

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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REPROOF

G.C.McKay

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One would seek grace, dear brethren, to speak of rebuke or reproof, which enters into these scriptures, for it is one of the exercises that enters into our relations together. It is important to remark at the outset, of course, that rebuke is not the main line amongst the saints; we are not to be constantly rebuking each other. The main line amongst us is that of edification, involving the positive presentation of the truth for upbuilding and encouragement. Indeed, even when it becomes apparent that adjustment or correction is needed, the primary thought in Scripture seems to be that we pray for one another. That would be the first exercise, to pray for one another, whether reproof becomes necessary or not. It is a very salutary exercise to pray for another in this setting. As you go into the presence of the Lord and seek to bring before Him your concern as to a brother, you find that your thoughts are modified. You probably find that it is not so easy to pray as you thought. It is one thing, of course, to criticise, even to have a right judgment; but when you take that judgment into the presence of the Lord, I am sure we all have had that salutary experience, that things are modified. First of all we find that we ourselves are in the presence of the Lord and under divine scrutiny. And then you find, if you are going to express something to the Lord as to a brother, that you cannot use just any words. We may speak lightly and use words of one another lightly sometimes - many of us would have to admit that - but when you go into the presence of the Lord, how are you going to express your exercise? This is real, this is experience, the brethren know this.

How are you going to speak to the Lord about your brother if you think your brother needs help and you are concerned about him? It is right to pray for one another, but then your thoughts are modified.

You find, too, that in the presence of God you get an impression of the greatness of the saints; so what you express must take colour

from that. You find that in the presence of God the saints are regarded with great respect, with divine valuation, with great dignity. You find that the saints are held there in the affections of Christ and held on that table of shew-bread before God continually. God regards the saints. In fact I suppose you might seek to pray for a brother and end up not saying too much about him to the Lord, but instead the Lord might occupy you with yourself a little bit in adjustment, That again is very salutary.

But still we should pray for one another. The book of James says that: "pray for one another, that ye may be healed", chap 5: 16. That is a remarkable verse. It says "Confess therefore your offences to one another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed". I understand that that is not some kind of formal confession but such a state of affection and self-judgment and nearness among the saints that there can be something mutual in the way of confessing of faults and praying for one another. Do you think love is great enough for that? I am sure we could not speak of these things except among the saints. There is no such principle in the world in relations among men, but in the family of God love dominates and things can operate, otherwise it would be impossible. Men adopt procedures and political expedients to resolve conflicts and to arrive at what they wish, and there is no principle of love in it at all, rather the reverse.

But among the saints love is great enough for these things. The saints as having the Spirit of God, as thus endowed and subjects of the work of God, have wonderful and remarkable things predicated of them in the Scriptures, not only as to their dignity and standing before God - how great they are! - but also their capacity to work out things amongst themselves. Scripture contemplates these things, which are not along the lines we sometimes think naturally. We often think naturally, not according to the thoughts of Scripture.

Another thing, too, is that what we are speaking about is the rebuke of love, and you will find that where rebuke in a right sense comes into Scripture, the thought of love almost always seems to be there. We experience it ourselves, for the Lord's own love has that character: He disciplines and rebukes as many as He loves. Again

another scripture in Proverbs that we often quote in regard to this is "Faithful are the wounds of a friend", chap 27: 6. If you look at the footnote it is the wounds of 'one who loves', it is a lover. "Open rebuke is better than hidden love" (v 5). It is how love sometimes expresses itself, because after prayer and all that we have been speaking about, and patience ("Love has long patience", 1 Cor 13: 4), it might still be that we are faced with love's obligation to reprove. What a testing thing! Love's obligation might be actually to reprove, and those of us who are younger no doubt need that more than any. We need to be admonished and to be even re proved, if that is love's way, if that is what love necessitates. So love's obligation might come. It lies largely, I suppose, with the older brethren and those with experience, those who watch over our souls "as those that shall give account", Heb 13: 17. We are to obey them and be submissive to them, even to reproof. It is quite clear: "Obey your leaders, and be submissive; for they watch over your souls as those that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you".

Then the side of reproof comes in very much, I suppose, in regard to parents, that they have a formally stated obligation to bring their children up "in the discipline and admonition of the Lord", Eph 6: 4. So certain persons are given that special obligation, a certain charge, in love's way. In the epistle to Titus you will find indeed that the older sisters are given an obligation, or charge, to be an example themselves, and then to admonish the younger. That is not what you might call the main line, but it is one of love's ways, one of love's provisions and only through love can we enter into this exercise.

