

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

AN OPENED DOOR

THE CHILDREN'S NEEDS MET

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Luke 22: 14-21, 25-27; John 13: 1-9; 20: 19,20; Acts 1: 1-3

R.T. What is in my mind is that there may be some fresh impression in our hearts of the love of Christ for His own. The first passage we read speaks of Him desiring before He suffered, and the passage in Acts speaks of Him appearing to His own, presenting Himself after He had suffered. During that period of time the Lord seems very concerned to leave with His own an impression of His love, His dying for them in love. There comes a point in the gospel where He seems to turn His attention to that line of things. We think of the gospels, rightly, as the Lord here in relation to men. He "went through all quarters doing good, and healing all that were under the power of the devil", Acts 10: 38. His attitude was towards all, yet a point comes in the gospel when He seems to turn His attention particularly to His own and would give them an impression, such as "This is my body which is given for you", and I wondered if there is scope for us to think of the death of Christ in that way. It is more limited in one sense. The value of that work is towards all, but the Lord seems in these simple incidents - and they are simple, just sitting with twelve men, and in another incident just taking a basin to wash their feet - I think He would convey something of His love for them in particular.

He was going into death, and they were on His heart. We could have read in John 17 where we get something of the breathings of Christ in relation to His own, but I thought these occasions and the simplicity of them would have their own charm. He desired: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer".

He would give us an impression that He was dying, His love for His own entering into His death, that they might be free to enjoy Him in the conditions into which He was going, where that love could be enjoyed unhinderedly. I think there is room for our hearts to contemplate the Lord's death on this side of things. It is not the sin offering, it is more, perhaps, that He "loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it", Eph 5: 25. What a sense that gives us of His love! that we were in His heart and that He went into death to

secure us and to bring us into relationships that love had designed before time began.

D.J.H. In Luke it is before He suffered, and this is after. In the scripture in John the note says, as to "loved them to the end", that going through with everything is implied. That would be in between, would it not?

R.T. I thought that. Think of what was before the Lord. In the passover, which is referred to there, He was going to bear God's judgment, the passover Lamb was bearing the wrath and judgment of God against sin. That is one side of His death. But while that was being accomplished, while the hatred of man must have pressed in on His spirit, He seems to want to convey to these few persons some sense that He was dying in love for them.

A.J.E.W. Is that why it is here "my blood, which is poured out for you"? The pouring out really alludes to His own action, does it not?

R.T. That is fine! Say some more about that.

A.J.E.W. We read of His blood being shed, in which you might think of another shedding it, the soldier with the spear, but the pouring out is surely His matter, what it involved for Him.

R.T. That is very beautiful; there was no hesitation, there was no drawing back; the fulness of the love that was expressed was "for you". I think the emblems are meant to give us some sense of the love of Christ in this way. "My body, which is given for you" is like a private side. He speaks of it in John: "Ye are my friends", chap 15: 14. He lays down His life for His friends. What it meant for Christ, the pressures of the moment tremendous, and yet He takes this time to impress on them that He was dying to express His love for them.

D.J.H. We speak of committal on our side in relation to the Supper, but when He says "which is poured out for you" (at this point that had not been done) He was committing Himself unreservedly in relation to it.

R.T. Yes, and the spear of the soldier, and the ignominy and shame to which He was going to be subjected, would not turn Him

aside from expressing this love for them: "my body which is given for you".

E.P. There is a touch in the Song of Songs where the word is "Many waters cannot quench love, Neither do the floods drown it", chap 8: 7. That is followed by "even if a man gave all the substance of his house for love", but the Lord gave more than that, He gave Himself.

R.T. Yes, He gave Himself. It says about the pearl that "he went and sold all whatever he had" (Matt 13:46), but the many waters were all there, the waves that rolled upon Him. That was perhaps the view of Him bearing the judgment of God; but then His heart - the hymn speaks about it; 'Borne in Thy heart through death's dark tide' (No 347). These persons, as I have said, must have reflected on the simplicity of these incidents, conveying the love of Christ amidst the hour of His pressure, His distinctive love for them.

E.C.B. Is there any type of this?

R.T. Well, you have been going through Leviticus on Wednesdays, have you found one?

E.C.B. We have reached only to chapter 12, but I do not think there is a type of this. The offerings involve one person taking the sacrifice and sacrificing it but I wondered whether this entered into "who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God (Heb 9: 14), His love being involved in that.

R.T. Say some more about that.

E.C.B. As we understand that scripture it is that is presenting Himself to God; Mr Darby says 'What did God do? He made His soul an offering for sin', but it was in love, was it not? "That the world may know that I love the Father" (John 14: 31), but as already quoted; "having loved his own". It seems to me that it exceeds the type and required God having come into our condition in manhood for it to be demonstrated.

R.T. Yes indeed. I think Mr Darby comments on some of these instances that He was both Victim and Priest; the Victim was slain but the Priest went through. What remains is the Priest, and there is

a touch of that in these verses , is there not? The charm of His love! He did not hesitate in the offering of Himself, but, as you say, I do not think there is a type which measures up to it. It required the Person who was there, because who else could have been one like this, who could in dying speak of living? He looked on them as He was going to receive them again in the kingdom of His Father. He looked right through the whole thing. The power of death rolled in upon His spirit and He felt it as no creature could, but He saw that work accomplished and He saw them with Him, we may say in the restfulness of all that love had secured.

