

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THE MYSTERY

Ephesians 1: 15-23

We come now to the purpose of God. We have been looking at the house of God. It would be easier to understand the mystery if we kept in mind the great characteristic of Christianity - even that the Holy Ghost is here now in a way in which He will not be when the church is taken away. In the millennium He will be on the believer, now He is in the believer.

Christ is Son over God's house; by Him we have access by one Spirit to the Father; He has given to us His Spirit; the world seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.

Now we come to the organisation in the house. We are all baptised by one Spirit into one body. The order in Scripture is, that the house is known before the body; but it is a remarkable fact that in late times the truth of the mystery was revived before the truth of the house was revived. I remember when the truth of the house was revived, in 1848. The house is in a state of ruin, the body is not; the mystery is as perfect as ever it was.

It was necessary that the truth of the mystery - of the body - should be revived, in order that the state of the house might be understood?

It is a special mark of God's favour when He makes known to you His present object, that He has destined you for the highest position, that you are members of the body of Christ, and His purpose is that you should realise the blessedness of this union now. We ought to take to heart how little we have answered to His purpose. In our history from Plymouth days down, the effort of the enemy has been to divert souls from the truth of the mystery.

There is a constant influence at work to divert people from it?

Yes, exactly. At Plymouth it was a system of prophecy by which they were diverted from the truth they originally came out on.

That is what we should expect, that the attack of Satan should be against that which is God's purpose at the time.

I believe so. At the break up at Plymouth some said, "If you work in the church you will get your heart broken, let us go and preach the gospel". All goes on brightly in a place - where the church is the interest of all. In that place the saints flourish, and ministry will surely arise amongst them. The body is the organisation by which the assembly is edified. This is our present subject.

You cannot have Christ as your object properly unless you have the church before you?

No; because you have not *His* object before you.

Have you not noticed in the history of souls that there is a state which would be ready to embrace the alternative which was referred to, the church or the gospel?

We all have a weak spot, the enemy knows where it is, and he touches it. In Rebekah, the type of the church, the purpose of God is first presented; and first she has to overcome family influence and then the wilderness. God's consummation is to conduct us into conscious union with Christ. A great many fall in the wilderness.

There is a day of temptation to each. I know a small thing can turn one aside.

It may not be persistent and final?

Through mercy, not. But you cannot be a *confidential* servant until you have answered to the purpose of God. You might be an active servant. There were three classes of servants in Solomon's house - servants, ministers and cup-bearers. The confidential servant is the one who knows the mind of Christ. "I call you not servants but friends". You are not a confidential servant until you know union with Christ.

Knowledge of the truth is not enough?

No. If you go into a room that is well lighted up you see the most interesting object, but if the light be extinguished, what have you

then? Memory only! It is here where many are morally. They have lost the light and they trust to their memory.

If it is merely that, they have never had it as a revelation?

Yes, but I think they have had the light; you may get a glimpse of a truth but have it imperfectly. You were more occupied with the truth than with the Lord. I see two classes of students, one reads that he may be it, the other reads it that he may *understand* it.

Both ought to go together?

Yes, surely; but many can state a doctrine correctly while their consciences are not up to it. The apostle said, "When I heard of your state, I ceased not to pray for you".

Is he not writing to the saints in Ephesus who were in a good state?

Yes, they were ready to take in more. I cannot conceive anything more gracious than "the riches of his inheritance in the saints"; we should naturally have said, the riches of our inheritance; no, it is "the riches of the glory of his inheritance".

I think one has looked at Ephesians to find the position in which we are set, instead of the One who gave us the position.

The whole subject is the expression of His love.

God would have His own place in you in order to satisfy His love?

You get in the calling what we are individually.

It is not only that He saves you but He delights in it?

The church will be the eternal delight of God, and the secret is that Christ will be displayed in it?

Yes, quite so.

It will perfectly answer to Himself. Yes the church is His complement.