But then, as far as I can see from the scripture in Leviticus 19, that obligation might come home to any of us. Responsibility is taken up, I suppose, specially by those who are fitted for it and who are exercised to take it, but responsibility belongs to all. No one can abrogate responsibility; if you are breaking bread you are beginning to take on responsibility. This scripture points out that we have a responsibility to our brother. You might say, Someone else will have to take this up, someone else will have to help this brother, I cannot

do it. What if he is your neighbour though? "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt earnestly rebuke thy neighbour".

What are you going to do? He is your neighbour. You are the one who knows him and you know the problem. Perhaps no one else does. It might come home to any one of us. It might come home to a young person in regard to what a companion might say or do. He is your neighbour; what are you going to do? What love would do is at all cost to prevent disaster. If that is what is needed to avoid disaster, that is what love would do and love would have grace to do it. I believe that is so, though it is a very testing thing. I do not know which is more testing, to receive a reproof or to give one. I rather think to give one is more testing, a deeper exercise. So this comes in then: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart" - it is a question of love - "thou shalt earnestly rebuke thy neighbour". I suppose you see that he is on a way that will damage him, will even bring in, perhaps, disaster; therefore you earnestly rebuke him or else you might be held responsible. If you stand by and let someone go on into trouble, will the Lord say, That is all right, that is his responsibility? But you are his brother, you are his neighbour. It is very testing, but the earnestness is that there might be salvation. And it is one of love's ways where it is necessary.

I read the other scriptures because they seem to bring out something as to the exercise of receiving and giving of rebuke, and it is a very testing thing. Where we read in Psalm 141 David actually invites reproof; it is extraordinary. In psalm 139 what a remarkable saint David was, what exercises he had, how sincere he was, how deep he went in his exercises, out and out, you might say, for the truth and to be with God and for God, his whole heart set that way! At the beginning of that psalm he speaks about God searching him: "thou hast searched me, and known me", and at the end of it he invites the divine scrutiny. You might say the beginning of the psalm was enough, and the body of the psalm was enough, but at the end he is still exercised. Of course this brings out the fact that David's relations were with God, and that, of course, is a great preservative, one of the main lines, that our links should be with God. Who can

reprove like the Lord? One look at Peter! Who can help like the Lord? But I am not exactly speaking of that. "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another", John 13: 34. It is a question of what works out among the saints that takes character from the love of Christ. Of course there is what the Lord can do, and many a thing you have to leave with Him. The Lord has His own rights and His own way. But sometimes love's obligation comes to us.

Well, David at the end of Psalm 139 invites divine scrutiny: "see if there be any grievous way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting". You can see the depth of his exercise. Is there something I have missed? I am conscious of divine scrutiny, but perhaps there is still something that has been missed that is going to lead me astray, an idolatrous way, and if that is so, then let God find it out so that I might be delivered from it and be led in the way everlasting. That was David's exercise, the way everlasting. But further, not only was David exercised before God in the divine presence, but in Psalm 141 he actually invites reproof from the righteous: "Let the righteous smite me, it is kindness"; you see that love, kindness, lies behind it. It is extraordinary; men could not understand that. How could a natural man understand what we are saying at all? The flesh is so resentful of any check, and the flesh likes so quickly to take advantage of any opportunity to attack another. Among men these things are impossibilities. Among the saints of God, through divine grace and the work of the Spirit and all that flows from heaven and all that has been demonstrated in Christ, there is capacity for this. There is love among the saints, a stock, a certain quantity, that is capable of seeing the saints right through every exigency until the Lord comes. How wonderful that is! So David says here "let him reprove me, it is an excellent oil which my head shall not refuse". I suppose David saw that he might get gain from the reproof and be set up in a greater sense in spiritual intelligence and dignity. How wonderful that he should get the gain of that! Those of us who are younger, how much we need this! How real our exercises should be, dear brethren, real with one another, and how love should dominate them, so that everything that is done

is done in a manly way but done in love. So David invites that. I suggest for the younger and for all of us indeed, that that would be a right spirit - the desire to be adjusted. There are great examples in Scripture of that. Paul himself, and Peter, are great examples. One of the moral features of a believer is that he can be adjusted and can judge himself. It is a wonderful thing, and it relates to the power of recovery in a believer, that he can listen to the word of God through whomsoever it might come.

