

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THE CHILDREN'S CONFIDENCE

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UNION WITH CHRIST AND THE RESULT

Ephesians 2: 1-6

Our subject this evening is union with Christ and the result of union. We start with the fact that everyone is united, though everyone does not know it. Every Christian who has received the Spirit of God is united to Christ. "Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him". We cannot alter our position, though we all do not know it. The epistle to the Ephesians was written that you may know it. Some are not looking for conscious union, because they think that there will be no union till the ceremony takes place, namely, the marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19). You are not a confidential servant if you do not know union with Christ.

Do you connect the knowledge of union with the Head?

You never understand union if you do not hold the Head. It is remarkable that when the truth was recovered, Mr Darby woke up to the fact - I have a Head in heaven; and if I have a Head in heaven, every Christian has the same Head in heaven; and one Head involves one body. That is how he got it. He began with the Head, not with the house. This is important, because the house is in ruins, the body is not.

Then would you connect union with our subject last evening?

Certainly. I think if you do not hold the Head you cannot understand the unity of the Spirit. My foot moves to the spot that my head indicates.

Does union now go beyond they; that is, that we are united to Christ as Head and to one another by the Spirit?

You will find that it is by the Spirit you are brought into union. The difference between this and Colossians is, it is life in Colossians, not the power of the Spirit as it is here.

I was thinking, with regard to the marriage of the Lamb, would that be union in another form?

The bride will be in heaven before the marriage takes place. It is to establish her position before she comes with Christ to reign. In all the types there is nothing said about the ceremony. All the types refer to her place here on earth. Take Abigail; she is the wife of Nabal and she ministers of his substance to the rejected king. That is the last type of the bride. In the last churches of the Revelation it is occupied with the kingdom. Laodicea gets the lowest place. The youngest believer will get a place on the throne.

So reigning is beyond sitting on the throne?

To be sure it is. Philadelphia goes immensely beyond that. The first great thing is that there is union. The first fourteen verses of Ephesians 1 is *fitness*. It is individual. That is the first point - you must be fit I think the great lack of souls is fitness. You are not ready for union if you have not fitness.

Fitness for what?

Fitness for the Bridegroom. It is not salvation but it is fitness. The type will make it plain. The only thing Abraham's steward was sworn to was kindred.

You must be of His kindred. The flesh is not of Christ's kindred. It is very beautiful to see how he found out her kindred. How did he find it out? He asked the Lord that he might find her by her grace - the steward finds out her kindred by her grace. Many would have said, I shall be very happy to give you a drink of water; but she says, I will give your camels drink also. It was grace. "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers". Therefore, I say, that though every Christian is united to Christ, I do not think every Christian is fit for conscious union, ready to be conducted to where Isaac is. There is no knowledge of union till you come to the Person.

You have already said we are united. Are you speaking now of the conscious enjoyment of it?

Yes. You are to have the conscious enjoyment of it. Do you agree that every Christian is not ready for the conscious enjoyment of it?

Oh, quite!

The great thing is fitness. You are of the same stock. You do not get union in Hebrews, but fitness for companionship. You are of His brethren. You cannot speak of Christ's brethren sinning; I believe some would like the divine nature to sin sometimes, because they do not like to think it is the old man. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin". The flesh and the Spirit are distinct, and when one is in the ascendant the other is not.

Then do you mean that being conducted to Isaac is farther than fitness?

Yes, You are not ready to be conducted until you have fitness. The steward delivers his message; he wants to conduct Rebekah to Isaac.

Now from verse 15 to the end is the counsel of God. Here you are ready to go. Verse 19 is "that ye may know [conscious knowledge]... what is the exceeding greatness of his power". We all were raised up together, but we do not all know it. I remember Mr Darby used to say, Christ would not be complete without His body. I used to mutter to myself, He would be complete without anything. Who was right, he or I? He was. I imagined that the body was an addition to Him; but no, it came from Him. It is no addition, it is a development. We all come from Himself. This is the secret of God. A great many who are well up in Ephesians do not understand God's counsel. Someone has said it is not only that you have to be enlightened, but you have to get the "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" before you are enlightened.

You began with the knowledge of Him.

Exactly. But if you have not a conception of God's mind you will never take in Ephesians. It is not studying Ephesians that will do it.

Suppose I was talking to a builder about a building, he would say I could do it if I knew the plan, I have bricks and timber in plenty, and good workmen, but I do not understand the plan. Nothing but the "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" can give you an idea of the plan.

Do I understand you that as a preliminary to our understanding Ephesians we must have the "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him"?

Yes.

What is the plan?