W.J.R.B. Paul says "my body, which is for you", 1 Cor 11: 24. I wondered whether you had some thought on that, because Paul received that from the glory.

R.T. Yes. As we are so often reminded, Paul and Luke go very near to each other but, as you say, there is that difference. Here it is "This is my body which is given for you". I think the word 'given' would just convey to us something of what we are trying to speak about. The Lord would give them a sense of how much they meant to Him; and the same with the cup; "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you". The words 'for you' are not mentioned in Corinthians, which has a much wider bearing of things in a sense ; His blood being shed and the cup of the new covenant will extend its fulness to many families. Israel will come into it, and all families will come into the blessedness of it, but I think the words 'for you' and 'given' here would just impress these few disciples with the personal love of Jesus for them as He was going into death.

C.J.H.D. There is a beautiful expression in the book of Job: "If he only thought of himself, and gathered unto him his spirit and his breath, all flesh would expire together" (chap 34: 14,15). But "the Christ also did not please himself", Rom 15: 3.

R.T. That is very beautiful. "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves". How much they meant to Him! We have the Supper week by week and it may lose its freshness and its appeal, but I thought these verses would just revive some thinking about it in our minds.

How much they meant to Him, and how they were held in His affections - borne in His heart through death's dark tide - so that after He had suffered He might present Himself to them living.

R.W.F. Does the repeated use of the word 'desire' carry great force? God's desires are made known in the glad tidings to all men, not looking for the death of a sinner but desiring "that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth", 1 Tim 2: 4. There is great force in that, but does the repetition of the word convey considerable intensity towards His own?

R.T. And especially at this time. How many things must have been in the Lord's mind. He came to do the will of God, and here is the whole point of His coming about to be accomplished, and yet in that hour, as you say, His desire was to be with them: "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you". It shows how much they meant to Him in these closing moments; the last part of His service was in relation to them.

C.J.H.D. We thought this morning, on this line of Luke that you are on, that that body held so perfectly for the will of God is said to be given for us. How affecting that is if you think of the immensity of what He did for God, through the blood; "made peace by the blood of his cross" (Col 1: 20), and yet He says "poured out for you". That greatly affected me this morning.

R.T. It shows us the place that the saints have in the purpose of God, and here is the way that that purpose is being effected in the power of the love of Christ.

J.C.E. Would you say something as to the blood being related to the new covenant, please.

R.T. Oh, you could say more than I could.

J.C.E. It does not seem so much concerned with the moral side; the moral side was needed in their personal need of cleansing, but in relation to the new covenant it is founding it on a basis that could never be disturbed.

R.T. That is presented, do you think, to make way for the love of God shining out in its fulness?

A.J.E.W. I had wondered about the expression used: "This cup is the new covenant"; not exactly 'the cup of the new covenant'. It is very closely identified with it, as if there is a present touch for us in the cup. I mean, in saying that, that the cup is not only a reference to an accomplished work but it becomes an immediate expression to us, as gathered, of the blessedness of that work. It would enforce what you are thinking. I was noticing too, as a matter of interest, that He uses the title Son of man in verse 22, that is, He is speaking to them, but not without regard to the full extent of what He would effect through death. He is in a sense confiding that to them, as if to say, You are the ones who will understand this.

R.T. That word 'confiding' which you use is a feature of love, is it not? There is confidence. They were very unlikely material from one point of view, but think of the love of Christ, as you say, confiding in them, how He would bring it home to them, His regard for them and His thoughts about them. I think they came into this as they reflected when they had the Spirit, the blessedness of the way the Lord moved and His thoughts about them, unlikely material as they were in the flesh, but He confided in them something of His love and His thoughts and the Father's thoughts about them.

E.C.B. Do you think the two going to Emmaus would especially have that as He drew near and went with them?

R.T. Yes, love adapts itself to the circumstances that may come in. It is a very affecting verse: "Jesus himself drawing nigh, went with them", Luke 24: 15. He could have passed them by because of their doubts and conversation but He went with them. He says, I will come down to these circumstances in which you are to bring you into the circumstances which My love has designed for you. They said "Was not our heart burning in us?". It has often been commented on that the distance from Jerusalem is given but the length of the journey back is not given. The love of Christ compelled them and soon caused them to be gathered with those who were speaking

about these blessed things. Well, the new covenant is the love of God; it is the basis laid in His blood that the love of God might be shed forth in all its fulness.

J.C.E. I think the Lord was looking at them as together. He was speaking of 'you'. The passover cup they were to divide amongst themselves, which suggests a sphere of things where one takes one appreciation and another another, but it seems that everything is for us, does it not?

R.T. Yes, I think there is a concentration. As I said, in the gospels it is towards men, serving humanity, but there comes a point in these incidents where He is concentrating on them, to leave an impression with them that His death was an act of love in relation to them. As we said, it is not the sin-offering, it is not the bearing of the judgment of God, it is making a way so that they may be free from all encumbrances and have part with Him. Well, He leaves that other impression; "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves". He says the world will go back to its own ways after My death, the kings of the nations will act, and men will act in their own ways, but He says, My love in your heart is to make you different. He says "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves"; He has come down and expressed love in service, and He would be encouraging and stimulating them to move on that line.

