

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 126

September 1983

Contents

PART WITH ME

CLOTHING

JOY ABOVE SORROW

THE CHILDREN'S KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

PART WITH ME

Reading at Croydon with J.B.Stoney (No.3)

John 13: 8

The subject before us this evening is "Part with me". It is not that I seek to get to the extent of it but to know the beginning of it. We have considered "Christ formed in you" - "not I, but Christ liveth in me" - and the more you enter into the reality of this, the more you necessarily know that you are in a new range of thoughts, tastes, interests, everything. Here Christ is going away, and He says to His disciples, Unless I wash your feet, passing through this world of defilement, you will not have part with Me. If you look at the history of grace in John it is very interesting, because you get Christ living in you morally. When you come to "I know my sheep, and am known of mine" there is now an intimacy subsisting between Christ and His own of the same character, I do not say measure, as that between the Father and the Son. That is where grace ends with relation to us. If you have not this intimacy, you cannot know when there is a shade of reserve.

Are defilements necessary in passing through the world?

Because of our natural susceptibility they are unavoidable. A very small thing will divert you from the Lord. You have entered on His line of things. It is not your duties, or business. The very air you breathe is not a help to you.

Is it moral darkness that we come in contact with?

Yes. You are often not aware how the defilement occurred. He knows; He washes your feet. It is plain to anyone who knows that Christ lives in him that then you like to be in the range of His ways and pleasure.

It would not be possible to have part with Him unless He washed our feet.

No, not possible.

Do you mean by part with Him intimacy with Him where He is?

Exactly; and I propose to touch the first step in it. One might say, Why not have the wilderness first? Because I believe you are better prepared to understand the wilderness path if you know what Christ is to you. I have before me now the book of Hebrews; first, that you have part with Christ touching the infirmities which press on you while here; and, secondly, part with Him as to His place in the assembly on the earth.

Is it that which makes this scene a wilderness?

The teaching of Hebrews is that Christ, the Person, who is not here, is so necessary to you that you are drawn away from this place unto Him, and the consequence is that Christ endears Himself so much to you that you run to Him - that is the race. It is not the *place* in Hebrews but the *Person* - I run to Him. How does He bear you above the pressure here? By His sympathy. How do I find Him here on earth? In the assembly. The two lines are outside of man. I do not want to go farther than that now - outside of man. I do not say outside of the world. I am only touching upon "part with me".

Do you mean you must be outside man to have part with Him? Yes.

Where shall I get sympathy from Him? Where is He? Not here.

Very well, you must go to Him where He is. There is a great deal in that. He is not only an Advocate but our Priest. A priest is to maintain you with God. Christendom has placed the priest between the congregation and God. You want to know that Christ would so maintain you above the pressure of circumstances that you can come boldly to the throne of grace. Let us look at Hebrews 2. The first point is that "both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren". Now follow up the subject we had last evening - He lives in me. Therefore you are of another order of being. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren". If you do not start there you cannot know sympathy. The general thought about sympathy is that the Lord will shew you consideration. "He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind". That is not sympathy. The sympathy in

Hebrews is that Christ is out of the pressure, and if you are with Him who is out of it you are borne above it; but if you part company with Him you are under the pressure again. While you are with Him He so absorbs your heart that you are above the pressure.

Is that by associating you with Himself where He is?

Yes; in His company you are borne above the pressure.

Does He not reach down His hand to me?

He draws you to Himself; He brings you into association with Himself; He is ministering to one of His brethren.

Is the sympathy of Christ the same as His support?

It becomes support because you are with Him. Mary of Bethany gives you a good idea of it. Martha got relief from the pressure but no sympathy. Mary discovered during that walk with the Lord more than she knew before. While she was mourning for the loss of Lazarus she found out that she had a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and I believe that He so endeared Himself to her then that when she heard He was going to die she anointed Him. What was anything to her if He died? "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her". I am not sure that it is in terms preached. It is not only that Christ loves the sinner but He makes the sinner love Him.

In addition to His support you have One who can enter into your pressure. "In all their affliction he was afflicted". You know He feels with you, but He is out of it, and He so soothes you by His company that you are more occupied with your gain in Him than with your bereavement. With Him you are borne above it, and you can come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace. Paul and Silas are a good example. They were in suffering, but they were most wonderfully supported above it. They were borne above it first, then mercy was vouchsafed. There was a great earthquake and every one's bands were loosed.

That is, He changes us morally.

Exactly. But it is by Himself. If you expect sympathy you do not look for anything else. This is because you know the solace He can be to you.