You must get the "spirit of wisdom and revelation" and then you will find out the plan. You will be a good architect. You will comprehend God's mind.

Can anyone form a conception of the mass of people required to form the complement to Christ?

It includes all the saints; the weakest is necessary.

I do not understand the church coming out of Him.

If His body does not come from Himself where does it come from? Where did Eve come from?

Out of Adam.

There you have it. Of whose flesh is His body? Do you mean of His origin?

Yes; you are of Him. Either He is of you, or you are of Him. We read: "both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one". Put a noun to 'one' and you limit it. Therefore Abraham's servant was sworn as to kindred. Souls must first learn that they are of one kindred with Christ. He is not your 'elder brother' as is sometimes said, but through grace you are of His brethren and that makes a very great difference.

Now that we have seen our fitness and have apprehended the counsel of God, we will turn to the passage read, and there we get the realisation of union. You are raised up together and made to sit

together. You must come to Him, like Rebekah. She was conducted all the way to Isaac, and then there is the realisation of union. I do not say the journey was accomplished in a minute. She had to encounter two great obstacles. Nine-tenths of saints, though true, are stopped by the first hindrance - family influence. Rebekah's family proposed that she should remain ten days. The steward said "Hinder me not". Rebekah was called, and she said "I will go". She is decided now. There is great decision - purpose of heart before you will be conducted to Him.

God's purpose for us is the greatest distinction ever vouchsafed to any, even that every believer now should be united to Christ in heaven, and should realise it now while on the earth. In all the types we find the bride a comfort in a day of trial.

Then does the church minister to the heart of Christ? Quite so. Next, consequent on decision, having overcome family influence (nothing baulks a man like family influence), you have to encounter another obstacle. Rebekah had to go through the wilderness to get to Isaac. Every step she took in the wilderness was a step away from her family. There is no way to heaven but through the wilderness. She did not realise union until she saw Isaac. Now she is united to him.

Now that we have come as far as realisation, you might read from the 14th verse of chapter 3: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen".

Well, there you have what I may call the endowment; that is, your gain from union. I heard a man once say that the youngest believer could understand this. Surely he had no conception of the magnitude of the truth here. There are three great things which no one can know until he is united to Christ.

What are they?

The first: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith". This is not the same as Christ living in you. You have now a new set of interests. There is in your hearts by faith "the Christ" - all His. You never saw a good wife yet whose individuality was not merged in her husband.

Would you say a word about the Christ?

It means, all that belongs to Him.

Himself and His interests?

But they are one. God never separates the body from the Head.

You take it then to be "the Christ" of God's counsels?

Quite so. Now it is by the power of the Spirit, who has conducted you into the realisation of union, like Rebekah coming to Isaac, that your individuality is merged in Christ. You have a new circle of interests. Next, you are made acquainted with the scope of His glory: "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height". Thirdly, that you may know His love which passeth knowledge. Now you are to know it. No one ever knows what is the fulness of Christ's love until he knows union. Do you understand me?

Yes; I think you mean that there is no question here of the love of Christ in salvation, but you know His love when you realise union. Is it the truth that the Holy Spirit conducts me to Christ where He is?

Yes. You could not know union otherwise. Now you are enjoying the good of it - the endowment. We know in the type it was on earth, but now the Spirit of God conducts the soul to where He is.

Certainly. How could you know union if you were not where He is? If you had the sense of union you would have the sense of being 'in

His pavilion free from the strife of tongues'.

What you said about being outside of man.

Here it is outside of the world. Christ has gone to another place. Many would read "heavenly things" here, but no, it is a place.

In a word, What are the three things? The endowment?

First, His interests are your interests. Next, the scope of His glory occupies your vision; and lastly the knowledge of His love crowns all. You are filled into (not with) "all the fulness of God". The more I know the love of Christ the better I know Christ.

Would you say that you cannot apprehend the love of Christ unless Christ is dwelling in your heart by faith?

I think the order is; first, the Christ dwelling in your heart by faith. Rebekah first lost her individuality because of Isaac, then she could survey his property, and she knew his love.

But inasmuch as this follows upon union, why did the apostle pray for it?

He prayed that the Spirit might work, and that He might give the endowment. They could not be entitled to it otherwise.

Is the Christ dwelling in your heart continuous? Yes. It is by faith you have it.

If faith is in exercise?

Yes. Christ lives in you by the grace of God for your own comfort. Here it is the calling of the saints - "your hearts". It is plural.

Then it is not individual.

No. It is collective, though known individually.

I think it is important to see that, because some consider that it refers to your individual state.

It is only consequent on union. Now you can understand how a believer united to Christ is endowed. Christ's interests are yours, the scope of His glory is your scope, and you know His love.