P.M. In that service He gave everything that He had, even the body which was prepared for Him. Is it not to attract us that the love of Christ is such towards us?

R.T. It is, and that He took these simple ways to express it; the loaf and the cup are left with us as a memorial, a reminder that the Lord died this way with the saints in His heart: "My body which is for you".

B.W.W. So are we to gain some impression at this time that although the company to which the Lord actually spoke here was, as you have emphasised, very small, the effect of it and the meaning of it is for us as much as for them?

R.T. Oh, I think it is for us. What an extension there has been! It says here that "he placed himself at table, and the twelve apostles

with him". It was done in that setting that there might be an authoritative representation of it. It was witnessed by these persons and it is carried on into the Acts. They continued this service in simplicity, but He has these persons there who were witnesses of the way He moved in His closing moments to express His love for them.

A.J.E.W. Is there something for us in the references to the table? He placed Himself at table in verse 14; He feelingly discloses one whose hand is with Him on the table; then He speaks in verse 27: "he that is at table or he that serves". Is there not an emphasis in that of the reality of joint participation with Him in what is peculiarly precious to Himself? It is not, so to speak, a public view but an intimate view in relation to Christ.

R.T. Would it bear the interpretation of family affections? Family affections are something that enter into the Supper. We have been helped to see that it is not in big numbers - we do not have them anyway - but there are a few together in family affections. 'At table' would suggest something of that. There is a simplicity and a family idea in being together at table, and the Lord places Himself there, and at that table there is a reminder of the love of Christ in its fulness.

D.J.H. Would it be right to connect it with the reference to "the communion of the body of the Christ", 1 Cor 10: 16? We were seeing during the week that the table relates to fellowship. Could you say something as to that expression: "communion of the body of the Christ"?

R.T. It is joint participation, that we are together in that way. We are so apt to separate ourselves and think of diverse things coming in, but the communion would be a very binding thing, would it not?

D.J.H. Yes, and in relation to His body. I was thinking of the reference made to "thou hast prepared me a body", Heb 10: 5. That body was unique; but was this in view of that divine preparation of that body?

R.T. Indeed, and the circumstances only bring out the intensity of His love. From the public point of view He is almost saying "I have

laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain" (Isa 49: 4) - the public view of the path of Christ - but here is an inside, a family setting of things. But if the course of things in the world was going on as it was, persons acting just as they were before, He says, I am showing you another way; in My death you are brought into another line of things and other principles that you are to enjoy in My love.

F.P.A.S. We often refer to the Hebrew bondman; does that connect with "the one that serves"? The outstanding word there is "I love".

R.T. Yes, and He loves unhesitatingly. There was another way out for Him but He loved without hesitation, did He not? I was thinking of that scripture, the way that the Lord expressed His love in relation to us.

F.P.A.S. Would it connect with the family thought that you were mentioning?

R.T. Yes, I think the simple side of these incidents would promote the family atmosphere and affections among us.

D.A.B. The Hebrew bondman committed himself, it says, "because he loveth thee"; then it says "because he is well with thee", Deut 15: 16. You were pointing out, as to the Lord that there was much ill that He endured; He transcends the Hebrew bondman, does He not? He loved, not because it was well with Him but in spite of what was ill against Him.

R.T. Yes, that is like what was referred to: many waters could not quench it, neither could the floods drown it. That is true, but think of the intensity of that coming in relation to *us*, His own; He loved His own, "His own who were in the world"; it says He "loved them to the end". "His own" - a very choice expression. The circumstances in that chapter were "before the feast of the passover"; that is, He was going to bear God's judgment against sin; but before that He is impressing His own: "having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end".

E.C.B. Do you think that the one who hears His voice and opens the door, even in Laodicea, would be conscious of His love? I was thinking of Laodicea being the public position in which we are, but the understanding and the enjoyment of the love of Christ lead to hearing His voice and opening the door.

R.T. The knocking there is another instance of love adapting itself to our circumstances, is it not?

E.C.B. Yes. I was thinking also of "I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me" (Rev 3: 20) as bearing on the references made earlier to the table.

R.T. That knocking; what an appeal! "I will... sup with him, and he with me". That comes into John 13, does it not? "Part with me" was His whole point in it; they did not quite grasp it, but His word to Peter, and Peter's action, bring out that His service in love, His taking this position, His doing these, you may say, menial things, was to impress them with His love in view of their having part with Him.

P.M. The emblems each Lord's day remind us that Christianity is based on sacrificial service. Should that affect us in the way we move in service to one another?

R.T. Well, that is a feature of love. We have remarked on the Hebrew bondman; the cost was there in a sense, but it was not counted. The object was so great, the saints meant so much to Christ, that He moved towards the cross, He moved towards those sufferings unhesitatingly.

J.S.G. When the Lord was apprehended, He says "If therefore ye seek me, let these go away", John 18: 8. I wondered if there was in a way a contrast between the Lord's preparedness to express love to His own protectively and this inner side that you are expressing, which the Lord seems more to have in view, leading up to the 20th chapter.

R.T. Well, we have each had experiences of the love of Christ, and it is a time for encouraging one another in it.