When I lose the support and sympathy, how am I restored?

By finding Him again. One great difficulty in dealing with divine things is that some put a human interpretation on the word of God. They call kindness and consideration sympathy.

Do I understand that you are using Hebrews to lead up to what "part with me" is in John?

I am using it as the first step. There are two steps scripturally concurrent. I am relieved of the pressure by being in company with Christ, and I find Him in His place here, that is, the assembly.

Do you come to the throne of grace because you have sympathy or to get it?

Because you have it. You are not distracted. There are three kinds of pressure - (1) circumstances, (2) bad health, and (3) bereavement. If you are so overwhelmed by pressure that you cannot pray, you cannot enjoy your place in the assembly.

You will be occupied with your pressure.

Quite so. I believe the great practical difficulty is to come to Christ's side.

That is the object of Hebrews.

Yes. The teaching most popular is that which sets forth Christ as He was down here; but the moment you press that you are to join Him where He is people say, Oh! that is too high.

But it is Christianity.

It is where Christianity is known.

Do I ever get to His side until I have known Him with me?

Certainly not; but you have come to that if you can say "Not I, but Christ liveth in me". Christ has His right place. You cannot have

sympathy unless you are of His brethren - unless you are in His company.

Then "all of one" do you take to be of one stock? Exactly. But if you add a noun to it you limit it.

Do you take this to be an advance upon the other?

I take it to be the fruition of the other - the very first step of one who knows that Christ is formed in him. I am presenting how you are really drawn away from this place by knowing all Christ will be to you where He is. Strictly, the saint in John is not a wilderness man at all: true, we have a power outside of it, but as to position we are in the wilderness. In Hebrews you do not get to heaven; but Christ, who is not here, is indispensable to you. If you get with Him when under pressure, He so absorbs you that for the time you are borne above the pressure.

Would you say that is the intention of the pressure? Sometimes it may be sent for that very purpose.

When we speak of the Lord coming to us in our circumstances - "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" - we are in wilderness circumstances.

Yes. You are to be content with such things as ye have. That is wilderness circumstances.

Then the other side is that we are out of wilderness circumstances when we have part with Him where He is.

I know nothing more difficult than to take our proper place in the wilderness, because the wilderness is Marah. How do you get out of Egypt? Through death. What do you get then? Experimental death. That is Marah. I do not mean practical death, I mean moral death. You are not out of the wilderness yet.

John 3 brings us to the end of the wilderness, does it not?

You come out in a new way before you leave it.

Well, I hope now that we all understand sympathy. You cannot know Christ as Priest unless you have known Him as your Saviour first -

your salvation must be a settled thing.

That is, the priest's work is not in connection with sins.

Yes; not with sins, it is with respect to infirmity. Infirmity may degenerate into sin but it is not the same thing.

But He makes propitiation.

He now maintains you in the virtue of all He has effected. This He did once, when He offered up Him self. The testament is of no force while the testator liveth.

If I bring myself under pressure through sin, do I get sympathy?

You must first come to the Advocate. You must judge yourself. If you do not judge yourself God judges you. A great deal of discipline is because a man has not judged himself for sin, and God is judging him for it. "Our God is a consuming fire".

What are infirmities generally?

There are three kinds. Pressure of circumstances: a man might be too rich or too poor. He might suffer from ill health, a very great pressure like a ship water-logged. Then there is bereavement, the greatest of all, because there is no repairing it; it is that which makes it such a terrible thing.

Then is the present state in which we are one of weakness?

We are liable to these things, and in ourselves we have no resource. The disciples immediately turned to the Lord to remove the storm, and He did remove it. But if you want His sympathy you say, No, I come to the Lord, and He will bear me up to where He is Himself. It is a wonderfully practical question, how far we have got to that. It is not only that He bears you above the circumstances but He is a great Priest over the house of God, and He maintains you in the place where He is, in the holiest of all.

There could not be much complaining if He were known in this way.

You must begin where we were last night - with Christ living in you. Suppose tomorrow you find you are under pressure and you say, How can I be maintained with God under this pressure? If Christ is

your life, if Christ lives in you, you have part with Him - you get sympathy - you are borne above the pressure.

Is it not a great hindrance to getting sympathy that we have unbroken wills?

Oh! Then Christ is not living in you - your old man is not crucified.

Do you want us to learn that it is better to be in pressure than to be relieved of it?

I do. If you are relieved, this place is more attractive. If you get sympathy, Christ is endeared to you; and instead of looking for anything in this place you are drawn to Christ, who is not here - He becomes more and more indispensable to you. In Paul you get infirmity of the highest order; and yet he says, I count it all joy.