"The riches of the glory of his inheritance". It is touching the spring?

The great word in that verse is "His" - *His* glory, *His* inheritance, *His* calling; and you get it in the earlier verses.

God's inheritance is in us?

I thought it referred to the tenth verse, all that it was; Christ was to take the inheritance of all things in heaven and earth, and the reason is, when He takes possession He puts the saints in?

Oh, yes; but I do not put the inheritance before the saints, I put the saints before the inheritance. The saints is the prime thing.

It is a great thing to see that the calling will be appreciated on the part of the saints; there will be a full response.

In the nineteenth verse you get the power, it is all His purpose. All the saints have gone up in Him but all do not know it; all have gone up with Him and all come from Him, there is no addition to Him. We all come from Christ. Every feather is in a bird and comes out of a bird; they are not an addition.

It furnishes itself in beauty. Yes, it is a wonderful structure.

Do you mean it will all come out bit by bit? It will all come out by-and-by; now bit by bit.

Do you think that we should be moved to pray on these lines?

I do not believe every one is fit for it. You must be in a condition of soul for it?

Yes. It is lamentable that we all know this epistle; many are well up in Ephesians.

Do you mean intellectually?

I mean that we can know so much of it and be so little affected by it.

When we come to speak of it we do not feel that we know much.

If your conscience is governed by your faith you are trying to keep up to it.

The fact is that the epistle to the Ephesians is really the least known of any.

Yes, I believe so. I do not say that it is not carefully read by many.

Let me say that there are two sides to the truth. If you are exclusively occupied with the subjective side - that everything is by

attainment, you do not see that every blessing has been secured for you in Christ; while if you are exclusively on the objective side, though you see that all has been accomplished for you, you are overlooking the work of the Spirit in you. In the one you are full of aspirations which are never reached; in the other you are elated with your acquisitions which are never enjoyed.

It is quite clear the Ephesian saints had not, because the apostle prays that they might have it?

Quite so.

In chapter 4, where we get "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". Is that when the complement is made up?

I think it refers to the present time. To make it future would take away the responsibility of the ministry. First, you must realise union and then you will know what you get by union.

What is the difference between the union of members with the Head and what is called bridal union?

I think if you know union, it is bridal union. Knowing Christ as Head is not so much union as the effect of His life.

The idea of the body united to the Head seems different to that of the church being presented to Him as the bride?

Was the union greater with Eve when she saw Adam than it was before she saw him?

She had the sense of it? What sense?

That she was part of him?

Very good - part of himself. I cannot conceive of anything greater than part of Himself. The presentation is only the declaration of position.

You cannot improve the spiritual bond, you cannot be closer to Him.

What is the difference between members of Christ and members of His body?

Members of Christ has nothing to do with union, it is your bodies which are members of Christ.

You would not deny that "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit"?

Certainly not, but that is responsibility. The body is the Lord's; there it is the individual and it is not the same as Ephesians. Those who do not see the corporate union quote 1 Corinthians 6.

It is not wrong to say your body is joined to Him by the Spirit?

Certainly not, but you cannot call that union; you are bound to Him as members of Him, not as members of His body.

What is union in this instance?

Nothing is united to Christ but what comes from Christ. You get in chapter 2, "to make in Himself of twain, Jew and Gentile, one new man, so making peace". When we speak of union with Christ we speak of the whole church. The mistake has arisen from making the bodies united. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones".

If some one will read the prayer in chapter 3: 14-21 you will see what we get by union. I think no one could have what is in this prayer unless he knows union: you get there the endowment of union.

Is not that individual?

Yes. It is individually learned, but common to all.

The question has been raised, Does it not involve the state of our souls?

It is not intended for the state. It does not create the state?

No.

Does it not mean that Christ's interests have a prominent place in your hearts?

I do not say prominent but paramount.

Is the prayer in chapter 1 objective and in chapter 3 subjective? In the first it is that you may have the conscious knowledge of the purpose?

