would know how to act when he was told to make an altar. So we should know how to act. So we come back to the matter of the Spirit, how are we going to know what to do? You can go to the

books and you can listen to somebody else who might tell you, but finally you have to go to the Spirit to know how to act.

C.F.D. I was wondering whether now the approach to God is not secured on the principle of self-judgment and if this is not something that the Lord is raising with us currently and constantly, that our approach individually and our approach collectively into the service of God has to be on that principle.

H.J.G. Two things are raised in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11: "Let a man prove himself, and thus eat". We are to go on, we are to judge ourselves and go on with the great things of God. But then we are also to judge ourselves so that there might be fellowship with one another in a right way. Does that help?

C.F.D. Very much so, because if that principle is operating I can sit down with my brethren rightly; as we have been helped to see, the first thing we do as we assemble is to greet each other. We sit down together as disciples or brethren and if this principle is operating amongst us our assembling will be according to the mind of God.

H.J.G. That is what I thought we might see in this that David made the sacrifice; he followed the direction of the prophetic word, he made the sacrifice, he paid the fifty shekels of silver, he built the altar but he offered up burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. Really for us it is what have we arrived at and what we set on among the brethren. We feel what has been raised about the matter of fellowship; so what can I do to help in that situation? I think David shows us here there is something in the way that he builds this altar; and offers burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. That would help us to see how it can be done. And then God was propitious to the land.

T.E D. Is this not a touch of glory shining at the close which God delights in? One has read this week how God watches over His discipline to see how it works in the saints to produce glory. This seems to be an example of that.

J.C.P. Do you think Satan moved in against David because he got away from God? Here David turns back to God and Jehovah

blessed the discipline He brought upon Israel. Is it not so that, when we are away from God, Satan moves in?

H.J.G. That is right, very subtly too; little by little he gets a foothold in you. But David is smitten; he says, Let us not fall into the hands of man; he trusted in God.

L.MacF. So is the sacrificial side to be noted? You raised the question as to the help we are locally, what we are to the brethren. Is it on the principle of sacrifice?

H.J.G. I think so. So you do not sit on the platform and tell everybody what to do, do you? Not that we are to depreciate those whom God helps in serving the saints, we are not to do that, but "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves" (Luke 22: 27) is how things have been set on.

A.MacD. Was Araunah like a son of consolation and would he himself understand what the peace-offering meant? He would be like that brother who took Paul and introduced him to the brethren, spoke well of him and then was able to recede into the background.

H.J.G. It is almost as though he says to David, I have just been waiting for you to come to this.

H.W.K. The Lord had a basis to be propitious to the people, did He not, because of what David set up? It was the setting up of an established relationship with God so that God could come out in blessing. Is that not what we want at the present time?

H.J.G. I think it is. We have concerns and we would that certain things were settled, but how is it going to be? We just have to make a basis for God to bring in this propitiousness.

C.F.D. I believe there is a point in your previous remark as to Araunah that all the resources were within his reach; all the resources - coming into the mind of God and a righteous approach to God, the propitious line of things - are all within our reach in the assembly and in the locality. It is all within our reach and the thing is are we availing ourselves of it? David did; he set on a good lead.

H.J.G. That is one of the things I was thinking about; David was the king, he was a type of Christ, he was God's king and therefore it was God's mind that he should give a lead in Israel; and so here he is again giving a lead - a wonderful man. But does it not get down to each one of us? I might say, Well, I do not know very much and I have never had any great part among the brethren, but each brother and sister, even the youngest here breaking bread can give a lead in something for God, can they not?

C.F.D. Yes they can. And Araunah might not have been well known locally but when it came to this particular issue he was the one who had everything under his hand. I believe that the word of God comes in prophetically, and not only on Tuesday (one of the places we should look for it is in the preaching of the word of God, that is where we would look for the power of it to come in peculiarly) and it would all have in view the approach to God; that is the final thought, is it not, that the preaching of the word has in mind?

H.J.G. It is right that there should be the prophetic word in the preaching. It is an exercise to have that, not just to speak the terms of the gospel but to have a prophetic touch in it.

A.S.H. Araunah even went further - if it is right to say that; he says "see, here are oxen for the burnt offering, and the threshing-sledges and implements". Is he not adding a further thought? He is really free in the movement, free with the king, and he has everything that would make this matter complete.