Now in regard to the giving of rebuke, the book of Job is very interesting because in it four persons administer a rebuke but only one does it rightly. What depth of exercise must lie behind this idea of reproof! What exercise lies behind the way the older brethren admonish us! Paul's tears in 2 Corinthians: what exercise, what depth; what depths of self-judgment too! We spoke of going into the presence of God in regard to a brother's failings; it is an equally great matter to be before the Lord in regard to saying something adjusting to someone. But then grace is sufficient for these things to help us. In Kings there is the prophet who was to speak a very severe word, against the wicked king Ahab; you might say it would be a simple matter, the word of God was there and the wickedness was patent, but then before he delivered the word he says to another by the word of God, Smite me, and he did not give up at the first attempt, he found someone else who smote him violently (see 1 Kings 20: 35-37). That is, I think, that the thing was to be felt deeply in himself if there was to be power in what was said. These exercises, therefore, search us to the depths of our souls in our own self judgment and as to whether love is motivating us and the exercise has been worked out through the grace of Christ.

Well, I do not want to say very much about this in the book of Job, but it is very interesting that the three friends tried to speak to Job to help him. Friends! Well, we have been speaking of that, the wounds of a friend, the wounds of a lover, but these three friends do not carry divine approval, but Elihu does. First of all he is very patient, he waits. I did not read that verse, but he waited till Job had finished speaking. Love has long patience. It could be that his

reproof might not be needed, and if not it would not be given. But at length Elihu feels that he must speak. And he feels not only that he has to speak to Job but also that he had to think about the three friends. He does not actually speak to the three friends - God does that - but his anger is kindled because they found no answer and yet condemned Job. I think there is a principle in that. What is the point of bringing in rebuke if you do not know the answer? They had no answer. They condemned Job, and I suppose that so far that was right, but they found no answer, they could not demonstrate the thing to Job, they could not bring in divine resource. But Elihu knew that he had the answer. What would the gospel be if it was simply conviction and no answer? Elihu had the answer, as you can see by what he says. How direct he is, how manly he is, how fair he is! The brethren can read the details. Job, he says, "thou art not right" (chap 33: 12). He goes by what Job says, showing how fair he is. He desires to justify him: "speak, for I desire to justify thee" (chap 33: 32). And he goes on in chapter 33 to the whole question of the ransom and recovery: "He will sing before men, and say, I have sinned, and... it hath not been requited to me" (v 27). He brings in the answer. Elihu had the answer and he had the moral power.

There are those who have it and if they speak to us, O, how much blessing there is in being like David and seeking to get the gain of it! Another thing that Elihu speaks about in this section is flattery. He says "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person; neither will I give flattery to man. For I know not how to flatter; my Maker would soon take me away" chap 32: 21,22. Flattery is the very opposite of what we are speaking of. Saying something to someone which will lead to inflation of the flesh and spread a snare and make the person fall: that is what flattery is. Flattery comes in in Proverbs, too, in no good connection in the woman who flatters and brings a soul to destruction. And here Elihu says "my Maker would soon take me away", as if to say, there would be very short patience on the part of my Maker if I was a flatterer. And he speaks so fairly and so directly. How near he gets to him! "Behold, before God I am as thou; I also am formed out of the clay", chap 33: 6. Then God comes in. It is interesting that Job does not answer to Elihu, he answers to God,

that is he gets right with God, because God comes in and God speaks and Job speaks. Then in the end there is wonderful recovery and wonderful grace, and wonderful blessing. Indeed Job prays for his three friends, he is taking that part for his three friends. Of course, it is Old Testament, and in that sense limited, but it shows surely that in Christianity these things can be worked out, because there is love, love among the brethren. There is that love, but it must operate and if it has to be this way, then the exercise is deep but very profitable.

Now in Proverbs we get sections that really relate to young people. Sometimes one is almost sorry for the young people, they seem to receive such a weight of admonition and reproof. In fact Scripture warns parents not to vex the children, not to be too hard.

Scripture takes account even of that. The children can take comfort from that; the Lord sees what happens. If you are subject to your parents' rebuke and your parents' instructions you will get blessing.

The Lord Jesus was in subjection to His parents. But then if there is anything you think is a little too hard, you can leave it with the Lord.