The disciples lost something by awakening the Lord to calm the storm.

Of course. I have often asked the Lord to remove a storm, but I should have known Him better if it had remained.

Still, it is better to turn to the Lord in that way than not at all.

Oh, yes! but it is for relief. I think the Lord does sometimes vouchsafe relief to young believers to encourage them. Mr Wigram used to say, if he wanted a thing done in a hurry he would ask a young believer to pray for it.

Now we come to another thing. I am trying to trace our course historically. The first step is that He bears you above the pressure, and you are so undistracted that you pray. But that is not all. He is a great High Priest over the house of God. Now we come to the step which every true heart would like to know. You would like to know where the Lord will be found on earth. A great deal of the weakness of souls is because they have not taken this step. I do not say that they have not sought fellowship, but they have not come to where the Lord is. "Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious". First, you know Him as bearing you above the pressure here; next you join Him in His place on earth.

You cannot know Him in the second place if you do not in the first.

I agree, I do not think you can. The first is with reference to the pressure here; the second is the only place for the heart. If you know the first you will not stop there. Both are outside of man. The Lord came to His disciples on the water. Peter from affection says "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come". I do not put it before the young believer (but he has not 'part' with Christ if he has not taken that step), but I put before him the affection which would join the Lord where He is. You cannot join Him except outside of man - where there is nothing for man at all. To walk on water was no path for a man. Nothing save affection can induce you to take this step; it is the only true way to enter the assembly.

I must expect to find Him in an outside place. Exactly. It is in that connection in Matthew 14 that John the baptist is beheaded.

You say this is the true way to enter the assembly?

If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious you are converted. Now there is another step - "To whom coming".

"To whom coming", then, is not a sinner coming to Christ.

No. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious". You must come to Him outside of man. You say, Oh, I came to the room. What did you find? Well, there was a very poor meeting. You do not know what the step is. It was not the Lord you went to. I believe when you are gathered to the person of Christ you get more from His presence than from the nicest speaking. Thus in 2 Corinthians 3: "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord" we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord". You are transformed. This is morally the same to the Gentile as Hebrews 10 is to the Jew - the holiest of all.

But you would not have us insensible to the bad condition that produces a bad meeting.

No. On the contrary, we have known instances of saints who were not able to hear, being conscious of the Lord's presence. And they could tell you whether it was a good meeting or a bad one.

If they are near the Lord, they know where He is.

Exactly. I think Christians are not set for joining the Lord outside of man. I say, the difference between me and Peter is that I have the power and Peter had the affection. Peter had not the power, but everyone who has the Holy Ghost has the power. But you have not used your power. Still, it is a great thing to know where the Lord is.

If Christ lives in me, shall not I necessarily find out where Christ is on earth?

Of course, but you will find that you are borne above the pressure before you can find Him in His place, which is the assembly.

Do you say it is only in the assembly that a soul can behold the glory of the Lord?

Not exactly. I believe an individual can behold the Lord's glory, but it would only affect him in his individual path; but in the assembly he beholds the Lord's glory in relation to His own affairs. Some say, I had the Lord with me at home. No doubt; but He was only in relation to yourself. He is helping you. No doubt you need it. But if you come into the assembly it is like the Queen of Sheba coming to Solomon. She got into his house and into his circle.

Might a person find this out without learning that he is a member of the body?

I think he might. I do not think there is anything here about the unity of the body. There was nothing about it in Acts 2. It had not been revealed. The Lord has a place upon earth - it is really His house. The first thing a truly converted soul thinks about is - Where shall I worship? You get it in Exodus 15. It necessarily follows that if you are relieved of judgment you want to know - has God a place here?

How would you connect "beholding the Lord's glory" with the priesthood of Christ?

Where did Aaron and his sons go when they were consecrated?
Into the holy place.

Very well. Then if there is no veil, where are they? In the holiest.

Very well, that is where you are. The holiest is the glory of the Lord. To a Gentile it is beholding the Lord's glory. To a Jew it is that a Man has met all that was typified by the ark. The antitype is Christ Himself.

Why is it Son over His own house, and great priest over the house of God?

Because one is His right - Son over God's house.

In a word, What do we learn from the high priest over the house of God in Hebrews 10?

That not only you come into the presence of Himself in glory but He maintains you there. Aaron's sons went in with him. You come into the holiest so that you find Him in His glory. You have not yet come to the Father but to the place where the Father is. You cannot come to the Father unless you come to the place where He is.

But you do not get inside in Hebrews.