J.S.G. It is very precious to know that the Lord's love goes as far as the protection of each one. He says in chapter 17: 12: "those thou hast given me I have guarded, and not one of them has perished", but I wondered whether the Lord specially has in view leading us through personal experience of His love into the collective enjoyment of privilege.

R.T. That would come into "part with me". The Lord would not stop short of the full accomplishment of what love had purposed, and that involved "part with me". It involves part with Him in the resurrection circumstances and surroundings and with Him in that glory that He now bears, which He shares (wonderful fact!) with us. "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them" (John 17: 22) would enter into "part with me".

E.P. Would this be a continuing part with Him? I trust we have all had a touch with the Lord and known His love, but to have a continuing part with Him! He credited the disciples with having persevered with Him in His temptations (see Luke 22: 28) - wonderful that He should say that! But is this in view of continuing, both in the sense of privilege and testimony?

R.T. I think that "loved them to the end" would imply that, that His love is great enough to sustain the position. He has not only brought us into a relationship as His brethren but His love is great enough to sustain the relationship in all its privileges and responsibilities.

H.P.W. Would the use of the water and the linen towel show how things are to be done? The example of the Lord would bring out the priestly features that should be enacted in the disciples?

R.T. Do not forget the towel. We may see there is a need for certain things and we may forget the towel. The using of the towel is needed for "part with me".

H.P.W. I was thinking of the linen towel, the righteousness that it would suggest, and the priestly way in which things are done.

R.T. Yes. It has been pointed out that the water was 1 Corinthians and the towel was 2 Corinthians. Paul wrote another epistle. He did

not write only about what was wrong but he says "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you", 1 Cor 16: 23. That would come in in view of "part with me". Love would serve to have this relationship in its sweetness and its blessedness to be enjoyed.

J.M.W. I was going to enquire about formation: do you think that these experiences we have, personally or collectively, would cause there to be formation after love?

R.T. I think so; we can see that in Peter. Formation was not there when he said "Thou shalt never wash my feet". You can understand his sentiments about it, but I think that the formation came as he reflected on this. I think formation comes as we give time for the love of Christ to form us in its own blessedness. It gets rid of our own ideas, and the love of Christ forms us and strengthens us, do you think?

J.M.W. Indeed; and the reference you made earlier to "after he had suffered" (Acts 1: 3) would involve for us the gift of the Spirit, would it not? Is He not essential so that what is divine might be formed in us, not merely mentally but in deep harmony with His service towards us?

R.T. What is formation? I think if there is formation at all it is formation in love. Nothing forms us like the divine nature. Other things will puff up; Christendom is full of that. Love is the formative side of things; love's response as was expressed in our hymn, 'Worthy of homage and of praise' (No.195), should come into all our gatherings.

C.J.H.D. How quickly love in service and the table came in when the gospel reached Europe at Philippi. The jailor washed them from their stripes, he laid the table for them and rejoiced householdly.

R.T. Very beautiful! That was a good start for Europe: what has happened since?

C.J.H.D. May it be continued in the unity of the household of God!

R.T. Yes. Love does not wait on some big occasion; it is the simplicity, I thought, in these two scriptures we have read.

"Knowing... that he came out from God and was going to God", departing out of the world to the Father. What a prospect that must have meant for the Lord, that He was leaving these circumstances of humiliation and was going to be with the Father in His glory! But before He goes, having loved His own who were in the world, He leaves them with an impression of His love for them going through with everything.

E.O. When you selected this chapter I thought, What, again! We had it a fortnight ago in the city and we have had it many times over recent months, and it seems to me that the Lord, in detaining us on it, desires us to reach fully into it and to arrive at something.

R.T. Well, you often feel slow in suggesting familiar scriptures and yet they have their own charm, have they not? The simplicity of this scripture was what attracted me. He was about to go to that glory and yet He says, This is the impression of love I would leave among you. As you say, He has asked them to continue it, love in simplicity, love in activity in view of "part with me". Let us not stop short. Love would not tolerate the distance, love will not allow the shortcomings. It is in view of "part with me", 'in My glory'.

A.J.E.W. Simplicity delights to follow an example. This is the Lord's example, is it not? An example means much more than a great deal expressed in words.

R.T. Yes, indeed it does. What meaning in this chapter, what fulness, and down as far as He could go, He washed their feet. He could not have gone lower; and as He said in Luke: "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves".

E.C.B. In chapter 17 the Lord in a certain sense hands over the protective side to the Father, but His desire is that those the Father had given Him should be with Him where He was. What the Lord has in view in His love is not merely that He should be with us in our circumstances but that we should be with Him in His.

R.T. Well, in the assembly, in our gatherings we should touch that. In these settings the Lord was still in the world, the course of things

was all around, but there was a point - private maybe touched with these disciples that was in character not of the world.

E.C.B. Do you not feel that, while as we have been taught and understand, the breaking of bread itself is in the wilderness, as soon as the Lord comes in He brings His own environment with Him?

R.T. Yes. Mr Taylor said that when He comes in He brings the wealth of heaven with Him.

E.C.B. Should not the value of the two words in chapter 20: 26, "again within", be with us each Lord's day?