H.J.G. He is not holding anything back. Then finally he says "Jehovah thy God accept thee"; he is right in line with what God is doing.

A.S.H. I feel that we sometimes need that. We hold back, I feel that for myself. Our brother just spoke as to the gospel, we have some who will not take it on. Some of us cannot say much but we need to get sharpened and take on the matter. It is a vital thing.

H.J.G. I think most of us would have to say Amen to that.

S.E.H. What did you have in mind in Araunah saying "Jehovah thy God accept thee"? Does it go beyond God's acceptance of the offerings?

H.J.G. I think it is just that Araunah knew the need of a man being accepted in God's presence. Is that not part of what we are speaking about? You can look at things objectively and say, There is this problem and this is the word that applies, and so on, but really with a priest it is a question of his acceptance in the presence of God, and everything will work out from that.

H.W.K. In the very beginning of Scripture God looked on Abel and his offering (see Gen 4: 4) and it goes right through.

H.J.G. That is good.

J.A.P. Acceptance is the burnt-offering, is it not, the glory of Christ? and I am accepted in Him.

C.F.D. That is perfectly right, that is what a man is in Christ, yet the side of responsibility comes home to us very much from our own side as to God having a right to look at us. And you are challenged, at least I am, as to the question of approach to God. I believe that that is a very real thing for us because we can become very casual as to our approach to God but God is not casual about it.

H.J.G. I just thought that we might be helped to think about these things so that we might get this objective. God's intent, and what David fulfilled, was the building of this altar and the offering of these offerings, and God was propitious to the land. In Romans where we read I thought there was a further touch to that; "Salute one another with a holy kiss". That is really fellowship in a full way and a right way, is it not?

C.F.D. Is "Salute one another with a holy kiss" the way we are to assemble? If we are in the good of the peace-offering we will be able to greet and embrace the brethren as we assemble. That is one of the final thoughts that Mr Taylor left with us, as you remember, and it is certainly one that I believe tests us in our localities at the present time.

G.H. What is prophetic is not merely the preaching of the gospel but, as Mr Taylor brought out helpfully, it is the preaching of the word of God, which would involve teaching. You get the sense that you have to be ready for what is prophetic to come in in view of that.

H.J.G. It is good to be reminded of that; it is the preaching of the word of God and it gives the preacher plenty of scope. The glad tidings covers everything.

G.H. It would involve teaching and also in the word of God to be ready for a prophetic touch coming in.

H.J.G. That is right. And the gospel makes way for a special appeal in that way. It is a little different from the ministry meeting in the sense that the gospel is an appeal, an appeal to our affections, and if there is something not right it seems to get at it. It comes at you in a little different way from the prophetic word in the ministry meeting.

G.H. It says that God would have all men to be saved, that is one side; but then it says, and come to the knowledge of the truth (see 1 Tim 2: 4). That would involve teaching.

H.J.G. Yes.

L.MacF. There is a salutation here. It says of Joseph's brethren they could not greet him with friendliness (see Gen 37: 4). We have to see what is the cause of that. I do not think we enter into what is in Romans if what is personal is not judged.

H.J.G. Judah judged it and it made a basis for the friendliness to obtain again. Did you have more in mind?

L.MacF. We are in a sphere to get help and I trust that we will get help as we are speaking, for the Spirit is speaking. Am I greeting my brethren with friendliness or is there reserve?

S.E.H. Is there a side that goes beyond that also, because even after Judah's confession, after Jacob died there was still a suspicion that remained that had to be overcome?

H.J.G. I think if we are honest we know something about that. It is quite a crucial thing that there is not to be that. The Lord has made

the basis for that all to be cleared and when we come and sit down at the Supper it is to be clear.

J.A.P. And in a wider sense all the assemblies of Christ. Can we say that in this country? We would like to have that.

H.J.G. Well, that is a concern and I trust what we have been going over might reach a point with some of us that we might get before the Lord as to how we can help things. Paul put every effort into helping the brethren. Scripture is full of the spirit of how things are to be; like it is here: "Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the assemblies of Christ salute you". A lot of these expressions of Paul's are really not doctrine but they are in the power of the Spirit of God to promote prosperity among the brethren.

T.E.D. You read verse 17 also; I would have to consider what in me might create a division, what element might lead divisively amongst God's people; whereas if I understood the feelings in the heart of God, what the people are to Him, that would help me in my feelings for my brethren, would it not?