Yes, quite so.

Here it is not Christ for my soul, but it is Christ as the centre of all God's thoughts and purposes?

Yes.

We are allowed to enter into it? Yes.

The love of Christ is not exactly the love of Christ to the sinner?

No, it is His full affection.

What is the force of being rooted and grounded in love - is that preliminary to the other? It is a necessary condition.

In chapter 4 you get the testimony?

The church is first, before family and everything.

Is the exhortation to keep the unity of the Spirit in chapter 4 in connection with the close of chapter 2?

I should say chapter 2 sets forth the calling.

What is the difference of God's calling and our calling?

Our calling is in chapter 2; God's calling is in chapter 1.

Is our calling what we are called to now on earth?

Quite so. I know Him as Head; I am "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace".

Does endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit imply some difficulty?

Yes. the great point is to maintain the mind of Christ, and this is only known as He is known as Head.

Does not the unity of the Spirit take in all these circles? Yes, I believe so.

Is the idea of edifying the body of Christ different from edifying saints individually? .

You should have the body in view when you seek to edify; the divine way to correct error is to set forth the full truth. You expose the error fully in the light of truth; you stand for God and He honours you.

THE "DIFFICULT TIMES"

"WHAT ISRAEL OUGHT TO DO"

2 Timothy 3

Evidently the apostle had not lived to this time, he is making known to Timothy what will come. The difficult days had not come when Paul wrote this epistle. He is preparing Timothy for them, and through him every servant. I suppose no one will deny that we are now in the difficult days. There is no other preparation for them than this. Chapter 4 is not the difficult times; chapter 3 is. Chapter 4 resumes this subject of chapter 2; we all here have learned something of chapter 2, that is, purging ourselves from vessels to dishonour. God's house is here and you cannot leave it, but you are called to purge yourselves from the vessels to dishonour. It is always in proportion to your separation from these vessels - persons, not their doctrine merely - that you are sanctified and meet for the Master's use. I think very few have an idea how one suffers from unhallowed society. It is not enough not to hold their doctrines; but their society contaminates. You are coloured by the lowest company you keep. Every effort has been tried in Christendom to weaken the force of this passage; every one is great in proportion to his separation. Luther was a great servant as long as he was separate.

Have the perilous times continued from Timothy's day until now?

Yes, we are in the last days. We cannot fix the day, but the servant is in this epistle prepared for the difficult day.

Do not you think that Timothy represents the ministry that goes on to the end, not the apostolic ministry?

Quite so; no one is up to the present days except he is up to this chapter.

The man who is suited to this day must be like-minded to this chapter?

Yes. There are two qualities which mark a good physician; the first is, that he knows what is the matter with you; the other, that he knows what will cure you. The first great obstacle is that the real state of things is not seen, and if you do not see that, you cannot apprehend the remedy. The great practical question is - Do you see things as God sees them? To be in concert with God's mind you must see things as He sees them, otherwise you are not in communion with Him.

Purging oneself from the vessels to dishonour is the true preparation for understanding chapter 3?

Doubtless; if you are not purged from vessels to dishonour you will never understand it.

What marks the man of God?

It indicates an individual path. If you are not right yourself you cannot set any one right.

Mr Wigram used to say, Do not tell me your lectures, but shew me your pupils. You never saw a man decline yet but he gave up the best bit of truth he had; it requires divine power to maintain the new growth in vigour. In plants you will find that the top-shoot is the first to suffer from the weather.

Is the man of God so with God that he sees things as God sees them and acts according to God?

Yes, quite so.

May not a sister be that?

Surely. Often sisters are before brothers in spiritual power.

You have in Romans 1 the state of heathendom; here you have the state of Christendom. The same evil principles are working; here they are under a cloak, the form of godliness.

I suppose it is the flesh in activity?