You get the right to go in. It is not going in and out at all. I do not say you may not soil your feet and lose it.

Then "Let us draw near" is once for all.

Once for all. We have always the right to go in, but if you soil your feet you have to judge yourself. There is no new consecration. Practically speaking, at the Lord's supper we are remembering the preliminary to consecration. The consecration did not take place until all the offerings had been offered up. Hebrews 2 takes you up at the twenty-second verse of Psalm 22, but the first twenty-one verses must have been fulfilled.

Is responsibility connected with "to whom coming"? It is calling more than responsibility. I would not press the Lord's supper on a young believer; but I should say, Would you like to join the Lord? Would you like to be where the Lord is?

Yes. Well, the Lord is outside of man. The truer a heart is the less will anything satisfy it except His presence.

Would the effect then be that the assembly would become our absorbing interest here?

Certainly you are brought into His interests. Hence the Holy Ghost is known to you in a different way from what He is in John 4 and 7. He is first for yourself. In John 14 He is called "the Comforter" because He takes the place of Christ; but if you do not take the place of a servant you do not know the Comforter.

All this supposes that the will is not at work.

Of course we start with "I am crucified with Christ". You must keep Galatians 2: 20 in your mind.

Is this all leading up to "part with me" in John?

It is the beginning of it. What we arrive at eventually is that He is Head over everything, and you are united to Him.

We are only at the beginning now. May I ask what the ship was?

It was what suited water, the Jewish system if you like. You are outside of what suits man. Nothing has enfeebled us so much as what people call joining the brethren - not understanding the ground of the assembly. I put before a young believer nothing but affection for Christ.

You do not expect him to see that the Lord is in one place and nowhere else.

No, I do not. I want him to join the Lord. You get an illustration of it in the young birds. The parent birds want their young ones to know that they can fly. They go about two feet above them, and the young ones try to get to the parents and then they find they can fly.

I believe many a Christian, if he really wanted to join the Lord, would find out he had wings - the power.

CLOTHING

J.A.Gardiner

Isaiah 63: 1-6; Luke 15: 21-23; Matthew 22: 11-14

I believe I was led to these scriptures, beloved friends, initially in any case because they refer to garments. Whether I should proceed with them and speak about garments I do not quite know. But clothing is a great thing in the world. The clothing business is a great business, I suppose. Man likes to clothe himself; it is right of course that he should because of the fall. Naturally man likes to invest himself with whatever will give him some distinction. I suppose the first thing that man did when he fell, when he got a conscience and saw that there was some deficiency, that he was naked, was that he felt he needed to remedy that, he needed to invest himself with something that covered up that exposure. What an exposure it was! So he clothed himself, he took fig leaves, made aprons, and sought to retain his respectability. That was not good enough for God. God has clothing He wants to adorn man with, wonderful garments He wants to clothe man with. One beloved man who came to Christ, who would certainly confirm what I am saying, came to such an appreciation of Jesus that instead of seeking to invest himself with everything that would promote respectability in the world and make way for himself in the world, he enumerates all the things that he could have invested himself with naturally; he says, I count them all dung and dross that I may gain Christ, (see Phil 3: 8). That was Paul, as you know.

Beloved friends, we are here in the presence of the word of God, and the word of God exposes us, it shows that there is deficiency with us. The word of God applied to Jesus brought out perfection. The word of God applied to you and me naturally brings out a deficiency, but God has the remedy for that deficiency in Christ, and as we accept the exposure and are prepared to submit to God's word we will come into blessing.

The portion I read in Isaiah points to the work of Christ: what a work that has been! You say that is a very judicial setting of things in that chapter; certainly it is. What does Edom represent in the Scriptures? Edom represents what is lawless and what God has to say He hates. Edom represents features that stand athwart God's accomplishing His purposes in His saints. Edom represents what is unbrotherly, what would seek to hold up the passage of true hearts through into the great area of eternal life that God has in mind for His people. Moses says to him, we will go through on the king's road, we will not drink of your wells, we will go through without in any sense appropriating anything that you have because we do not really need it (see Num 20: 17). Do you know the king's road? Do you know what the king's road is? Go to Matthew's gospel and you will find the King's road. Go through on that road. The King is meek and lowly in heart (see Matt 11: 29); that is the way He moves, that is His road. The children of Israel say we will go through on the high way; Edom says, you will not pass through lest I come out against you with a sword. That is the man of sin and shame who is obnoxious to God, who seeks to clothe himself with his own righteousness. In Genesis 36 you begin to read about Edom, the dukes of Edom, duke this, and chief that, and chief the next thing; all want the upward line, the line that is against God. Jesus has taken up the cudgels against that man. He has come into this preaching; in a sense He has come as from this chapter, come from Edom. He has come from a mighty triumph, He has come from His victory, and oh! He would assure your heart that there is no need for you to fear. He would say to you, I who speak in righteousness am mighty to save. Would you like salvation? He is ready to save. Later in this chapter He becomes a Saviour. Is that not beautiful? But you see how He has met things in this chapter, how He has met Edom, how He has met all that stands out and stood out against God. "Who is this", it says, "that cometh from Edom, with deep-red garments from Bozrah, this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" Oh, what power there is with Him, as He comes in God's word to speak to your soul! He is travelling in the greatness of His strength; what strength He has! Soon it will be manifested publicly.