What answers now to Rebekah's crossing the wilderness?

No one gets to heaven without realising that this world is a wilderness. Are you ready for it? When?

At any time. She had to break with her family and to travel through the wilderness unto Isaac.

Do you mean 'in spirit there already'?

Yes, you come to that; but I say that if you do not accept the wilderness you will not get to heaven while here.

Then domestic happiness might be a great hindrance at times.

In one way, but not in another.

I mean to the realisation of the wilderness.

If you are contenting yourself with any natural blessing you have not accepted the wilderness. When you make too much of anything here you are hindered by it. But as you accept the wilderness you will find nothing here.

"A dry and thirsty land, where no water is". Yes.

'This world is a wilderness wide
I have nothing to seek or to chose'

I can say that much, but the next lines embrace more.

'No thought in the waste to abide
I have nought to regret nor to lose.

You can sing it as desiring it. Are we up to it?

Do we not know joy until we realise heaven? Is there none in the wilderness?

The moment you have Christ formed in you you have joy: "rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice". "Joy unspeakable, and full of glory" is not union. Union realised is that you belong to Christ, and when you know that, you will come out in quite a new way. The one who knows union with Christ though once active in natural things, will now have a new set of interests, and will come out in a new way.

Would such an one realise crossing the desert? You wish to bring before us what we should by grace do.

Yes; you never can get to heaven without accepting the desert. You must break with your family and also with the world. That is, the young man who has "overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2) has to overcome the world.

The general interpretation is that we are all on the way.

Exactly, and that when you come to Jordan you

'Stand shivering on the brink,
And fear to launch away!'

It is making it the gospel that has hindered the perception of this chapter.

Quite true. But it is not the gospel.

Is it only the Spirit who can make this world a wilderness?

Naturally we are looking for something to suit us in it. We have to learn that there is not a green thing in all the land of Egypt. Look at Paul and John. Where did they end their days? In some happy retreat? No. One in prison and the other in exile. That is a great help to me, because as you are here for Christ natural things do not improve, and yet you never were happier.

If we are in the right place I suppose. Yes. Would you like to be there?

Would you say, What is the object of the church?

That is the next step. Read verse 20 again.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end".

There is your answer. The church is to be always the display of Christ to the glory of God.

"According to the power that worketh in us": is that resurrection power?

The power that raised up Christ. The same power that raised up the bird, so to speak, raised up every feather in the bird. That is our comfort!

Now you come to chapter 4 and there are two great circles of testimony. One is the church and the other your own family.

Is the first circle the church?

Yes. If a man does not behave well in the church he never will in his own family. You must begin at the top; it is a great mistake to begin at the bottom. Men try to work from man to God. Work from God down and you will soon see where you are.

Now in the first circle the great thing is "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" - a full-grown man.

Is it simply the object of the ministry?

Yes. You have not done your work until you bring every saint to that. The gifts are given for that purpose. This we see in a remarkable way in John 15: 26. The Holy Ghost was to be sent to the disciples to testify of Christ: "he shall testify of me". Then we get 'ye' afterwards: "ye also shall bear witness".

That refers to the twelve. That was only up to the resurrection.

The other applies to us all.

Yes; the testimony of the heavenly Man. It is Ephesian ground. We should be descriptive of the exalted Man at God's right hand; you a part and I a part. It is the calling of the whole body.

Is that the ministration of the mystery?

It would come out that way. This testimony of Christ (see John 16) would be very effective. The brethren at first gave up their position in the world in order to be in this testimony. No man holding a

position in this world can be a witness of Christ exalted. It is possible to be a servant but not a witness.

What do you mean by a position in this world?

Any recognised position. A postman's badge will not help him to be a witness of Christ.

To receive a testimony from the world would destroy your testimony of Christ.

Yes; surely such an one could not be a witness of Christ because he has a position in the world. Do you understand me? Do you agree?

I do indeed.

Well, next, the heavenly man is to be described in your own family. You get nothing about your family under law. I have not seen many fathers who have brought up their own children. Some allege that because of circumstances they could not do so. The Scripture makes no exception, and therefore I cannot.

You have to state the truth.

You would not get this information under the law. Now that you are united to Christ in heaven you are able to carry out every ordinance of God in the fullest way. Under the law you only get: "Children, obey your parents".

The heavenly man would not delegate it.

He would keep his children under his own eye.

But if man and wife are one, could you not delegate them to her?

Scripture does not tell the mother to bring them up because she would naturally do so. The fathers are responsible.

There is one subject more, and that is in chapter 6. Read verses 10-13.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the

rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places".