H.J.G. I think so. Oh that we might get something of the spirit of these men who have helped in the testimony! not only these two that we have been reading of, Paul and David, but we could do well to get something of the spirit of those who have helped even within our memory.

C.F.D. This is quite strong. Would it show that the creating of divisions amongst the saints is contrary to the mind of God. "And occasions of falling": we would have to test ourselves as to whether we have contributed to that in any way, "occasions of falling, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learnt". You would say that what Paul is bringing in here is quite strong but it is the word of God. He says, turn away from such persons. I think we might underestimate God's own feelings and judgment as to the introduction of what is divisive.

H.J.G. We might, because we have something of what David and Israel had, some point of pride, that we like to think that the line we are on is the right way, but he says here "turn away", really turn your ear away and do not follow that road.

J.A.P. "By good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting" (v 18). One of the current things is that people say, We are Christians. We all would respect that, and the test is really the sincerity of that. It is a fair speech, I am a Christian.

H.J.G. What we are together today lies behind the way we gather tomorrow morning. We are to do things on the basis of being "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart", 2 Tim 2: 22. That is what you are speaking about, is it not? A pure heart involves that things are laid open before God and that we have a right judgment of these things that have been mentioned.

C.G. Hebrews 12 would relate to not having divisions; "Pursue peace with all, and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord: watching lest there be anyone who lacks the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and many be defiled by it" (vv 14,15). Do you not think that is a good passage to bear in mind as we come together in a general way?

H.J.G. Yes, the operation of grace is a wonderful thing. We need to do all we can to keep it operating. Grace meets the situation, law does not meet it, legality does not meet it, grace meets it. But still God intends it to be met; He meets it in His word and His word would always have that side of grace. In Christianity I think it would always be so that grace is in the word. "Salute one another with a holy kiss"; grace meets the reservation.

G.C.G. Joseph said to his brethren "Come near to me", Gen 45: 4.

H.J.G. That is this; "Salute one another". And do not go back to the old thing.

G.F.D. While it is spiritual it is none the less real that I should be able to greet every brother and every sister. If we cannot do that how can we merge in the loaf?

H.J.G. That has to be the objective. If something is hindering it I trust we can get some help to get through to that objective.

PLAINFIELD

27 March 1982

Key to initials

C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; T.E.Druckenmiller, Plainfield; C.C.Gill, New York; C.Greenidge, Plainfield; H.J.Glass, Toronto; A.S.Hinkson, New York; G.Hesterman, Plainfield; S.E.Hesterman, Plainfield; H.W.Knauss, Indianapolis; A.Macdonald, New York; L.MacFarlane, New York; G.D.Pfingst, Plainfield; J.A.Petersen Plainfield; J.C.Petersen, Plainfield; A.G.Spooner, New York; A.R.Stevens, New York

THE GLORY OF WHAT GOD HAS ESTABLISHED

H.J.Glass

Isaiah 55: 8,9; Hebrews 2: 5-10; Matthew 18: 18, 21-23

One's exercise is that we might be stirred a little in our thinking as to the glory of what God has brought in in His order of things in Christ and the Spirit, and that we have been made partakers of it. We get used to meetings and the Scriptures, I suppose, but we always need a touch in our hearts as to whether we appreciate the glory of what God has done and the glory of what obtains still. Think of it all to be gathered up for eternity, that is for ever, beyond what our minds can imagine! The young people here maybe think they have a lot of years ahead of them - that is all in God's way - but eternity is beyond what you can think. Think of the privilege of what God has brought to you in the glad tidings! We have been reminded of the glad tidings, the word of God that men might be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Think of what God has brought in for you dear young ones and all of us that we might have a fresh touch at this time of the glory of the way that God has moved!

So He says "my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts". We would do well to go over that, as to whether we really have an appreciation of it or whether we look at things in too natural a way, whether we assess things in the testimony too much in the light of what can be worked out in our own minds rather than what God would have us work out by the Spirit in accord with His thoughts and His ways as being higher than ours. So He has done it in Christ, He has done it in a Man. We would do well to be freshly affected by the glory of the One by whom He has done it. "What is man, that thou rememberest him, or son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him some little inferior to the angels on account of the suffering of death". We sang of that: 'He no service thought too lowly, and no sacrifice too great' (hymn 141). You could not name anything that has ever taken place on the face of this earth that corresponds in any sense with the glory of what