The Lord deals with all, we all are before the Lord. We know that everything we say applies to all, including the one who speaks. We are before God in that sense. The word of God has that character, that no one escapes, all things are laid bare before His eyes. So I can speak openly, I can speak, I trust, with acceptance because of the affection that exists, the family link that is in our souls through the work of God and through what Christ has been to us.

Proverbs is a book that is full of instruction and admonition, and it is imbued with love. You might open the book in the middle and say, It seems rather a catalogue of wise sayings, but it is a book imbued with love, paternal love. It is a book that is addressed to a son. It is addressed by the wisest man and he has put together this instruction in affection, to deliver it to his son for his salvation and blessing. It is imbued with the affection of a father, and of a mother too. Solomon spoke as one who had known a father's affection: "I was a son unto my father", Prov 4: 3. He had known a mother's affection and instructions too. In fact he tells us in that chapter what

his father had said to him. And now, as having known that, and as having received grace and wisdom from God in an outstanding way, he brings to bear all his resources in wisdom for the salvation and blessing of his son. That is what the book of Proverbs is, a book written in the greatest affection for the preservation of young people, and every word is important. You can read the book and get great gain. So in the book reproof comes in along with all the commandments and the light and the instruction. Two voices are raised in the early chapters; one is wisdom and the other is the flattering woman, the strange woman. That is the situation then, especially when you are young. There is the voice of wisdom, the voice of all the admonition and affection and the presentation of the truth, all the care, all the solicitude for your blessing that exists in the meetings, in the readings and in the addresses and in the preachings; the voice of wisdom, all brought to bear for our salvation. That is what the voice of wisdom is. How wonderful! And she raises her voice, too, so that you might hear, and she will reprove if necessary. But, O, what appeals! In one place wisdom says "I will pour forth my spirit unto you", chap 1: 23. There is that spirit then among the saints that is directed towards the young people. And if it seems a great weight of admonition, love lies behind it and it will stand you in good stead right through your life.

Another voice is raised and that is the voice of the strange woman who flattereth with her words. The world is marked by flattery. The strange woman is the world and she makes her appeal and she flatters, presents what is pleasant to the flesh, says that this will be good for you and you will enjoy this and you will fit in well here. Do not listen. The book of Proverbs tells us not to listen to the strange woman. Do not go that way; the issues are too serious. It is not just a question of coming to the meetings or not coming to the meetings; the issues are very, very serious. If you follow the strange woman you can find yourself consorting with the dead. If you follow her and are her guest in the world you will find you are consorting with those that are spiritually dead. What place is that for a Christian? This book, after the first few verses setting out the ideas

in the book, presents first of all a warning and then a reproof, the warning against sinners enticing and then wisdom raising her voice.

Young persons, we can say this, that if your heart has gone a little towards the world, and even your foot, wisdom would call and would say "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour forth my spirit unto you". Listen to the voice of wisdom, listen to the voice that comes through your parents, listen to what the Lord Jesus would direct in love for your soul. The issues are very, very great. "The path of life is upwards for the wise, that he may depart from Sheol beneath", Prov 15: 24. What is the issue? It is either upwards or it is downwards; it is as serious as that, but the path of life is upwards and it is the way of life, what David speaks about, the way everlasting, and we want to have our feet upon that wonderful way of life.

So where we read in Proverbs 6 is an exhortation to a son. "Observe thy father's commandment, and forsake not the teaching of thy mother", both of them. Perhaps your father is slightly stricter, perhaps he speaks a little harder. I do not know. Perhaps your mother appeals more. Whatever it be, listen to your father and to your mother, listen to all the appeals that there are. And indeed it says "bind them continually upon thy heart": you have something tied, bound to your heart, and that is this wisdom, this advice that has been brought to bear and the instruction that this book contemplates. Then "tie them about thy neck". The neck speaks of will, your will, what you might want to do. But then our necks have to be governed by this instruction, so that we do not do what the flesh would will to do. We do not stiffen our necks against what is really the voice of the Lord through the saints and through our parents.

And then this very interesting verse: "When thou walkest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee". You will be provided for continually by this wonderful wisdom. But then it comes to reproof: "For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching a light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life". It is the way of life, there are not two, and for that, dear young people (and we would address all the

brethren indeed, because we all need this), the way of life lies in this valuing of the commandment and the acceptance of the reproofs of discipline, that we might be kept "from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman". It is a wonderful thing that we can speak thus of such searching exercises and know that there exists among the saints the resource to make these things work. Love makes things work. Love is the motive and the power to make things work. If there is love, these things are possible.