Now you see that in the circle of testimony we have to confront the combined force of Satan, If you seek an easy life on earth you will not touch the heavenly side of truth.

But it would not be good to seek that.

No, certainly not. If you suffer with Christ you will reign with Him; and if you do not realise union with Him you are not a confidential servant. I might say to a civil engineer, Can you do that work? Yes, he would reply, if the money is forthcoming. If you are in the power of the heavenly Man you can overcome everything. Difficulties are only opportunities to display the power of Christ. You may have seen a child cry at a fly. But by-and-by he gets power, and he kills the fly. The difficulty has vanished. Some think that because they are interested in this scripture they are experimentally in it. There are, I should say, but few who know this conflict. You lose the power of scripture if you misapply it. Here you encounter the full force of Satan. Satan has worked up man to cast Christ out of this world, and now he cannot tolerate that anyone should be descriptive of Him here as the exalted Man. Satan always throws something in your way to allure you from the heavenly path.

Do you make a distinction between the power of the enemy and his wiles?

Yes; I think he begins by wiles. If he can get you into a bye-path he is satisfied. It is well to remember your history, what you did, and how you got turned off, and how you came back again.

Only histories never tell you how you got turned off.

As a rule they always recount the best things. But we read, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee", and when you look back there is enough to cast you down - how you have been hindered and turned aside. Satan has only two barrels to his gun. He will allure you if he can, and if that will not do he will try the other, that is, he will crush you. With the blessed Lord, he came

to allure Him. If you refuse the allurements which Satan throws in your way, so surely will he subject you to persecution. As was said to Mr Darby, You would not mind if the newspapers abused you, but for God's people to disparage you, that is very painful.

It is a great mercy we always have the power of God.

You will never enjoy it until you know union with Christ.

What is "as thy days, so shall thy strength be"? That is where you put yourself.

How does 'crushing' come to us now?

By persecution. If you step out as a heavenly man, the first thing will be that Satan will throw something in your way to allure you, and if you do not take the bait, he will subject you to the opposition and enmity of even Christians.

It will not take a moment, if you would just go over the headings to gather it together.

Fitness, counsel, realisation, endowment, result in the church, testimony, and opposition - conflict with the enemy.

GOD CAN DO EVERYTHING

C.F.Dadd

Job 42: 1, 2

At the time of the Lord's supper, which is the doorway into the service of God, the last hymn we sang was given out by a very young brother; it was number 406, and the last line of that hymn says 'Thou canst be hindered in no thought of Thine!'. Those words have since been echoing through my mind. The greatness of God is brought forward in that hymn beautifully, finalising with that thought that Thou canst be hindered in no thought of Thine.

Job comes through to this thought. We have been reminded tonight of discipline, of pressure, adversity, suffering; this is something we have come to learn possibly as we never thought we would experience, but in it all God has had His own designs, He has had His own thoughts, and in the way He is proceeding He is reaching His own end. This is the way that God moved with Job. If you and I had been contemporary with Job we would have known him to be a very remarkable man and no doubt a very upright man, but Satan challenged God as to Job and in his audacity he said to God, If you did not hedge him around and protect him he would not be the same. He said, If you let me get at him He will curse you to your face. The audacity of the devil to say a thing like that! but that is the devil that we are dealing with. So in the ways of God He gave Satan certain latitude and the discipline that came on Job I suppose stirs every one of us when we read about it. Sometimes we think that our discipline is extremely deep, and no doubt we would have to say that with some it is deeper than with others, but when you read the history of Job you say, What that man went through! But in all his discipline, all the pressure, the loss of his family, the loss of everything he had, he learned God; that is what he got through to.

My concern, beloved, is that we might come to know God, the God who can do everything. Job says, "I know that thou canst do everything". That is marvellous! What a thing to come to! You

might say that Job had had a lot to say; maybe some of us have had in our histories too much to say, but God worked with Job and brought him through. And Job says to Jehovah, "I know that thou canst do everything" - not anything, but *everything*. I wonder as to myself and as to my beloved brethren whether in our experience with God we have come through with the settled knowledge of and a relationship with God in which we can say, I know that Thou canst do everything. If it is calling the universe into being He can do that with His word; if it is calling the sun and the moon, putting the stars in their courses, He can do that with a word. That is the God, beloved, with whom we have to do. Job says "thou canst do everything".