Yes, but the terrible fact is that man has used the Bible to advance himself, and while you have all the principles of evil working, you have the form of godliness. Men go on with evil and at the same

time they go to church. It is not, as has been said, that the world has corrupted the church, but the church has corrupted the world. A nominal Christian can be a more wicked man than a pagan.

Do you think these are only nominal Christians?

Yes, I think a man that goes on in that way is not a true Christian. I should have to turn away from him.

It is not the individual here but the general state of things.

Quite so.

If I look abroad at Christendom the impression it produces upon me is that the Bible has ceased to be to them light from God.

Yes, but you must bear in mind they have got all their civilisation from the Bible; they now want to advance man on his own account.

The great object of man in the Revelation is to get possession of the earth, to displace God.

Self is the worst form of evil that comes out.

Yes, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

Every form of evil man covers up under the cloak of sanctity?

Yes, that is the sorrowful fact; it is such dreadful deceit.

Is that what we get in Sanballat?

Sanballat wanted to bring them down to his level. "They which creep into houses" really want to bring others down to their own moral level.

I suppose all that is spoken of here has to a very large extent been realised in Christendom?

That is precisely what we all require to see.

Is it not less difficult to realise what you get in the first part than to understand what comes afterwards, the imitation?

Imitation is the great aim and object of the opposition.

In Christendom generally they pursue all kinds of evil for the exaltation of man?

Yes; here it is creeping into houses, forming a party.

A class of men who use their influence with others for their own purposes?

Yes, in chapter 2 they err from the truth, here they resist it.

Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses by imitating him.

The effort now is to produce in a human way the same as has been effected by the grace of God, like a Christmas tree decked with fruit and flowers which never grew on it.

Will you say a word about verse 5, and the divine power?

There is the root of the difficult times - the right form but denying the power. You do not get form in John, you get form from Paul but you get the power from John. Brethren have the right form, have they the power?

It is not simply the absence of the power but denying the power?

Yes.

But would not that open the way for human power?

Quite so. The church in accepting power from Constantine denied the power of God. As to verse 7, who are they?

Those who were led away, ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth; always listening but never apprehending the truth.

That is why they fall under the power of others?

Yes, quite so. You see Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses; that is the aim now.

What baffles them?

Life; the creation of life baffled Jannes and Jambres; nothing but life will baffle the imitation of this day.

I think, too, we ought to feel very much that all around us Christianity is ceasing to be a power. It is a principle abroad "ever learning" - no certainty. I suppose there are 250 Acts of Parliament passed

annually for the improvement of man. Christianity has ceased to be a power, that is, the Bible is ceasing to be light from God.

I know places where souls did stand for God but it is not so now; the whole thing is gone, you do not find the power anywhere.

The evangelical movement has collapsed; the line of demarcation between the divine and human has been broken down.

Not very long ago the word of God was revered as the word of God, but now it is something they can speculate upon as to how much is the word of God and how much is not.

Oh, yes, the Bible has lost its power; man in a way is saying, we can do without the power; the setting up of man is the one great thought. There is a practical denial of Christianity; there is no godliness; there is no man for God.

This does not mean that they say that they deny the power?

No but the sole object of Jannes and Jambres was to frustrate the power of God by imitating it.

In what way does life baffle this effort?

Divine life in a practical sense manifested by those who have the truth.

It is just the difficulty we have encountered. Exactly. The conflict arose from not seeing how the believer receives life in Christ. Under the law it was, "this do and thou shalt live". Who lives? The man who keeps the law.

Now in grace "he that believeth hath everlasting life" - Who believes? Surely not the man who lives by keeping the law? The opposers wanted that life should be imparted without the change of man.

They do not see that the believer gets life in Christ and not, as life was offered under the law, in Adam.

It is denying the power? Yes.

Is it like Sardis? thou hast a name to live.

That is merely reformation.

Form kills power?