God has done. Those amongst us who are young, and perhaps some of us who are a bit older, hardly know of the effects that these world wars had on men. When they are completed there are epitaphs to the glory of men who have given up their lives, but what has it accomplished? God is over the nations and God is feeling for men that they might come to Him. But what is accomplished if you go over it? The glory of what can be raised as a tribute to what a man has done: how can it be compared to this? Paul says in Romans "perhaps for the good man some one might also dare to die", and "we being still sinners, Christ has died for us", chap 5: 7,8. Think of the way that God has brought in what He has brought in! So that ground is covered here: "What is man, that thou rememberest him, or son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him some little inferior to the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast subjected all things under his feet. For in subjecting all things to him, he has left nothing unsubject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him". How true that is! To outward appearances there is more and more insubjection, but God says that everything is subjected to Him. "Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast set him over the works of thy hands". Oh that we might get a fresh touch of the glory of the way that God has done things, the glory of the One by whom He has done it and in whom He has done it for His own satisfaction and that He might have His saints! We have been going over the objective that God might find delight in His people but think of the way that God has done it. He has done it in this One, this One whom He has crowned with glory and honour! He finished the work that was given to Him to do. There is a glory that belongs to such an order of things that you cannot compare with anything in this world. Oh that we might be raised in our thinking about that! How much higher are His ways and His thoughts than ours. So let us have an appreciation of the One, as it says here, to whom He has subjected all things. But we do not see that yet - it cannot be seen by the outward eye - but it says "we see Jesus". That is our privilege - to see Jesus. How much more buoyant we would be in our souls, how much more prosperity we

would find among God's people, as we follow this, that we see Jesus, we see the One to whom everything has been subjected. Do you really see Him? do I? - the One to whom God has subjected everything. Or are we not so clear about that? I think therein lies our lack of joy perhaps, our lack of the working out of things as God would have them worked out. The writer says here "we see Jesus, who was made some little inferior to angels... For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings". Think of God bringing persons into the glory of sonship that He might be served! And the way He has done it, as it is brought before us here, is that He has made perfect the Leader of their salvation through sufferings. The Leader is perfect. What else in this world is perfect? I often think that we are in the time that Daniel speaks of where it says "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased", Dan 12: 4. We seem to be in those times when men have great ability to reach through to things that a generation ago they would not have thought of; God has given the ability to do that. We are in those times, but they do not help you or anyone to reach through to this; only the word of God can bring us through to this, the One who has been made perfect, the Leader of our salvation, the One who has brought in God's whole scheme - if one can say that respectfully - the scheme that God has had, the plan that He has had so that men might understand that everything has been subjected to Christ. If we do not get anything else out of this short time together it is that we might get a touch about that, that God has an arrangement of glory and that arrangement of glory involves that everything is subjected to Christ. So our enjoyment, our blessing, our satisfaction, whatever we can give in the way of return to God, comes from that. There is no other way - My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

I thought that in Matthew we get a sense of the way that these things are to be found here in this scene. There is no question but that they are found in Christ. He has been raised from among the dead, He has been crowned with glory and honour, He is at God's

right hand. In God's eye everything is subjected to Him. We do not see it yet, but in God's eye everything is subjected to Him. But think of the way that God has designed that this is to be found here! It is to be found in the assembly. Our brother mentioned in the reading that we have the means in the assembly for all that is needed. I suppose you would say that it is all in the Spirit. The Spirit is the power. Ye shall do greater things than these, the Lord said, speaking of the time of the Spirit. But behind it all is God's mind about it. "The assembly of God which he has purchased with the blood of his own" (Acts 20: 28): that is behind the whole thing; and behind whatever operates is God's thought about it, His thoughts higher than our thoughts. You never would have thought of this. The hymn says that: 'For sure no other mind... Thine only could it be'. We could not have thought of this; God has thought of it, thought of it for His own satisfaction, for His own glory. It is a system of glory.

So He says here "Verily, I say to you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven". Think of what proceeds in the assembly!