If in His ways with the children of Israel they go down into Egypt for four hundred years the eye of God was always upon them and the time came when He opened the way through the Red Sea. Think of that! There was the sea, a wall on one side and a wall on the other and they went through on dry ground. We know that God can do everything. What has been accomplished in the death of Jesus! The scene which is blotted with the power of sin and shame and violence and corruption is, in the power of the death of Jesus, held in reconciliation to God. Job says "I know that thou canst do everything". I wonder if we have embraced this. Would it not help us as to our families that God can do everything? Would it not help us in our localities, New York or Plainfield or wherever it might be, that God is able for every matter? Do we know God in this way, that He is a God who can do everything? He wants to get us through to this. This is why some of us have to go through so much discipline, to get us through to a settled knowledge of God, and in that knowledge would be the understanding that He can do everything. The people will dwell in Zion, they will be in Jerusalem, He will bring them into their own land. Where are they now? Scattered to the corners of the earth. But God knows where they are, He will bring them back from every corner and will place them in Jerusalem; He will place them there according to His own purposes, His own thoughts; He can do everything. That is the God with whom we have to do. I wonder if we have confidence for this. I believe we need to

be strengthened. We are in a day of small things, we are still going through much in the way of pressure and feeling the effect of smallness, but, beloved brethren, God wants to get us through to a knowledge of Himself and in that knowledge He would teach us that He can do everything. Do we believe this? Do we have confidence in God? Job came through. Look at his end: what an end he had! His family: what were they morally against what he had before! What were they spiritually! There was no numerical change but what they were spiritually! There was none more beautiful than the daughters of Job.

Job goes on to say: "and that thou canst be hindered in no thought of thine". What a God! Our thoughts have been directed tonight to the purpose of God, the sovereignty of God. Can you take it in that before the foundation of the earth God chose you in Christ? Just think of it! How long ago was that? Was it ten thousand years ago? Was it a million years ago? It was back before God had created time. We know that God created time and in Christ has dipped down into it and worked out certain things, and when He has brought His final thought into operation He will terminate things here. Time will cease to be, it will have served its purpose. In the meantime we are in the time scene and Job arrives at the fact that God can be hindered in no thought of His. So He is going to take us in, beloved brethren. Here we are but a handful; we are in a city of eight and one half million people and we are insignificant, you might say meaningless, as far as the city is concerned and yet God has His eye on us, He has His eye on every believer in the city, He knows every one of them. How many do you and I know? A handful. But He knows every one, He knows every one that has been covered by the blood and He will bring every one through to His final thought - He can be hindered in no thought of His.

Think of the final touches that we get in the end of Revelation as to what God will do, how He will terminate things - the rapture, all that He is going to do among the nations, what is going to be seen in the city coming down out of the heaven from God having the glory of God. God can be hindered in no thought of His, and He will dwell

with men eternally, He will dwell with men through the assembly "the tabernacle of God is with men", chap 21: 3. He can be hindered in no thought of His, every thought of God is going through; it cannot be intruded upon because God is God. This is what Job gets through to and this is what I believe God would have us get through to. Our brother referred to the fact that we may be still in the trouble time in our minds, in our hearts we still might be in the latter part of Luke's gospel where they were very much concerned and upset when the Lord came in amongst them. They were disturbed; maybe we are disturbed. I believe, beloved, that God would have us get through to a knowledge of Himself which would bring in stability in our affections; it would bring in stability in our minds if we could just get through to the thoughts of God and the fact that He can be hindered in no thought of His. Now that includes everything as to you and as to me. God is going to see us through. Can we depend on God for that? Let me tell you brethren, God has committed Himself to get us through and He is going to take us through; the Father is committed to take His children through. Through the grace of God we can be numbered amongst the children of God; not of our choosing, you did not choose me I did not choose you, but God chose both of us, that is God's thought, and He says, I am going to take you through. And Job says that he knows that God can be hindered in no thought of His.

So let us be restful beloved brethren, let us have confidence in God, let us believe God. It says of Abraham that he "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness", Rom 4: 3. Think of that! Can we get through to that, that we really believe God? I believe it would bring in the great matter of stability, it would build us up. Oh, how God intends to build us up and strengthen us in our faith. May we now with the help of the blessed Spirit of God, the help of that blessed One who is at the right hand of God who is the Leader and the Completer of faith, may we come to it in our own souls that the God we know can do everything and that He can be hindered in no thought of His. May it be so for His Name's sake.