Paul, having divested himself of all that would make something of him naturally, says all I am waiting for now is a body of glory, like unto His own glorious body; I am awaiting Him as Saviour and He is going to transform this condition which I am in according to the power which He has to subdue all things to Himself (see Phil 3: 20, 21). What a magnificent statement that is! He has won that power morally; He has gone into death; Jesus has gone into death in the accomplishment of God's will. He says here in this chapter that He has trodden the winepress alone. Have you seen Him in the winepress? Have you seen Him working this thing out in committal to God's will, in lowliness, in meekness"? Come along to Gethsemane, see Jesus working things out with God, giving expression to His own will, yes, but submitting it to the will of His Father. Never was there a man here like Jesus! That is royalty, that is a King. "Not my will", He says (Luke 22: 42); "if it be possible" (Matt 26: 39); He wanted that cup to pass from Him, that was His will. But then He says "not my will, but thine be done". Oh, the submission! He did not have to clothe Himself with anything; He did not have to take on anything, He was the thing Himself. Are you like the disciples? Can you watch with Him? Maybe you are not too interested. I do not think they were just too interested. In that place, a wonderful privilege, seeing the great thoughts of God being worked out, they fell asleep. Is that not sad? Does He rebuke them? No. He says just watch, watch, that you do not go into temptation (see Matt 26: 41). He goes away again and He says the same thing. Oh, the pressure that was upon Him, the pressure that the devil was bringing upon Him, seeking to divert Him from His purpose. Could He be diverted? No. He is committed to the will of God. That is the winepress, that is pressure. That is how He overcame Esau. He says He trod it alone and there was no man with Me. He never needed any assistance. Who else would be equal to working out this great moral problem, this great moral complexity but He? And He worked it out Himself in His own body on the tree (see 1 Pet 2: 24). Is that not wonderful? He has come into the preaching tonight from that position. He went into death, He lay in death, He rose again, He broke the power of death. He could not be holden of it

(see Acts 2: 24). And what power death has! How weak we are in the presence of it! Death is the expression of weakness in man; it brings out the weakness of man. He was crucified in weakness (see 2 Cor 13: 4); He did not go into death in weakness, He went into death in power. That loud cry was a proof that He was going in in power, and going into death He annulled him who had the might of it (see Heb 2: 14).

Oh how glorious Jesus is in His apparel! What garments He wears, garments of a Saviour! He fills out every divine office; He is invested with it. God has made Him both Lord and Christ (see Acts 2: 36), and He comes down to us in our need here to speak to our souls, to lift from us this terrible burden, this weight of sin that is upon us. He speaks through our conscience, says to us, Do not go and hide behind the trees, do not try and clothe yourself with something that is no clothing. Come to me, He says, and I will give you clothing, I will make you whole. He was here healing, He is still healing. He speaks in righteousness; you go through the gospels and you will find Him speaking in righteousness, "mighty to save". What a Saviour He is! One poor woman came into a house where He was and she could not say anything; she was so affected that she was giving expression to her emotions. In that house Jesus spoke in righteousness; He said a lot of things in righteousness; finally He says to her "Thy faith has saved thee, go in peace", Luke 7: 50. He is mighty to save. He is speaking in righteousness tonight. The great system of divine speaking is operative on your behalf. He made a mercy-seat, it says, of pure gold, and put it on the ark, and He says, there will I talk with you, there will I commune with you (see Exod 25). Are you going to come up to the mercyseat? You do not have to go into the tabernacle now; God has set Him forth a mercy-seat "through faith in his blood", Rom 3: 25. He will clothe you with His righteousness. Your own righteousness is as filthy rags (see Isa 64: 6); that is what scripture says. God has wrought out a righteousness in Christ, and you come up to Him and talk with Him. Would you like to speak with Jesus? He never turned anybody away, never will He turn anybody away. He is the