R.T. Yes indeed, but as He comes in the whole circumstances change and we are absorbed with Him. We feel the slowness of apprehending Him, but here He comes; you might say in principle that He brings the wealth of heaven with Him.

E.C.B. I have been impressed by it before, but I was impressed again this morning with the way in which the experience of the Lord's coming in refreshes you, with nothing being said. Just to be in the Lord's presence is refreshing.

R.T. Yes, He does not say very much here on these occasions.

They must have gone on for a bit longer than what is recorded, but the impression that He leaves on them, the impression that He distinctly leaves on John, is "Peace". That is very refreshing, is it not? "Peace be to you"; and as you say, they were again within.

One of them had missed an occasion. They must have gone and visited him and told him how good a time they had, they must have stirred up some reviving of affection about the absent one, stirred him up to be there the next time.

E.C.B. They might even have reminded Thomas of what is recorded in chapter 13.

R.T. Yes, that He washed his feet. He did not wash Thomas's feet for him to stay at home, He washed his feet to have part with Him and to bring out the gold. Somebody once spoke about that: "My Lord and my God" was a piece of gold, and so it was, but the gold is to be in circulation. There is gold in the brethren; we want it in

movement, to see its face value; we want it shining. This experience stimulated Thomas to be there when they were again within.

P.M. "Peace be to you"; would you say something as to that; it is not 'Peace be among you'. Would it link with the Lord imparting His own peace and He Himself becoming their object?

R.T. I think it is what He brings in here, with "the doors shut where the disciples were, through fear of the Jews". There are often certain anxieties in our hearts, but if we see the One whose love has settled every issue, as He is before the soul what peace it brings! It is in view of this enjoying part with Him; "he shewed to them his hands and his side". What affection! What could be read into that - the love expressed in a suffering way to bring into expression a vessel that is His counterpart!

E.C.B. "Peace be to you": that is ministry, is it not? Is not ministry something conveyed or communicated? While the Supper itself and the service of God is not exactly a time for ministry, although we welcome what the Lord may say to us, is that not the character of ministry?

R.T. Yes, and I think it is His attitude as He comes in on any occasion. As to ministry, "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves" is another example. The saints are always greater than the minister. You are speaking to persons who are Christ's brethren. You are addressing the work of God, not men after the flesh. How attractive and blessed it is! And the Lord is greeting the work of God here. He says "Peace be to you", even a Thomas. In the mixed conditions which sometimes mark us the Lord comes in and He addresses His own work.

R.W.F. Why did the Lord say "Peace be to you" three times in this section?

R.T. Say what is in your mind.

R.W.F. I was wondering whether the Lord has perfect knowledge of our condition. He is aware of fears, questions, doubts; He knows

exactly the point at which they arise and His word comes in swiftly to deal with them and leaves us with a sense of peace from Him.

R.T. I think one point of it would be that it is what is to mark and characterise the assemblings of the saints. They were again within.

The Jews are outside, the doors are shut. What is to mark the inside, the gatherings of the saints, is peace: "Peace be to you". It can, and it should. The atmosphere of it facilitates the place that Christ is to have enthroned in our affections.

T.J.B. Is that confirmed by the way in which it says "And having said this" and "Then he says to Thomas", that is, He would establish something in ministering His own peace, and then things can proceed?

R.T. Yes. So very simply, the first hymn should bring us into peace. We come with problems, we come with exercises, but I have often experienced it, the singing of the hymn transports your soul into a different area, and we should think of that kind of thing, because if there is not peace there cannot be, as you say, the unfolding of His hands and His side. The Lord wants to show us something. He does not only speak. It says He said "Peace... And having said this, he shewed to them... ". If there is not peace He cannot show, but having said "Peace" He showed them His hands and His side. It should be something that very quickly will set us together to hear and to see what the Lord may do. That should be at the Supper primarily, but there should be some touch of that character coming into all our occasions, would you say?

A.J.E.W. Surely. It is a little again on the line of the example. It is what is done rather than what is expressed in word.

R.T. We have been taught that these appearings were to accustom them to spirituality; it was an example. These appearings were to accustom the saints as to how the meetings were to run, if you like; it was to accustom them to thinking spiritually. So the example of the Lord coming once, coming twice, and John says "This is already the third time" (chap 21: 14), is as if the Lord would establish it without any doubt that He is coming in relation to those He loves.

J.S.G. The second statement actually comes in following the reference to their rejoicing in seeing Him, as if the peace is necessary not only to meet conditions of fear externally but to sustain us in any rejoicing that we may reach, to set us forward in it.

R.T. Yes, the basis of that peace is the love of Christ.

C.G.H. It is a great thing for our souls when we have an impression of the Lord presenting Himself living.

R.T. Yes, especially these words, "after he had suffered". The Lord was about to go to the Father but Luke says He continued for forty days coming in and going out among them; after He had suffered His first occupation was His own who were in the world He "loved them to the end". He was not seen again publicly, but it says "he presented himself living, after he had suffered, with many proofs; being seen by them during forty days, and speaking of the things which concern the kingdom of God".

C.J.H.D. Is not peace necessary the second time in view of the sending out, for their feet are said to be shod with the preparation of the glad tidings of peace?