NEW YORK

11 October 1983

THOSE WHO ARE LEFT

D.E.Burr

Leviticus 10: 12-17; Ruth 1: 1-5; 2 Samuel 9: 1-4; 1 Kings 19: 12-18

The link between these passages, beloved brethren, is that they speak of persons who are left, and I would just like to draw some instruction and encouragement in relation to that because in a certain sense we are all here as persons who have been left. The tide of the testimonial history has gone on and carried away some: we can look back on a day when we were in fellowship with persons who were numbered in tens of thousands, I suppose, universally. But we are in a day now of weakness and breakdown and I think we could say that we are the ones who are left; we have been left when others have moved away, the breakdown in the testimony has carried them off. Of course it would apply too to certain of our brothers and sisters who have been left as widowers and widows and we can speak simply of them as those who are left, the spouse has been taken away in God's ordering and there are those who are left. Well, what are we going to do as we take account of that? Are we going to bemoan the state of history? Are we going to bemoan God's ordering that He has chosen to work in that way and that things are not as bright as they once were, that we have not the companions that we used to have, that we have not the local assemblies to visit that we used to have, that more responsibility falls on us because we are the ones who are left? Is that the way we look at it? Or is it rather to be that there is the responsibility to be taken up, work to be done, a stand to be taken, the service of God to continue? I think that we get help as we forget the things that are behind and press on as Paul did to the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus (see Phil 3: 14). What an outlook he had!

In Leviticus 10 there had been the strange fire which was referred to in the reading. I am thankful for brothers introducing thoughts into the reading when we are together. This strange fire

was referred to and the result was that of Aaron's four sons, two became involved in this question of the strange fire and God had to come in in judgment - He removed them. In a sense that is what has happened in the testimony in our day. There has been a period in which strange fire has been offered, commandments not according to God and service not according to God, not according to the truth and teaching that has come to us. But then there were Eleazar and Ithamar the sons who were left, and I think the instruction of this passage is to indicate how the service of the offerings is to go on, that because two have died in their own sin things were not to collapse and be given up, least of all the service of God, what was for His pleasure. So "Moses spoke to Aaron, and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons that were left". You might say it is short of perfection, it is limited, but Moses is concerned that the offerings should continue and that the priestly food should be partaken of. So in this passage we have the oblation referred to "and ye shall eat it"; and the breast of the wave-offering, ye shall eat it, and the shoulder of the heave-offering, and they shall be thine.

These offerings in particular do not exactly stand related to man's need - we come on to the sin offering in the next paragraph - but here we have the oblation, the wave-offering and the heave-offering, and I do not think any of those really stand related to man's needs, breakdown or failure, they stand related to what was for the pleasure of God and speak of the perfection of Christ as Man here. The oblation in particular would speak of Christ in His manhood in the glory of the perfection of who He was and how He went about in the expression of God, evenness, the fine flour coming into display, the Spirit of the Lord being upon Him because He had been anointed to preach glad tidings to the poor (see Luke 4: 18). That was the Lord Jesus here as Man under the eye of God; 'Divine perfection in a Man' as we sometimes sing (hymn 20). And that is to continue as food for the priest. It is not to be given up; we are not to say, Well, Nadab and Abihu have broken down and things have all gone to pieces. That is not the approach. What is expressive of Christ as Man for the Father's pleasure is to continue to be food and to be

partaken of in view of the maintenance and upbuilding of a holy, spiritual constitution.

Then the wave-offering, I think, speaks in particular of the affections; it speaks about the breast of the wave-offering and I think that is suggestive of the affections of persons and the interest and concern to bring impressions of Christ and to wave them, that is to present them affectionately, before God for His satisfaction and to be reminded of the perfections of Christ; not, as I say, exactly in relation to man's need or failure but keeping in our minds the glory and beauty and affection of Christ and the presentation of it for the Father's pleasure. Then there is the shoulder, the shoulder of the heave-offering, and that I think is suggestive of a certain energy; it is lifted up. It is presented on the basis of the energy of love and committal to God because of the joy and the appreciation of Christ here as Man that would be appreciated by the Father as presented to Him; that is, that we come into line with the perfections and glories of Christ that we can energetically bring to God and be in line with His own thoughts.

Then too there is the peace-offering; how needful that that should continue! You might say, There has been conflict, there has been loss, disaster, things have broken down. But God is looking for the peaceoffering, He is looking for the maintenance of what Christ has secured through His death, having made peace by the blood of His cross (see Col 1: 20), removing the enmity. The line of division and disunity is entirely contrary to the thought of God in relation to His people and He is looking for the presentation of the peace-offering. That is one of the features of the kingdom - righteousness, peace and joy, - and these are things to be followed by those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Peace is intended to be arrived at. We say righteousness is our leader and that is true; in that scripture in 2 Timothy 2 peace is the last of the list, but it is not left to the last because it cannot be attained, or because it is one of those glorious impossibilities; we are intended to work through the list and to arrive at the end.