Without love, no. But love is there; in all these matters it is the appeal of love and the exercises of love, and the end is salvation and blessing and greater intelligence, salvation from the world and from all that Satan would do. May we be helped, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

19 February 1983

ANSWER TO REPROOF

D.J.Hutson

Habakkuk 2: 1,2; 3: 1,2,17-19

We had before us at the weekend the matter of reproof, which comes in in the first verse that I have read, and one has been concerned of late, for oneself as much as for others, as to these occasions for prophetic ministry that we have week by week. It is a great privilege for us to be able to come together and to have many with whom we can walk in fellowship, walk together in the truth, and to have many vessels under the Lord's hand available to the Spirit that the word of God may be found among us. It is not so with all our brethren, as we know, for in the smaller gatherings it is not possible to have this occasion from week to week, or other occasions for that matter. We can easily, if I may speak for others, become so accustomed to these occasions, and occasions of fellowship in this city month by month, that we may be together without the exercise that we should be in in relation to the word, but just come that we may have a good time together, receive the word of ministry which may come to us to encourage us, or perhaps which we may feel is for some other brother and we hope he gets help from it.

Habakkuk was concerned as he looked forth to see what would be said to him, "what I shall answer as to my reproof". I wonder if we are each one of us exercised as to what answer we give to the word that comes to us. It calls for an answer in us, each one. Again I say I speak as much for myself as for any, but it does call for an answer, and Habakkuk was exercised as to what he should answer as to his reproof when the word came to him. It says that Jehovah answered him: "Write the vision, and engrave it upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it"; so it is to be something which remains. We are thankful that that which comes among us is something which is to have a permanent place in, may we say, the library of the assembly, not something to be forgotten, although one is often challenged, if one were asked as to what we had before us, for instance, on this

occasion last week. So it says that it is to be engraved upon tablets. Maybe that would connect with what the apostle speaks of as "fleshy tables of the heart", (2 Cor 3: 3), something that is written there indelibly and permanently with a view to a result; as it says: "that he may run that readeth it".

I just suggest that the answer that Habakkuk gave to his reproof is seen in chapter 3. Jehovah had spoken to him but now he speaks to Jehovah, he answers as to his reproof, and he says "I heard the report of thee, and I feared". It is right that we should do that; if the word of God comes to us it calls for a holy, reverent fear.

The word of God brings us into the presence of the God whose word it is, and so it behoves us that we should be marked by this fear of which he speaks: "I heard the report of thee, and I feared".

Then he goes on to speak to Jehovah as to the revival of His work in the midst of the years. How we can do that, for there is what we can thank God for in the way of recovery which is proceeding in other parts; but would this be our prayer, beloved, in answer to the reproof, in answer to the word that we have, that we might be promoting conditions among us in this city so that there might be a revival of the work of God among us? A revival in each one of us also so that we might be that little more quickened in relation to what the Holy Spirit has on hand at the present time, and that there might be conditions in which there might be seen the work of God in recovery in persons being brought in and added - increasing numbers available to the Lord in this city and in other parts, and maybe other places where as yet there is nothing established of assembly character. Surely the word would have this effect. The psalmist could say in that long psalm: "quicken me according to thy word", Ps 119: 154. That would be the reviving effect of the word of God as it comes among us, and we would lay ourselves open to it as we are rightly found in the fear of the God whose word it is.

And so it results in something with this prophet, and I would say again we are speaking of one man; it is just the prophet, just one person. It might be you, dear brother; it might be me; it might be you, dear sister, or another. It is just one person who is exercised to