mercyseat, you see, the Saviour is the mercy-seat. "This is my beloved Son... hear him", Matt 17: 5. What is He saying? He is appealing to your heart, to have to do with Him about your state, to have to do with Him about your sins. Do not argue with Him; He is not looking for arguments. Job spent a long time arguing; he would argue the point with anybody; he even argued the point with God. There comes a time when Job has to humble himself, and he says "I... repent in dust and ashes", chap 42: 6. That is the kind of spirit that gets blessing in the gospel. That is the kind of spirit that gets blessing at any time. That is the voice of Judah, he took responsibility. I have not committed your sins and you have not committed my sins. You take responsibility for your own sins before God; He will prove to you that He is mighty to save, He certainly will. He proved it to Peter when he walked on the water - Peter actually walked on the water; when he took his eye off Christ he began to sink. Peter really thought he was going under. He says "Lord, save me", Matt 14: 29. Jesus stretched out His hand and took him; Peter proved that He is mighty to save.

Is your case hopeless? Do you think your case is hopeless? No, it is not. The worst sinners have already been converted. Oh! that big religious Pharisee who knew it all: the Lord spoke in righteousness to him: "Saul", He says, "Saul, why persecutest thou me?", Acts 22: 7. He is exposed, completely exposed. Did Saul answer back? Did he enter into an argument? Did he say, Well this is the principle that governs this and this is how it is going to be? He says "What shall I do, Lord?". The Lord would like to hear you say that tonight; He would like to save you, He would like to become your Saviour, and go along with you feelingly in all your affliction. It says He was afflicted (see Isa 53: 7). How feeling Jesus is! He has given expression to the feelings of God. He wants to break down the stoniness of your heart, the hardness of it. In new birth you get another kind of heart; God says He will give His people a heart of flesh; He would make you impressionable to God's word so that you become receptive to it. You build up a link with Him that will go on through all eternity. What is your answer going to be? Have you

something to say to Him? He has worked out this thing Himself completely. God has been completely glorified, completely vindicated. Suppose nobody ever came to Christ, yet God has been glorified in the death of Christ, completely glorified. And oh! the grace that comes right down to where we are, in our littleness, in our ignorance, in our lack of understanding, and just meets us there, and touches us in our hearts. That is Judah. Are you going to be like him? Are you going to take the responsibility? Everybody blames everybody else for everything; that is the way of the world; that is not the way of Christianity. Judah took on the responsibility because the thing really belonged to him in any case. As I said, you are responsible for your own sins. He comes to Joseph and he says "Ah! my lord", Gen 44: 18. He is smitten, he is convicted, he is going to have the thing out with him, he is not arguing, he is not setting out this and that and the next. And what is the result? He takes on the load of the whole thing. He stirs holy emotions in Joseph. Joseph says "Put every man out from me!", Gen 45: 1. Would you like to know Jesus? He will make Himself known to you. He has His own way of doing it. "Put every man out from me!", Joseph says. There was nobody there when he made himself known to his brethren. He said "I am Joseph". Would you like Jesus to say that to you now? He will say it, you know. He said it to Saul: "I am Jesus", Acts 9: 5. Would you like to hear Him say that to you? He says to Saul "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest". He says "I am Joseph. Does my father yet live?". Oh the affinity that there was between these two men in relation to the father.

Now here in Luke 15 there is a young man, and he has been in a terrible state. We all know the story, we have preached about it many times and, if the Lord will, we will preach about it as many times again. What happens here is that God is looking, looking longingly. This young man does not say anything for a start, he just makes a move. Are you going to make a move? Make a right move; there are plenty of wrong moves being made: too many. Start making a right move. He decided that he would go to his own father. Oh, God is looking, He is longing to see you move. He is not a hard

and austere man like that other man thought. God has made Himself known as Father. Would you like to call God Father now? He said, I will arise and go to my own father, I will get a reception there. And you certainly will. What does he say? He says "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee". He is beginning to come into the knowledge of God. Oh the blessedness of the knowledge of God, God as a Saviour God, God as a Father' That is Judah - "in Judah is God known", Ps 76: 1 - and that is how the knowledge of God really comes into your soul, because you have to do with God initially in relation to your sins. What a history Judah had! But that was all past.