Then there is the sin-offering and it says that Moses "was wroth with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron that were left"; that is, that things had not been done according to commandment. They had evidently not eaten the sin-offering in the holy place. So there is this side of the maintenance of the sinoffering that it should be partaken of. The wrath of course is abated here. When we get down to the end of the chapter where it is said as to Moses "it was good in his sight" there is an answer, there is an explanation, but nevertheless the fact is that there had been some weakness and breakdown and it brings in the side of wrath. Well, these things are to be maintained although it is a broken day; although things are not in their pristine glory, yet the full scope of the commandment of God in relation to what meets His need and meets our need is to be maintained and not allowed to lapse.

I refer to the book of Ruth, and what is in mind is to draw attention to Naomi. Naomi went off with her husband and there were these sons who took Moabitish wives and then it says there was a famine and Elimelech died, and Mahlon and Chilion died also, both of them. It seems to emphasise the fact that death had come in and the male element, the responsible element, had completely broken down, it had departed. No doubt Elimelech had given this lead out into the country of Moab, but it led to the death of himself and ultimately of his sons. So that it says "the woman was left of her two children and of her husband". As we know, Naomi in this book speaks of the assembly in its position of breakdown publicly, the position that is not exactly marked by attraction, it is not grand, not glorious publicly. We are in a day of small things. You cannot find the assembly in New York or in New Jersey, we are in a day of breakdown when the responsible element in that sense has died, but there is that which is left, Naomi is left. And really that is sufficient; God sees to it that in Naomi and one of the daughters-in-law there is sufficient to carry the testimony through. So if the testimony is in breakdown, if it is in weakness, if it lacks attraction publicly, if the children perhaps feel that they would rather be found at some kind of grand cathedral or church building rather than

meeting in an undistinguished meeting room, that is part of the Naomi position, a position that has little to commend it in the public eye. But, as I say, it was sufficient here for God to work with, and it is sufficient in our day for God to work with; whatever the breakdown, whatever the smallness, God has what He has reserved, He has what is left and it speaks to Him of the whole, it speaks to Him of the totality of the assembly, and I think He would encourage us to look out for the attractive features in the assembly in its Naomi character. Ruth found it; Naomi urged her to go away but Ruth said "Do not intreat me to leave thee". Is that the kind of committal that we have in our day in our places, in our local assemblies? Are we saying, "Do not intreat me to leave thee, to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God"? Ruth, you see, got past the breakdown, the failure, the weakness, the lack of pretension, and she got through to the reality and attractiveness Naomi represents and she clung on to that. Of course she was to find out that Naomi had a relation, a mighty man of wealth. Well, the assembly today, your local assembly, the company that you keep has a mighty Man of wealth, a Man who has everything under His hand sufficient to meet your needs here, sufficient to interest you in the assembly to provide life and joy and to be with you in the service of God, that mighty Man of wealth. And it is Naomi who would lead you there. I know that we have our personal links with the Lord, we have Him as Saviour, we come to confess our sins and find that He has removed that burden from our shoulders, the consequences of our sins, but do we know Him as Naomi's mighty Man of wealth, the relation? That is the relationship that is enjoyed as in the assembly, and the experience of union, the experience of His embrace, the service, as we refer to it, of the Minister of the sanctuary. You would not know much about the Minister of the sanctuary if you did not know much about Naomi; it is through that means that you come to be acquainted with the Minister of the sanctuary. While Naomi was left, and there is what is left today, I think that we do well to look for these features of attractiveness that are there, features that would lead us to Christ.

I refer to David. This is a supreme example of blessing. David says "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness". Think of the true David looking around as it were on individuals lost as to a position in this world, having given up everything here, unable to find a place or fit in, unable to walk amongst the nobles of this world, and yet David would say, Is there any one left that I may show the kindness of God to him? Have you had that experience, beloved friend? Have you had the experience of God desiring to have His kindness and His love shown to you? Well, it is available to those who are prepared to take this Mephibosheth position. Mephibosheth was in it perforce, he was lame and he had not been cared for properly and yet he is elevated to eating bread continually at the king's table. The true David would be concerned today for those who are left of the house of Saul. He is not leaving you, He is not leaving these persons in their straits; this place of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel in Lodebar was a desolate kind of spot, a spot where there was no provision, no life, no source of enjoyment, and Mephibosheth was there just content to keep, as we might say, body and soul together. But David is not content; Christ is not content, He is not content with persons just being on the fringe of things, He is not content with persons that do not, as we were having at Indianapolis, get into the real centre and enjoy the swimming in those waters that issue out of the house. David has a search made that this man might be brought up. Mephibosheth takes a lowly place but he is brought into this position. Mephibosheth, said David, shall eat at my table as one of the king's sons. That is what the Lord would seek to do for any of us as we accept this position of unworthiness, incapacity and yet marked by responsiveness to David's love, that because of your straits, because you have been left, He would raise you up to eat continually at the King's table.