Yes. but you must have form; but it is a terrible thing to have the form of godliness while denying the power thereof. It is very interesting to study Timothy. You get the church of Ephesus in four different aspects in Scripture:

1. Its natural state in the Acts.
2. Its brightest state in the epistles.
3. Its state in testimony in 1 Timothy.
4. Its fall in Revelation 3.

In the first epistle the church is in order.

Yes. No one understands the second epistle of Timothy who does not understand the first; if you do not know the right form how can you use the power?

How do these two things come out?

They come out in the servant at Ephesus. Before you can apprehend the remedy you must see the true state of things. First, in order to be able to meet the state of things you must be thoroughly acquainted with Paul's teaching. Surely Christendom has given it up, and we know but little of it.

Are we thoroughly acquainted with Paul's doctrine?

You must have the gospel as well as the church?

You cannot understand the church unless you know Paul's gospel.

Fully followed up my doctrine?

It is really fully acquainted with me.

It is not to do great things but to maintain the truth.

Certainly. You cannot go back to the apostolic days; we have lost the candlestick. We should not traffic on the toleration of the world.

In principle the Salvation Army is trying to get back the candlestick.

The work you were speaking of is more in detail now than in the aggregate?

Yes, God is looking at the workman sweeping the house diligently.

What is the meaning of "Do the work of an evangelist"?

When I address a company of professing Christians I give out a hymn; I would not give out a hymn if they were pagans. I believe the evangelist would have more power if he went from house to house.

You would rather preach in the open air? Yes.

In Acts 13 they went into the synagogue to preach the gospel?

The evangelist must be with God.

Your point is that a place for public ministry is gone.

What is godliness?

Godliness is the reverential sense of the divine presence.

The scriptures here were the Old Testament scriptures?

Yes. They set forth God in His dealings with men.

What would you say is the special value of the Old Testament scriptures?

You get all the principles of God in His dealings with man in them. If you want to learn a divine principle you will find it in the Old Testament.

The sixteenth verse would bring in the New Testament as well.

Assuredly, but no one could meet the present state of things who does not know Paul's doctrine. The moment you insist on Paul you should turn to John to support you.

You must get your gospel from Paul?

The gospel is on the ground of man's responsibility. If you preach the gospel from John you must bring in Paul. You must present the truth to man according to what man is. J.N.D. said John's was a Calvinistic gospel in contrast with the other three.

A very important point as to where you get the gospel.

If you got the gospel from the Old Testament it would be only the sacrifice.

Righteousness is the great question in the gospel?

Nothing but the work can give the conscience rest, and you do not get that in John.

The idea of the gospel is that God is acting in righteousness. What is the gospel?

God's glad tidings concerning His Son Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of God gives great prominence to the man "of whom thou hast learned"?

Yes. I must know Paul, I must know John,

I must know Peter. It is a great thing to know the man.

Timothy was fully acquainted with Paul.

We should be a wonderful company if we were fully acquainted with Paul?

The man that reads only the Old Testament is legal, the man that reads only the New is critical, but the man that reads both is practical.

Do you limit "all scripture" to the Old Testament?

I thought verse 15 was the Old and verse 16 introducing the New.

Yes the sixteenth verse embraces all.

In our day the most critical student of the Bible could not apprehend that an offence done to the assembly was an offence done to the Head.