The younger son said "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee", and he was going to say other things. God says, I am clothing you in the worth of Christ. "Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it". Is that not wonderful? You do not go into that house in your rags, nobody ever did go into that house in their rags. The best robe is taken out and the rags are removed, and he is clothed in it, and he goes into that house in the blessedness of sonship. That is adoption. Would you like to come into the family of God? Come into the family of God through the preaching. You are equal to it, you are no embarrassment to the family. It is wonderful to come into this great blessed family that God has, on the principle of adoption. Christ is born Son: "today a Saviour has been born to you in David's city" - He is born that, the Saviour - "Christ the Lord", Luke 2: 11. "Where is the king of the Jews that has been born?", it says, Matt 2: 2. You come into it in adoption, but God gives you His nature, you become a partaker of the divine nature. Oh! instead of that other nature that can only corrupt itself and sin against God and bring in dislocation and sorrow and suffering and distance and alienation, God gives you to be a partaker of the divine nature, so that you grow in love, and grow in the knowledge of God. Well might the Psalmist say "in Judah is God known, his name is great in Israel". Have you on the best robe? Could you be better arrayed? Did you ever sing that hymn? Mr Stoney says He has put on the best robe, let us wear it.

Then in Matthew 22 there is another man, and he is not for it, alas. There is a wedding garment provided for him. God is committed to honouring His Son. The utmost dishonour has been done to Jesus cast out of the world as worthless, crucified, denied, everything that was His taken away from Him. God is bent on honouring Christ. So in this setting He has made a wedding feast for His Son, and He has come in to see the guests, He has come in to have a look. He looks upon everyone to see how they are appreciating what He has provided. He has provided the wedding garments, He has given them. He comes along and He sees somebody here, a man, and he is not clothed with the wedding garment. It is not that he did not have the opportunity to be clothed with it, it is not that; it is that he did not want to be clothed with it. He did not want to wear it, he did not want to submit to the will of God. What else can God offer him? Has He anything else to offer? He is offering the very best that He has. He sees this man and he is not clothed with a wedding garment. Would that be you? Would it? Oh, you say, it is not me, I belong to Christ; that is wonderful if you belong to the Lord Jesus. How are you getting on at the feast? What sort of response comes from your heart to this bountiful provision, this expression of the plenitude of divine grace that the gospel sets out? Oh, I long that my heart was more affected and more responsive to the display of grace that is toward us in the glad tidings. I think I would be more evangelical, I would be more concerned to tell people about Christ. But here is a man, and he has not got it on. What does the King say? He says "My friend, how earnest thou in here not having on a wedding garment?". This man is speechless; he does not have the voice of Judah. He can say nothing, no communion; there is no link at all: is that not terrible? There are going to be people like that. It is very solemn. Persons in Toronto today will be coming to Christ, I have no doubt about that at all. There will be many coming to Christ tonight. I can assure you that that will be the case, but alas there will be persons who will be missing the blessing, who will be refusing to put on the wedding garment, preferring their own works and their own righteousness.

Oh how foolish! Oh the folly of such a course! There will come a moment when they have nothing to say - speechless.

I have often wondered what the thief on the cross, who died in his sins, will say to Christ when he comes up at the great white throne. I doubt if any person in the universe had witnessed such an expression of divine love and divine grace as that man, and he refused it. His fellow was converted, his fellow could discern the King and he could discern that there was a kingdom. There is a man who is obviously going to be speechless. That is a solemn and sobering side of the glad tidings. God is in real earnest, you know. This is not optional. You do not have options; you have a responsible life that has to be answered to to God. Jesus has died, He has been into death, He has suffered for your sins. God sets Him forth for your acceptance. God never divests man of his responsibility. Man was created a responsible being and he always will be. So you are responsible now, and I am responsible now as to how I answer and react to the word of God. Well, this man is cast out into outer darkness. It says there will be "weeping and... gnashing of teeth". How sorrowful that is: too late! The terrible 'too late', full of remorse; that is Esau, "he found no place for repentance" (Heb 12: 17), he despised the birthright; he sought it earnestly with tears but he did not think it was necessary to repent. Is that not awful? He was a pro fane per son - an element that would seek to usurp every feature of brotherly love and brotherly covenant that ever existed. That has all been dealt with in the death of Jesus. Jesus has dealt with that in Himself in totality, and so the summation here is that "many are called ones, but few chosen ones". You had better make sure that you are chosen, because we are in the midst of Christian profession, and because you break bread and go to the meeting does not necessarily mean much at all. What you need is Christ, a living, vital link with Christ. There are plenty of people in the world who break bread and go to meetings, but that is not a proof of salvation. The proof of salvation is that you humble yourself before God as conscious of the fact that you are a sinner and that you need a Saviour. Thank God for everybody who smites on his

breast and says "O God, have compassion on me, the sinner", Luke 18: 13. That is not profession, that is reality, and God is looking for reality in you and me. May the Lord help us to follow up His word and bless it to us, that we might grow in the knowledge of divine grace, the knowledge of divine love as it has been made known in Jesus.