R.T. Very good. I think it is a normal relationship of love known. If there is love between us, and if we know and enjoy that love, there is bound to be peace. We will have things to speak about, but there is peace between us.

A.J.E.W. "During forty days" suggests that it was not just a question of some occasions; there is a certain constancy about it.

R.T. That is very beautiful. As you say, again it is an example, what the Lord has left as a treasure coming into the assembly. He is coming in and going out; He has established the thing immutably. His love is bound up with them "after he had suffered". Before He suffered He was assuring them of it; now, after He had suffered, the first thing He does is that He comes in among them during these forty days.

R.W.F. Were His own, themselves the proofs?

R.T. Yes, I think His hands and His side was one of the proofs. "He presented himself living, after he had suffered, with many proofs... and speaking of the things which concern the kingdom of God". I think the many proofs would assure them, reassure them, of the love of the Christ. What do you think about it?

R.W.F. Well, it was not exactly a legal proof, but there was that proved by those who saw Him and had to do with Him, and they would from that point set Him forth, become themselves proofs.

R.T. The Supper each week as it comes in would be a fresh proof of the love of Christ for His own. That is to awaken response in us.

I just thought, in closing, that I would allude to the end of Deborah's song. She says "But let them that love him be as the rising of the sun in its might", Judg 5: 31. Nothing could stop the love of Christ to us, but the answer to that is, those that love Him are like the rising of the sun in its might. Then it says "the land had rest for forty years". The love in expression brings about these conditions where it can be enjoyed without let and without hindrance.

E.C.B. Do you get some answer in that sense to the heavenly host at the incarnation: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men"?

R.T. Yes, it has come out in its fulness, and what an answer there is! There is the love of the Christ for us; now, in the assembly there is a vessel that loves Him above all else, cherishes Him, and it is like the rising of the sun in its might.

LONDON

22 January 1984

Key to initials

(all local unless otherwise stated)

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AN OPENED DOOR

Luke 24: 28-35; Acts 16: 13-15, 25-28; Revelation 4: 1,2

P.v.d.B. I trust the Lord will help us together in connection with the door the Lord has opened. In Luke we have the Lord's movements in recovery, recovering the two who were on the way to Emmaus. If the Lord recovers us He recovers us to His original thoughts. He opened the Scriptures, He opened their eyes and in the end of the chapter we read that He "opened their understanding".

In Acts we have the movements of the testimony, an opened door being given. The Spirit had come from heaven and the movements in the book of Acts are directed from heaven. Stephen sees the heavens opened. Then in chapter 16 Lydia's heart is opened and later on the prison doors.

When we come to the book of Revelation the Lord presents Himself to Philadelphia as the One "who opens and no one shall shut", chap 3: 7. He says: "I have set before thee an opened door, which no one can shut, because thou hast a little power, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (v 8). In chapter 4 John saw a door opened in heaven, and we can thank God indeed that our way is not entirely shut up. Things may be closing in the scene in which we are, certain things are being finalised, but there is a door opened in heaven. I thought we might be helped to see how this has entered into the recovery in the movements that have taken place and the way things will be carried through till the close. Finally the assembly will be in glory but it is our privilege to be in the Spirit now and to be conscious of a door being opened in heaven and to have a sense of the glory of the One who is there.

M.P. It is Himself who has opened the door for us. I am thinking of what we have in Micah 2: 13; "One that breaketh through is gone before them: they have broken forth, and have passed on to the gate, and are gone out by it; and their king passeth on before them, and Jehovah at the head of them". Here we have the One who

opens, who broke through the door, and who goes at the head of them.

P.v.d.B. Yes, that is the great thing, that the Lord has things in hand and is going before us. He is the leader of our salvation and we are recovered to Him. We may not always be conscious of His speaking but there comes a point when, as here in Luke 24, He holds Himself as though He would go farther. Even when our *minds* are not reached there is something in our *affections* to be reached. Later on He opened their understanding but here their eyes are opened.

F.C.M. Is it not affecting that the Lord is prepared to serve just two of His own? These things are not dependent on large numbers. There had never been such an unfolding of the Scriptures - yet it was just for two persons.

P.v.d.B. And the Lord is prepared to go a long way with us. He has unfolded many precious thoughts to us. But we must come to the point of committal. So many are prepared to listen even to what the Lord Himself is saying without a definite committal to the testimony; and the Lord is bringing about a crisis here. The evening is fallen - will we let the Lord go alone? The Lord will go through but are we going to be with Him? In Mark's gospel when He came to His own in the ship He would have passed them by (see chap 6: 48). The Lord is sovereign in His movements and it is a great privilege to be with Him in the testimony. He gives us an opened door; I think we can expect that.

M.P. Is it important, too, to keep an opened door for Him to us? I am referring to Psalm 24 where the lifting up of the gates is spoken about.

P.v.d.B. Yes, we need to be lifted up in our affections to make room for the King of glory to come in. I think the gates were pretty much down in Luke 24. They were downcast but they were eventually lifted up and finally the King of glory comes in in the latter part of the chapter. At the Supper we need to be ready for Him to come in amongst us.

F.C.M. We see in verse 21: "But we had hoped that *he* was the one who is about to redeem Israel". Our thoughts, our habits of thought, may be a hindrance to us. He would open up, as you say, what is far greater than what we had thought.