Have you found your part in it in a full sense? Have I? Think of what is open to us that God can be glorified in His saints! God can be glorified in the assembly. It says that: "to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen", Eph 3: 21. These are God's thoughts, but what is working out in us, in our localities? Is each of us set for this, that we are acting properly in the light of what the Lord has left with us? "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven". O what operates in the assembly! We do not want to lose sight of it. We may back off sometimes from the exercises involved, but what glory there is to Go in the assembly. I think He delights to loose. The binding is His too, it shall be bound in heaven. Think of God being in accord with our judgments. We were reading Psalm 37 the other night: "for Jehovah loveth judgment, and will not forsake his

saints" (v 28). We want to prove that in the present time: "Jehovah loveth judgment". It is that He loveth a right judgment about things. We need to be developed in that. I think that is the thought in Matthew 18, that we might be developed in a right judgment of things. "Verily I say to you, Whatsoever ye... " Well, who is the 'ye'? It is you and I in the present time, in the privilege that we have of being set in the assembly, of being set in the places where we are to fulfil our responsibility so that God may be glorified and that His great thoughts may be worked out here in this scene. Christ is on high crowned with glory and honour and everything is subjected to Him. In God's view everything is subjected, but what you find here in the assembly is that God intends that everything is to be in accord with that. We know that the exercises in working it out are sometimes difficult. I just thought today we might get some touch about how high God's thoughts are and that He intends us to go on according to them until the Lord comes for His own.

Then Peter comes and says to Him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Well, these things come up, they come up to hinder these thoughts of God, to hinder the way that He would have us. We have been reading about greeting one another with a holy kiss, but things do come in. Oh that we might be prepared for them! Peter was a man who was prepared for things; he was prepared for that searching in John 21. He says here, How often shall I forgive him? Think of the glory of what is to be found in this administrative sense where things are bound and things are loosed in the light of all that is in accord with heaven, in the light of judgment according to God - "Jehovah giveth judgment"! It has a great place with God that His people have a right judgment. We were mentioning about Samuel; one thing it says of him in the Acts is "he gave them judges till Samuel" (chap 13: 20) - He gave them judges. The time of the judges was not a very good time, every man did what was right in his own eyes; that is not a feature of subjection, is it? But in the face of that the word was that He gave them judges till Samuel. Think of God always considering for His people! Think of Him considering for us in 1982! You might say, I can remember

when things were better; I can remember when there were more brethren available to us and when we had persons who could serve with great ability; what good times we had! But God knows what we need; He does not forsake His saints, He is ready to help us. So these things come in that hinder and Peter asks the question. Think of the Lord's answer: "until seventy times seven"! We need to understand how the principle of forgiveness is to operate. Have you, have I, that spirit so that we do not hold on to things that offend, we understand how forgiveness is to operate? Matthew of course does not mention repentance, he does not mention putting the thing right. Matthew would always presume righteousness. But he raises this matter of forgiveness, of a forgiving spirit, seventy times seven. That tests you, does it not, whether you could do that? Seventy times seven is a lot of times. But I think what it is at is, have we that spirit of forgiveness? We must have that for right relations to operate among the brethren. When the brethren are few you get very picky in your thoughts; there are only a few brethren and you see the same ones all the time. But think of the divine system; "my ways higher than your ways", and that this provision is made, that you are to forgive him seventy times seven. One of the things needed in our present exercises is to know how to forgive. The Lord's rights are in this because He says "For this cause the kingdom of the heavens has become like a king" (the note says 'a man a king') "who would reckon with his bondmen". Well, we have to do with God. David had to do with God.

I think we would be encouraged today to take away what has been before us, to see the greatness of the order of things that God has set up: "to make perfect the leader of their salvation through sufferings". Oh that we might get a glimpse of that and understand what God has done in Christ, and that we might understand how that order of things is to operate here! For His Name's sake.

PLAINFIELD

27 March 1982

PROSPERITY

G.McKay

Isaiah 53: 10, 11

As coming together, dear brethren, the thought came to me as to prosperity and the pleasure of Jehovah prospering in the hand of Christ. This is a meeting that tests us, and the readings and other meetings test us; I believe that the service of God, too, tests us as to what we have that is the product of prosperity. Everyone who seeks to carry responsibility locally would surely have this exercise that there should be spiritual prosperity. Prosperity is a great word in the world but it is a great thing spiritually, a great spiritual word, too. I wondered if we might be stirred up a little in exercise that we might assess whether we are on a line that would cause prosperity. Joseph in Scripture emerges as a person who wherever he was caused prosperity. He was a prosperous man, a man that caused prosperity. That was the kind of man he was (see Gen 39: 2). That would be a test to us, I think; are things prosperous amongst us and are they on a line that would lead to this, to the brethren being enriched? It is not just survival. Sometimes we set our sights on surviving. Sometimes you feel that is all you can do, just hold on. Well, that is fine, too, that you hold on. But then we should be more than just surviving, we should answer to the thought of wealth and prosperity spiritually. Every local company should have that, prosperous conditions where life is fostered and where the saints are getting on. The great point, as Paul wrote in Philipppians, is that the saints are getting on; not whether they are still there or not but how they are getting on. The thought of prosperity is very important. Isaiah brings out the great matter that prosperity involves the hand of Christ: "and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand". We are assured that that will be so. The Lord Jesus, on account of the way He has gone and His exalted position, has everything in His hand and it is in His hand to be turned in this direction - prosperity for the pleasure of Jehovah.