TORONTO

10 October 1982

JOY ABOVE SORROW

F.G.Suckling

Matthew 11: 20, 21, 25-30; Romans 9: 1-5; 10: 1

I have been thinking the last few days, beloved, of the sorrows of the testimony and the tests of the pathway, and whether in these matters we can rise and be like the Lord Jesus with a note of worship. He says here "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth". We sang in our hymn about the living character of love of the Lord Jesus lifting our hearts above this earth to Him. We are reminded in a special way every Lord's day of the Lord's present love to us, and there should be that with each one and with all of us, in carrying the sorrows of the testimony, to be able at the same time to have the experience of this wonderful matter of rejoicing and saying "I praise thee, Father". What a spirit the Lord Jesus shows in this chapter, as we think of His public service coming to a close and the small result outwardly as well as the rejection by His own brethren and Israel! Yet in the midst of it all He could rise above it in His constant communion with the Father and speak as He does. He includes us in what He says; and have we not all received great encouragement from what the Lord said here?

In the same way, we find this spirit in the apostle. He speaks of "great grief and uninterrupted pain", and we should feel the same in regard to the testimony as we see the breakdown all around and feel how it has come so near to us; and we each have to test ourselves as to how faithful or how unfaithful we have been. He then goes on in the next chapter and says "the delight of my own heart". So while he has this uninterrupted pain, and while I know he is speaking particularly of his own race, nevertheless we can see it woven into all his ministry. He says at the end of Timothy that all had forsaken him and that Luke alone was with him, and that at his first defence no man stood by him, but the Lord stood with him and gave him power. There is always in the apostle's ministry those encouraging and substantial features of carrying the burdens of the testimony and

yet inwardly maintaining this rejoicing in his heart. And I would say that the uninterrupted pain and the delight of his heart was always related to his links with the person of Christ. How wonderful that the Lord has given us the Supper when we can be together and have the Lord personally before us, and be led on to the great matter of the service of God.

Well, it is just those few thoughts, beloved, that we may be with God in the exercises He may pass us through, and seek to carry the burdens of the testimony and the sorrow over the breakdown that we are in the midst of. There is to be that inward joy with us, and for us it is the Lord's present love that will sustain us. May we each and all be maintained in the experience of it, that individually, in our households, and in our localities, we seek to maintain right conduct in the house of God. The Lord loves always to feed us with His own present love. May we all experience it in a day by day way, so that when we come together there is food for us and we are encouraged and kept here in the testimony. Christ is always the issue and it is to be this testimony that we are to render here in all that we say and do. The question I constantly remind myself of is. Am I rightly representing God here? That is what the Lord always did and we have it with the apostle as well as those who have followed and maintained the apostle's ministry. May the Lord help us each one in it, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

13 July 1983

THE CHILDREN'S KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

Most children in so-called Christian countries will know something about Jesus, though I have found at a street preaching that English boys in their teens had never even heard His name! Moslems and other religious groups will agree that He was a great and good man in history. This would however be just knowledge *about* Him and although perhaps interesting to the persons concerned would have no saving value. Children returning to school will find many such in their new classes. It is to be hoped however that this would be a step towards a personal, living and saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps your own witness will help to secure this.

When Jesus was here He healed a man who had been born blind. It had never been heard before that such a man's eyes had been opened. In this regard it is interesting that this miracle was reserved, it was said, for the Messiah of the Jews, that is, Jesus. The cured man at first knew only that a man called Jesus had opened his eyes, so he knew about Him. Then his faithfulness to what he did know proved to be a step towards a closer personal knowledge of his Healer and led him to worship the Son of God. How quickly these precious movements can come about when there is desire to learn more of the Person!

I remember reading of a girl many years ago who was walking along a Norfolk cliff path when a sudden large crack in the ground showed that there was going to be a cliff-fall. She was on the part which would, and actually did, fall away. But in the nick of time a Drill Sergeant walking on safe ground and wearing the correct army dress of those days ripped off a large sash and threw one end to the child to hold so that he could haul her to safety. This mercifully he did but the little girl fainted from fright for a short while. Immediately she became conscious again her first words were, I want to see the man who saved me.

As having been saved for time and eternity are we not also eager to see the face of the Man who saved us? We can see Him

now by faith crowned with glory and honour, which is very wonderful, but what must it be to behold Him face to face! Are you too waiting and watching for that moment?

J.C.Evershed