P.v.d.B. Yes, the Shepherd in Luke 24 is moving in view of recovery. The recovery is to nothing less than the highest thoughts of God.

We are not recovered to something that is half-way, we are recovered to the full thought and height of the purpose of God.

M.P. In John 10 we have the Shepherd who finds an opened door into the sheepfold of Israel.

P.v.d.B. Yes, He is the good Shepherd there who lays down His life for the sheep. Now He is out of death as the great Shepherd brought again from among the dead. The Hebrews were in need of being reminded of this, and the two here, too, were slipping, but the Lord patiently goes a long way with us. It is the word of God and the priesthood of Christ which is operating.

F.C.M. Why does it say He "disappeared from them"?

P.v.d.B. I think that would bring in our responsibility. The Lord is not going to do everything for us. He gives us the manifestation and we are responsible to move. Is that right?

F.C.M. I think that. So in a meeting like this He may give us an impression, a word from Himself, and He might say, How are you going to move in relation to it?

P.v.d.B. So that they rose up that same hour, they did not postpone it to the next day. They would not miss the opportunity.

M.P. Although it was late in the evening.

P.v.d.B. Yes, but they made the same journey back again.

F.C.M. And they now found themselves in the company in a new way, with something to contribute.

P.v.d.B. They went back to the point of departure. The Lord knows more than we do. They had thought that the Lord was a stranger in Jerusalem.

M.P. Have we a similar thought in John 21? I have in mind the thought of responsibility. In Matthew 14 we have Peter walking on the waters miraculously but in John 21 there is nothing of that sort.

P.v.d.B. It was Peter's breakdown and he had to go through the water instead of being above it. He had become so far away that he did not recognise the Shepherd's voice. It was John who said "It is the Lord" (v 7). So here in Luke their eyes were opened and they rose up and returned to Jerusalem. When there is a genuine work of God people will act. Peter came under the service of the great Shepherd of the sheep and the Lord prepared him for shepherd service. In his epistle he speaks of the chief Shepherd (see 1 Pet 5: 4). That is the thought of Psalm 24.

In Acts 16 we have the work of God appearing in Lydia. It must have been there for some time. There was a distinct movement, the Spirit of Jesus not allowing Paul to speak the word of God in Asia any longer and a Macedonian man appearing to him in a vision, beseeching him and saying "Pass over into Macedonia and help us" (v 9). There was a work of God in Macedonia and it says that the Lord had opened Lydia's heart. There was a ground ready for the word to be received.

F.C.M. There must have been, as you say, something working in Lydia which made it easy for the Lord to open her heart. She had been blessed with some knowledge of God, and the Lord would say now, I am going to give you what is greatest - the things spoken by Paul.

P.v.d.B. Yes, she was like the half-opened flowers in the temple (see 1 Kings 6: 18). I am not saying that things went half-way with her because the Lord had opened her heart, but we see here the development of the work of God. In Lydia it had gone on for some time; with the jailor it was immediate. God is sovereign in the way He works. This was the nucleus of the assembly in Philippi.

Everything in meetings like this depends on hearts being opened and having a sense of beholding the beauty of the Lord in the temple.

F.C.M. The very greatest and richest things are being spoken. Is my heart an opened heart to receive them?

M.P. Was it similar with Cornelius? There was likewise a previous work in his heart and it was such that God perceived it; there were things which "have gone up for a memorial before God", Acts 10: 4.

F.C.M. Is it not very encouraging, as to both Cornelius and Lydia, that the Lord sees every exercise and desire in our hearts and would encourage and answer them?

P.v.d.B. Yes indeed. Cornelius would be part of what was in the vessel which Peter saw descending from heaven, potentially anyway, and Peter would be tested as to whether he could appropriate a man like Cornelius. Sometimes brethren cannot get on very well together because we do not get through to the work of God in one another, but we are not in fellowship on a natural basis, we are there on a spiritual basis, on the basis of what the work of God is in all its purity. So we can appropriate one another in our affections as part of that vessel which descended from heaven and was taken up into heaven. If there are things in the way it may need an earthquake, for there will be an opened door. Things do come up in the course of the testimony but God is over all and He can move the prison; it is not to destroy us but to save us; this worked out for salvation. There was a powerful testimony in that prison, there was prayer, praise and singing and the prisoners listened, and "the foundations of the prison shook and all the doors were immediately opened and the bonds of all loosed". We can be sure that the singing was related to an order of things which could not be moved.

F.C.M. In Luke 4 the Lord said He was anointed to preach to captives deliverance (see v 18).

P.v.d.B. That is just what the Lord did in opening the door. There may be opposition as seen in this chapter but the testimony is here in victory. The Lord has been given all power in heaven and upon the earth and the Spirit of God is here who is greater than he that is in the world. Things are pretty bad in the world today but the Spirit of God is here in the assembly.

F.C.M. That is represented by Paul and Silas, is it not? It is like the assembly, and the service of God proceeding normally amid the captivity, and the matter is evidently attractive and effective.

P.v.d.B. Yes, I am sure that is right, the service of praise is in the assembly and the gates of hades will not prevail against it. The gates of hades would silence the praises if they could but there is victory here; it is like the people shouting when the walls of Jericho came down (see Josh 6: 20).