Elijah is perhaps somewhat of an unusual situation. He gets to the point where he is sorry for himself. He thinks that he has done great things; he says "I have been very jealous for Jehovah the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant". He is

engaged with what other people have done, their failures, their breakdown. He says, I have been very jealous and I am left, I alone. I think it has been said that Elijah really lays down his commission at this point. And God accepts it, God accepts the laying down of his commission because He says, Anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat prophet in thy stead. We do not want to get to this point, we do not want to get to the point of thinking that we are the only one that God has, get engaged with our own selfrighteousness, get engaged with the work that we have done, look around on the brethren and say, They are doing nothing, I am the only one, I am standing here and they are seeking my life to take it away. God has to say to him that if that is your attitude I have someone else who can take the job on. There is Elisha and he will be prophet in thy stead. But it comes to light too that God is able to say, I have left Myself seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth that hath not kissed him. Let us never, beloved brethren, get to the point of thinking that we are the only ones, that we are the church or that we are all that God has. Maybe these seven thousand were not very faithful, maybe Elijah should have known them, they should have come forward and identified themselves so that Elijah would have known, but they were persons anyway that God had taken account of, they were like those in 2 Timothy 2; "The Lord knows those that are his" (v 19). "I have left myself seven thousand in Israel". Elijah did not know about them and we of course do not know about the totality of the fulness of the work of God in the places in which we are or indeed in the world. Let us never forget that God somewhere has these seven thousand that we know nothing about. He has His own men, His own reserves; He has His own response, but we are to be kept in the humble sense that God has far more than we know about. But do not let us, nevertheless, be amongst the seven thousand that Elijah did not know about. We do not want to be like that, we do not want to be hidden away, lost in a corner, the piece of silver lost in that house, covered up in the dust so that great searching had to be made to find it. We do not want to be left in the sense that there is no life in us, no testimony, no response Godward. God can bring out in His own time His own work; Israel is going to be

born in a day, let us not forget what God is able for. The Lord's descent from heaven will reveal the fulness of what He has, but for us let us not be amongst those that Elijah did not know; let us be active and in the pursuit of the service of God and what pleases Him and, as it were, be on the Naomi line rather than on the Elijah line at this point. Elijah was a good man, he did a lot of valuable things, but I am just drawing attention to this one moment in his history, and any of us might have one final moment of breakdown and failure after a life time of successful service if we are not careful, if we are marked by self-confidence and self-opinionation. But we are to go on in humility and confidence in God.

Well, I just draw the attention of the brethren to these persons and encourage them to go on actively and energetically in the situations in which they find themselves, because it is all in God's ordering and it is in view of His pleasure and service being maintained

PLAINFIELD

3 December 1983

THE CHILDREN'S CONFIDENCE

Looking back on an early visit to the deepest coalmine in the Forest of Dean, I can see a remarkable picture of the simplicity of the way of salvation. A visitor down at the 'workings' who wanted to get from the darkness into daylight would simply need to step into the 'cage' which would surface in a few seconds of time. Of course, if he did not have confidence in the help that was so readily to hand for him, he would remain in the gloom for ever. But he would have to do just nothing to help to raise himself into the light. Indeed if he were to meddle in any way with the cage it might be disastrous for him.

The jailor at Philippi, though of course not down a mine, yet in his own prison anxiously sought to do something in order to get from the terror of darkness into the light of day, calling out "Sirs, what must I do that I may be saved?". All that was required of him was to "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house". Just as there is only one way out of the blackness of the coalmine, so there is only one way of salvation for the sinner.

To take the illustration further, when at the 'top', the visitor would doubtless wonder at the simplicity, quickness and safety of his rise into daylight. Although he had to do nothing to help himself someone had completed for his benefit the necessary work by much thought, labour, care and expense. How loudly this tells us of the perfect atoning work of the Lord Jesus who died that we might live and have the light of life in exchange for darkness and the "judgment of the great day"!

The mine owner had to dig a shaft deep, deep into the earth. Jesus not only died but was buried, and this is part of the glad tidings. He was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. He did not carry the sins of believers down to those depths because

He had already shed His blood and atoned for them. But as enquiring more about the perfect work of Jesus you will learn the meaning of His going, as it were, a very long way out of sight and for an extended time. It was a sign of His bearing what was due in judgment upon the nature of the persons who had sinned and thus become an offence to a holy God. Is this good news to you?

J.C.Evershed