That was primarily in mind, but also our enjoyment of prosperity. It is not a happy position materially, or spiritually either, to be in want, to be in poverty. But it is a fine thing to have a touch of spiritual prosperity, a touch of joy, a touch of wealth, satisfaction, all that is involved in prosperity. It is all under the hand of Christ; He is the key to it, that there might be something for God. That is why I thought that perhaps the service of God brings this out, as to how we are in what we are able to offer to God. "The pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper" in the hand of Christ; that is, on high He is seeing to the pleasure of God. He Himself has set out in the fullest way what is pleasurable to God. I suppose anyone who is going to cause prosperity has to set the thing out a bit in himself, to apply it in that way. It is seen in the Lord Jesus supremely. Perhaps it would not be right even to compare too much, but just to think first of all of the Lord Jesus Himself and how He is on high. The Lord is able to dispense for everyone, like Joseph who was able to provide for everyone, for the whole land of Egypt in the seven fat years and the lean years as well. It involves wisdom, and it involves suffering according to this scripture; "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see a seed". If there was to be any wealth for us He that was rich had to become poor that we through His poverty might be enriched. If Joseph was to come through as the person who was going to enrich the land of Egypt, then he had to go into the pit, into the prison, and the iron entered into his soul. So there may have to be suffering and exercise if there is going to be prosperity locally. It may be there will have to be deeper exercise, akin to some of the exercises that Joseph went through. He is a type of Christ, of course, and there will be no prosperity apart from what Jesus has done for us.

So the pleasure of Jehovah is prospering in the hand of Christ. "He shall see a seed", there is something produced, there is some result. And that is what we would love to see locally, what is fruitful and what is productive, signs of life. I suppose a gardener likes to see that in the spring, something emerging, signs of life, a shoot, and a bud, and then the full fruit. That is what we want to have locally in

everyone, in all of us, brother and sister alike, that there is what is for the heart of Christ. It might be in a shoot or a bud or a flower, it might be a fruit, something full and mature. I think the local company is so constituted that there should be all these things, not only in the older brethren but in the youngest; not only in the brothers but in the sisters; not only in the older sisters but in the younger sisters too. In every stage and in every circumstance there is something emerging that shows there is life and there is a product, there is something for Christ and for His heart, something for the pleasure of Jehovah. You can see that this is a very important line. If there is going to be wealth that can be under the Lord's hand for the service of God there has to be wealth in our souls. So what line are we on then? It is one of the features, I suppose, with many of us that we underrate what we can do, and say that our little contribution will not make much difference. You might say, what can I do to bring about prosperity locally? We may very easily say we can do nothing and just sit back. But then what can we do? In Colossians Paul speaks about the head and the body, and the joints and bands (see chap 2: 19). The whole body is ministered to by the joints and the bands. That points to something, some activity of perhaps a rather obscure character but of a vital character. It may be that much of what is vital amongst us is obscure. Maybe some of the most important things amongst us are the obscure activities, the affection that underlies the binding together of the saints, having love for one another. Perhaps if we had these things that would be producing prosperity, it would be on the line of producing growth, of producing what is going to be for the heart of God, what is going to be for the divine pleasure.