hear the word and to answer, and he is replying in this way, and it results with him in confirmation. Our brother who has just spoken has referred to the full assurance. Think of the assurance this prophet has, that whatever may be taken away, whatever the disasters, whatever the conditions of famine or whatever it be, he says "Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah". Here is a man who has the full assurance of faith and he is fully committed, and he says "I will joy in the God of my salvation". He goes on: "Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength, and he maketh my feet like hinds' feet, And he will make me to walk upon my high places". But then he says "To the chief Musician. On my stringed instruments"; that is, that what he had answered he now feels has a place in the service of song, has a place in the service of God, and he commits his answer to his reproof to the hand of the chief Musician. How it would be, beloved, that as we answer to our reproof, as we take heed to the word and as it brings about a result with us, we can commit it to the Lord so that it is available to Him that there might be a richer note under the hand of the chief Musician in the service of God. He says "On my stringed instruments". He is going to have his part in it himself, but then it is to be brought into assembly circulation, so that as I said, although this is one man who is waiting, concerned that he might give an answer, yet now the answer is given and a result is worked out in him, a result in this way in the furtherance of the knowledge of God, and now it is to be available under the Lord's hand in view of there being enrichment in the service of God in the assembly. I believe that this is what our concern should be, beloved, as we come to these occasions so frequently, that there might be an answer from us each one and that as a result the service of God might be enriched. In the Name of the Lord Jesus.

LONDON

22 February 1983

A WORSHIPFUL SPIRIT

J.C.Evershed

Genesis 22: 4,5; Deuteronomy 26: 9,10; Judges 7: 13-15

I wanted to say a word, dear brethren, about a worshipful spirit. It is evident from our hymn and prayer that worship itself is an experience which is not by any means uncommon to us, but I have been a good deal exercised myself and no doubt others have, that we should maintain constantly a reverent spirit. One could not undertake to say much about worship, being the occupation of heaven which we learn down here. There are certain times no doubt when our hearts and spirits are extended in a definite way, perhaps only for a comparatively short time, in the worshipful appreciation of who God is and the way in which He has made Himself known to us. We should be thankful for that and should always maintain a worshipful spirit. No doubt there has always been worship to God, in the early time as Almighty and, as we have read, known as Jehovah, but now true worship would be to Him as revealed in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and particularly as having the Father in view. The Lord said "We worship what we know, for salvation is of the Jews", John 4: 22. God is a spirit, therefore He must be worshipped in spirit and truth (v 24). In other words, we should appreciate the true nature of God as a spirit and worship Him in truth, that is, in accordance with the way in which He has made Himself known. A thing that has often struck me is that the Lord connected worship with salvation in saying "for salvation is of the Jews". I can say, and no doubt the brethren too have found, that to have a worshipful spirit is in fact practical salvation to us; it preserves us from all that is evil and unholy, all that is merely of self, and many other things; it becomes a preservative and saving thing to have a reverent spirit.

So I ventured to read these three scriptures which bring out that the persons concerned in their time and age were worshipful in their spirits. In Abraham we have a man who was anticipating a

most critical and heart-rending matter in the path of obedience to God. What we find is that as the place is seen and the act of sacrifice becomes nearer and nearer, he is found in a worshipful spirit and says "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you". The light of what our brother mentioned in his prayer, of the resurrection day, was really already in the heart of Abraham, yet he would scarcely know how God would come in in His peculiar mercy. How important this scripture would be for us right down the ages as portraying in a figure the way in which God has given His only begotten Son for us. But there is just another side of it also, that these two went on together, so that we have the older generation going on with the younger. There may not now be the same age gap; Abraham was well into the second century of life, I suppose, and Isaac in his early teens, yet the same principle is now, and are we able to influence those who are younger and say, as it were, that "I and the lad will go yonder and worship"? Can we carry a worshipful spirit over to those who are younger? Abraham would have known what was in store for Isaac in the ways of God. In what he anticipated he did not fail, but he just said we will go yonder and worship. How are we, brethren, in the face of what the pathway of the will of God may mean for our younger brethren? They may have to give their lives. We older ones might have to. Some in parts of the world have had to do so. But, nevertheless, are we able in such a critical time to maintain this spirit of worship?

I speak now of the man in Deuteronomy 26. As has been pointed out, it is the only occasion of worship in this book that speaks so much about the land. Here we have a worshipper in normal conditions which we might say set out normal Christian surroundings. He had come into the land and he was enjoying it. I think we need, dear brethren, to think more of what is normal in relation to Christianity. It is a normal thing that we should be in the enjoyment of what God has provided for us. This man did not overlook the lengths to which God had gone to bring him in. Indeed in thankfulness for what God had done he came with praise for His acts in adoration of the way in which He had come out with a powerful