FROM ADAM TO CHRIST

Acts 19: 1-7; Ephesians 1: 12-14

I am not going to say much, beloved brethren, as to receiving the Holy Ghost, but what I do feel is needed (and I throw it out more in the way of two or three suggestions) is to meet the difficulties in souls. There is a certain amount of acceptance of the truth. I suppose all here would hold firmly as a truth that the old man is gone in the cross, and that we are in Christ before God. Then when it comes to the real history of the soul, and our actual life down here, we find that we often have to say to ourselves, 'where are we'? and I think that is a most important question - not how far I have apprehended certain truths. If you consider this question and look at the turn things often take in the meetings, we find how little our souls practically enter into the truth, and that is a very important point. I am sure, beloved friends, there must be what I call the journey of the soul; I do not mean the journey of the understanding. It is of immense importance to the soul when the light comes in, and I see divine things in the light of God. It is a moment never to be forgotten. What I feel is, that there are many who have not taken the journey from Adam to Christ; these people at Ephesus had not taken it. It is not that I want to raise the question as to whether any here have received the Holy Ghost or not, but it is useful to look at things as they came out in scripture. At Ephesus there was evidently something wanting in these disciples, and I would say here, as an important point, that we are formed in our souls by the teaching we listen to. These people had listened to the teaching of Apollos, and he only knew the baptism of John. Apollos's preaching was a rousing gospel if you please, and it occupied them with turning from the old state of alienation to God, that is repentance, as I understand it. It is a real turn to God, and that was the effect of John's preaching and baptism. What has often struck me with regard to John's baptism is that they all had to go out to him at Jordan to be baptised; it was a real going out, and leaving the old state of things; but it is

one thing to have left Egypt, or the old state, and another question, 'what have I come to'?

It is one thing to see that I am clear of the land of judgment, by the death of Christ, as Israel was clear of Egypt when through the sea, another thing to have the heart in Canaan. You must remember that Israel carried Egypt in their hearts all the way through the wilderness. Canaan was not in their souls. As to Israel we could not speak of their having come to another man, for Christ had not appeared, but by God's deliverance they were clear of Egypt. All was complete deliverance on His side, but they were not clear of it in their own souls. And now, I think you will find, beloved brethren, if one can speak for others, that a great secret of defect with us is that we have not left Adam for Christ. I am not speaking now of salvation, nor of the fact that I am delivered and clear of judgment before God, but on what ground am I really in my soul? That is an immense point. Paul saw there was something defective with these people at Ephesus, and he asked them, "have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed". I do not ask that question, but I would say that I believe the true mark of the Spirit of God in any soul is that that soul is linked with Christ. The Holy Spirit judges everything that is of the old man; of necessity He must; but what I may call the normal work of the Spirit of God is that He connects the soul with Christ, so that Christ may become everything to it, and you can understand from Paul's question here that they had not reached Christ in the experience of their souls, they were still on the ground of repentance and getting away from the old state, but were not really clear of that. Many a person may know the work of Christ; they have come to the cross, that is, to Christ's work, but not to Christ personally. It will put the soul entirely on a new platform when it has reached Christ. The soul may be hindered, or difficulties may come in, but I believe it is of immense moment to any soul when it takes that journey, from Adam to Christ. The first moment God begins with any one it is not merely to shelter him from judgment, but to put him on a new platform altogether. You can be sheltered in Egypt, but there is no real journey there. You may say to me, "that man is sheltered from

judgment", but with a view to a journey. I see God has found by the resurrection of Christ, a new platform on which the soul can be and it joins Christ there; not only has the work been done for me, but I myself must move. The twelve men at Ephesus replied to Paul's question, "we have not so much as heard whether the Holy Ghost is yet". Apollos's preaching had been defective, but Aquila and Priscilla took him and expounded unto him "the way of the Lord more perfectly". I suppose "the way of the Lord" is an allusion to Isaiah 11. There we see that the way of the Lord was prepared by the voice which cried "all flesh is grass", and the moment we see the disposal of all flesh, I mean in the experience of our souls, the way of the Lord is prepared, for God is brought in. God comes in with His salvation on the ground that all flesh is grass, and the word of this salvation spoken by the prophet speaks of a new state of things when all flesh should see the glory of the Lord. The soul is thus introduced to a new scene, where all things are of God, though in Isaiah it does not go further than the millennium. When I reach Christ I am connected with a new scene into which He has entered by redemption.