So we can look at these things and assess what line we are on. Another thing is, when you look at those animals in Leviticus, you find that if you are a clean animal the brethren can feed on you, because we are meant to appropriate one another. There are features of the brethren that can be appropriated, that build up the constitution of the saints. As you are in the house, or in the meeting, or wherever you are, the kind of person you are is effecting something, and if the saints can feed on you, you are building up the

saints. If you are a groaning lizard or a mole, an unclean animal, you are undermining, you are breaking down, you might say, the morale among the saints, you are bringing down the hearts of the saints and you are working away negatively and destructively. But if there are signs of spirituality in an exercised and separate walk, the chewing of the cud and feeding on divine things, and then the scales - by what we are we can be on the line of causing prosperity. It is amazing what one person can do. When you think of brothers who have ministered, these books on the bookshelves, you might say how is it that God has worked in a man to produce such great wealth? It is immense when you think of it. "He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water", John 7: 38. That is one person and there are rivers coming from one person in that scripture. There is not going to be prosperity unless there are rivers, unless there is room for the Spirit, unless there are persons who can produce this, you might say, persons who believe in Christ. "Out of his belly" points to a person that has appropriated Christ, a person of faith, a person that has taken on the truth, so that out of his belly can flow rivers of living water. That is one of the great ways that you can cause prosperity, by enjoying things yourself. I think that is the meaning of 'belly', the person is in the full enjoyment and appropriation of divine things and there is a great outflowing. The river in Ezekiel produced prosperity, the trees on this side and on that side. The thought is that there is a flow in the meeting so that there is prosperity. We can be persons who believe individually to bring this about.

There is the care meeting too. Think of the wisdom that Joseph had! Wisdom needed too if there is going to be prosperity among the saints. It would be fine to have a word of wisdom, the right thing to say at the right time. It preserves the saints and keeps the enemy out, keeps out what would destroy life amongst the saints and depress the saints. That is what Joseph had - spiritual wisdom. And he looked ahead too, to those seven lean years, and provided for the people. As we are together we want an atmosphere, a kind of input to the meeting, you might say. (I do not know if it is too

familiar a term), but I suppose everyone comes to the meeting in the sense of contributing in their spirit, in their exercise, in their demeanour, praying perhaps even before the meeting, providing beforehand. Preparation is involved, providing beforehand in exercise for each meeting. If you can possibly manage it, just have a moment to pray before the meeting. Even first thing in the morning think about the meeting at night, just look ahead and say, Well, Lord, it is going to be a hard day, there are many things I am going to need help about; but go right through in your prayer and say, May it be a good meeting tonight, too. May we be able to go right through and have an encouraging meeting. I think the Lord helps in that way, that you look ahead, as Joseph looked ahead into those seven lean years and provided for them in wisdom.

I believe there is something for each one of us to do, dear brethren. If everyone takes on the exercise to produce prosperity, to be the kind of person in character and activity that brings about prosperity, then we will have under the Lord's hand a prosperous state of things and wealth among the saints, children coming on, as I believe they are, and everyone encouraged, and perhaps persons who would go away will be kept from going away, and preserved because there is food among the people of God. May we be all exercised, for His name's sake.

GLASGOW

28 September 1982

THE CHILDREN'S CONFIDENCE

A young girl was earnestly seeking to be sure of the eternal safety of her soul and to have peace with God. She confided to an older friend that in spite of many sincere and anxious prayers and desires after salvation she really felt no different from before about the matter. After a pause her friend asked if she had ever learned to float in the sea. Strange to say she had just done so and she explained how at first she could not lie still on the water but each time began to struggle and as often began to sink. She could not at first believe that the water could hold her up without some effort of her own. But she had at last learned that she must just recline in confidence on the surface of the water. How much more could she rest her priceless soul on the unchanging word of God than her equally precious body on the changeable sea! Thus she learned to "Fear not; only believe".

There is always a responsibility on every child who receives God's gospel to obey His word and accept the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and His work. You must repent and believe in the glad tidings; you must have faith in God and not just about Him; you must in love be subject to Jesus as Lord. Thankfully God Himself is the source of the grace for all this - and much more! However, efforts to obtain salvation and blessing by such means as trying to keep Israel's law, or by works of self-denial, really only lead to disappointment. Valuable experience of self as these may be, yet they result in the soul being still in the distress of uncertainty just like the young girl battling with the very water which should be her source of confidence.

You will easily find in Scripture the words "Fear not: stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah". Children of all ages were amongst the frightened people of Israel standing by the Red Sea with agelong enemies marching up behind them and what seemed an impassable barrier before them. How full of wonder they must have been when the wind in their faces became so strong that it parted the sea before them so that they could go right across on dry

ground to safety! How they all praised God! Miriam, an honoured saint who long before had protected the babe Moses, was now in her nineties giving a lead in music and dancing and in praising the Lord. However young - or old - you may be do you know and sing redemption's song?

J.C.Evershed