arm, and now he was in worship before God. We might say to ourselves, Well, it is nice to think about what is normal, and we ought to be like that; but a thought like that gets very near to unbelief. It may be true that we ought to, but I have discovered that when I say I ought to be like that, it often means that I do not expect to be. It means that I am looking at self and getting into bondage. To say that we ought to, or I ought to, could well become self, unbelief and legality. You will remember that Caleb did not say that about going into the land, he did not say we ought to go into the land; no doubt they should, but he said, Let us go into the land, we are well able to do it. And that, dear brethren, is a voice speaking of God, faith and liberty. So that this man sets down his basket; what he is enjoying is one thing, but his concern is that God should be worshipped. I have no doubt that God would be worshipped as together, because this scripture can be read as being instruction to the people as a whole, that what God would look for in the one He would look for in all. So that He says "thou shalt rejoice in all the good that Jehovah thy God hath given to thee, and to thy house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is in thy midst". We see how, when God is worshipped, there is a very great enlargement of heart, and one looks towards the whole of the people and the stranger, one's outlook becomes immeasurably increased as we accord to God what is suitable to Him in our spirits.

Well, contrarywise in Judges we have a man in a time of extreme breakdown and departure from God, a time when the land was impoverished and the people held in bondage. Gideon had an early private history which is in a way a model for that of any brother or sister. In secret he had to do with God, but here we find him in his public life and God taking him up and using him. When he heard certain news and the interpretation, he worshipped. One might have thought that in his joy he might have overlooked that and just returned to the people and said, Now I am going to lead you to victory. But it meant that the man himself and what he was went out of sight and on the telling of the dream and its interpretation he worshipped. One has wondered whether, if someone said, O, you

are really only like a cake of barley bread, should I worship? Well, Gideon did. And it would turn one's attention the more to the greatness of God. Gideon said, God has given Midian into your hand. He was emptied of self, I think, because he had God before him and that is really the only way. Some of us are more prone to introspection than others, but God takes account of all that and makes provision for us. The more worshipful spirit we have towards Him, the more we shall be free from, as it were, these thousands of Midianites who really represent the oppression of self in some way or another. Deliverance for Gideon and for the people he was with was in God and in what God could do. So who can tell what trumpets and empty pitchers with torches can do in the testimony? I suppose the sounding out of the word in testimony, the fact of being vessels and having the torches, would help to dispel what is opposed to the truth. One has often thought how Mr Darby, in meeting all the infidelity of his time, shone the torch of truth and it really blinded the opposers and set them against one another as happened here.

Well, dear brethren, I do not speak with lack of exercise by any means, because I am the first that needs a word like this, but I believe it is a word for us now and at all times to maintain a worshipful spirit with God before us. In the Lord's Name, Amen.

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THE CHILDREN'S SHEPHERD

It is well within living memory that flocks of sheep used to graze on the green commons of inner London. They were not folded down, as farmers say, but with the instinct that so-called silly sheep have they kept to the pasture and were safe. If danger came from one source or another the shepherd would appear for their protection. At other times it was difficult to tell where he was, but he was always watchful. It used to remind us that the Lord Jesus said of His sheep, "I give them life eternal; and they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand".

The scripture just quoted was on a text card sent by a kind friend to a young girl who was ill in bed and also anxious about her own soul. She was however disappointed as she read it and let the card fall onto the coverlet, sighing how much she wished she were one of the Good Shepherd's sheep. As the card fell it turned over and taking it up again she read "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". 'Oh!', she said, 'Even if I'm not a sheep I'm a sinner,

therefore Jesus came to save me!' There and then she proved that, as trusting in Him, she was not only a sinner - a saved one - but one of His sheep as well.

No doubt some children have found that a happening such as an illness or a disappointment has been the means of bringing them to a living knowledge of being in the flock of Jesus. It may not always be that way, as indeed when He took up little children in His arms, as lambs to His bosom, and blessed them. He laid His hands on them as well which means for one thing that He wanted them for His own and to grow up for His pleasure.

From Scripture you will know that the Lord spoke of Himself as the *Good Shepherd* who laid down His life for the sheep, and not exactly for the fold or the flock. His love singled out each particular sheep - and each lamb - as a precious possession to possess which He would give His life. How this endears Him to us! But His devoted care was not ended by His death. He is the *Great Shepherd* as raised from among the dead. Those who tasted His tender care in His days on earth were comparatively few. But many sheep and lambs have enjoyed and do enjoy it in the years of His being in the glory. Then to those who look for His appearing again and who seek to care for His own meanwhile, He is the *Chief Shepherd*. Are you looking for Him to come?

J.C.Evershed