Now, beloved brethren, I do trust that you understand what it is to reach Christ and that new sphere, because it is where the soul and affections are formed. That is where my life is though I am still down here; I am going through this place, but my soul has been put upon new ground; not only is there peace but I am on new ground before God, I have reached Christ. John's ministry, great as he was, really belonged to the old order, it prepared the way for Him who came after, that is Christ Jesus.

Now Christ has died under the old order and the significance of these twelve disciples being baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus is that they emerged from the old order by having part in the death of Christ. The bearing of the ordinance upon them was that they reached Christ; the journey was taken from Adam to Christ; that puts the soul on a new platform, and the reception of the Holy Ghost (through them the counsels and purposes of God which are all in Christ, the Spirit being the earnest of all the glory into which redemption brings us. The apostle is putting the soul in connection

with the scene of God's glory, "that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ". No doubt those who "first trusted in Christ" were Jewish believers whose hope centred in Christ before the nation receives Him, and gets in Him the promises made to Israel; but those from among the nation, who first trusted in Christ are to be to the praise of His glory. "In whom", he adds, "ye also", i.e. these Ephesians, "after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" - that which delivered them from the old order - "in whom having believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise", thus they were connected with Christ in the faith of their souls. They reached His work, but the full effect of the gospel of salvation is that they reach Christ Himself. It puts the soul on a new platform, to live on it in the power of the laying on of Paul's hands) gave them the Holy Ghost. Thus the apostle can open out power to occupy it.

I only add one more thought in connection with Ephesians 1: 13. This passage refers to what took place in Acts 19. He speaks of their having received the Holy Ghost after their souls had taken this journey. "In whom after ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise", hence he can unfold to a new place in connection with the thoughts and counsels of God. We shall be to the praise of His glory, and being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, we realise now that which redemption brings us into. The power of the Holy Ghost is in connection with the promise in Christ Jesus. But it is not that I dwell upon, I wanted to bring before you, however feebly, this transfer of the soul to another Person and ground, and you will find it will affect us in every way.

May the Lord by His blessed Spirit enable us to understand it.

T.H.R.

THE CHILDREN'S GROWTH

It is a question as to how far we may speak of growth in relation to the Person of Jesus as a child. The gospel writer, Luke, records most of the early life of the Saviour and tells us that He grew and waxed, or became, strong in spirit. The power was inherent in Himself as a life-giving Creator. At the age of twelve, which is a stage of development in childhood, He was found in the temple hearing the teachers and asking them questions. All this would be spoken of as normal growth and it is evident that the teachers also asked Him questions and, as we would expect, were amazed at His answers. In the case of the forerunner, John the baptist, he grew up in a similar way but it says of him that he "was strengthened in spirit" as being only a creature.

Scripture speaks very tenderly of young growing persons as is seen in the case of the girl of twelve years old who fell ill and died.

On raising her from the dead the Lord used the affectionate word "damsel", taking her by the hand and speaking in the language that she would be used to. In order to maintain life she needed food and the Lord desired that loving hands should provide it for her.

The matter of food raises a very important question for both young and old. As converted persons believing on the Lord Jesus we have been born anew and a completely new life within has been begun, mysteriously to us. Then this life needs the earliest food that a new-born babe needs, which is milk. Thus Peter writes of the importance of the "pure mental milk of the word". For those to whom he wrote this must have been the Old Testament with his own writings and anything else of inspired value that reached the dispersed saints. For us it means the whole of the Scriptures.

The little children growing up in the wilderness must soon have become acquainted with the manna as food. For the believer the manna is Jesus in His humble life here. Therefore converted children need to read about Him and think over His words and deeds so that the new nature is fed and nourished. The "old corn of the land" refers to the same Person known and communed with as being now in heaven where the believer also belongs in God's purpose.

Scripture also speaks of "growing by the true knowledge of God" and as we grow older and the work of God progresses in our souls we need the "strong meat" of Paul's ministry. Are you enjoying the true heavenly food?

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