F.C.M. And here it is in all its power and preciousness in two persons.

P.v.d.B. Yes, it shows the value of what is available for the testimony today. In Revelation John is where he is for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. If there is one thing we need to learn today it is the patience of Jesus. John had a reason for being where he was: it was for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus. How attractive that is!

F.C.M. He was linked in spirit with the brethren - "your brother and fellow-partaker", chap 1: 9. The Lord may set us alone, or in a very small company, but in spirit we are vitally linked with what the Lord has universally.

P.v.d.B. So the door is not closed, it is an opened door which no one can shut. Doors may close in this world but it only opens up another world, a world where Christ is supreme; we want a door opened in relation to that.

F.C.M. A similar thought to this is Daniel's opened windows. In one way he was all alone, but Jerusalem was his outlook.

P.v.d.B. So that although he was the only brother there he was not independent. He was bound up in the bundle of the living, with all the saints.

M.P. Have we another akin thought in the window of Noah's ark? That window was directed upwards.

P.v.d.B. Yes. God had closed the door of the ark and it does not say that that door was opened again. What we do read is that the

covering of the ark was removed. So what then would be our outlook? I think John was in the gain of the testimonial position here and, like Daniel, he not only had an outlook towards Jerusalem but he had a wide view of the whole course of things which was to follow. Not that Daniel could see what John saw; Daniel had to close the words and seal the book till the time of the end (see Dan 12: 4).

But what is closed and sealed in Daniel is opened in Revelation - a book in which these great matters are opened up leading on to the day of Jesus Christ and the day of God. So John sees a door opened in heaven and the voice that he had heard as of a trumpet in the testimonial position is now calling him up. It is the voice that he turned to see in Revelation 1, the voice of Him who was in the midst of the seven golden lamps (see vv 12, 13). It now calls him up and tells him: "Come up here and I will shew thee the things that must take place after these things".

M.P. It is a remarkable word, is it not? - he turned to see the voice.

P.v.d.B. Yes, it was a voice which could be seen, and it was a voice as of a trumpet. It governs the movements of the testimony; we must not be moved by any other voice. In the prophetic word the trumpet would not give an uncertain sound; it should be the voice of Christ. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy", Rev 19: 10. So now the voice is: "Come up here".

F.C.M. He sees a throne and One sitting on it. Does that not mean that everything is surely established according to God?

P.v.d.B. It is a throne which cannot be moved. The prison was moved but the throne is not moved. We need to be in relation to this order of things which cannot be moved: "receiving a kingdom not to be shaken", Heb 12: 28. You were reading Revelation here and would have noticed how in this book things are opened up.

M.P. Exactly. That very comparison of Daniel and Revelation as to closing and opening up things came up last Thursday,

P.v.d.B. Well, Daniel had to close the words and he says "my Lord, what shall be the end of these things", and the answer is "Go thy way, Daniel; for these words are closed and sealed till the time of the

end" (chap 12: 8,9); but what is closed in Daniel is opened up in the Revelation.

M.P. Daniel's vision was sealed but in Revelation it says "Seal not the words", chap 22: 10.

P.v.d.B. Just so. It is important to be in the gain of the opening up of things. In the history of the recovery, as we speak of it, the Spirit of God has given us a great opening up, We need to be very careful that the enemy will not succeed in bringing anything about that will close things amongst us.

EASTERN EUROPE

12 November 1981

THE CHILDREN'S NEEDS MET

An old hymn which I am sure you enjoy singing begins 'I could not do without Thee, O Saviour of the lost'. Happy it is that there is no need for anyone to be without Jesus as Saviour. Indeed the apostle Peter said in one of his preachings that there is salvation in no one else. He also said that we must be saved, so that there is really no choice for you although your intelligent part is to believe on the Lord.

When speaking about children Jesus said that he had come "to save that which was lost". Little children are mentioned seven times in those few verses but you may not understand how it is that such are lost without a Saviour. As of the sinful race of mankind they cannot save themselves any more than can older persons. But

Jesus also spoke of "these little ones who believe in me", so however young you may be do not only be attracted to Jesus but put your faith and confidence in Him.

We cannot think of a flock of sheep without thinking also of their shepherd. Even those of us who live in towns have an image in our minds of the care that he takes of the sheep and lambs even if they do not belong to him - how much more so if they are his own! As saved by Jesus you belong to Him, the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep. Learn by heart the lovely Psalm 23 which tells you how He is able to supply every need throughout the life of His sheep. The detail of Scripture is wonderful. One passage says that the Lord will gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, which expresses His tenderness. Another passage speaks of the lost sheep, when found, being carried on His shoulders, the place of strength.

Fellowship is much needed in Christian life and is a great privilege for young and old. It means enjoying blessings together and a type of it in Scripture is a table. Long ago, when David was to be anointed as God's chosen king for His people, a number of great persons were kept standing some considerable time in front of a feast-table. Samuel, God's messenger, had said that they must not sit down until David came - who is a type of Christ. We have to remember therefore that there can be no true fellowship where the Lord Jesus is not the Centre. He is God's choice for mankind and ours is "the fellowship of his Son". Breaking bread in remembrance of the Lord is its great privilege. Have you taken your place in it?

J.C.Evershed