

A
WORD
IN ITS
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THE LIFE OF JESUS

J.A.Gardiner

Ezekiel 43: 10-12; Luke 3: 21,22; 4: 1-4; 9: 28-35; 22: 39-46; 24: 50-53

I am conscious, beloved brethren, of the need of help from the Spirit of God and help from the brethren as we proceed with this meeting.

It is a very fine experience to be able to draw from the brethren as the body of Christ is in function. You find that things that are fresh and vital come into your soul and a great extension of liberty of speaking when that is so. I am conscious of the need of help because I would like, if I am able, to say something about the life of Jesus. Paul speaks about it to the Corinthians, that the life of Jesus might be manifest in our body, and that the life of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal flesh (see 2 Cor 4: 10,11); in these conditions in which we are there is to be the expression of the life of Jesus. It is a very blessed experience. I suppose the idea generally in Christendom is that persons read the gospels and seek to imitate what is set out in the gospels, and say that that is the life of Jesus.

That is not what Paul has in mind. He has in mind that the life of Jesus, as He lives it now in the presence of God, is manifest here amongst the brethren. It is the same Jesus, there is no difference in Jesus – the Jesus of the gospels – and the features that come out in Jesus in the gospels are to come out in the saints as being found in the power, and gain, and blessedness of the life of Jesus.

So I felt encouraged to proceed on this line by reading the scriptures in Ezekiel. I doubt if I should have attempted it otherwise because there is the pattern of the house. He says, Shew the pattern to the house of Israel. We are not too interested in the literal pattern of that house; it may have certain architectural beauties and that sort of thing that some persons might be interested in, but we are interested in the pattern of the house as it is set out in Christ. He is the pattern, and if you are confounded at your iniquities you will get help. I thought that was very precious. If you find that as you

look at the pattern you are not really up to it, then you are on the way for help and so am I, to get help morally to be like Christ. The desire of every true heart would be to be more like Jesus, to be living in the gain and in the expression of His life, to keep the whole form thereof and all its statutes thereof, and do them.

Well, to arrive at that we have to know Him. You have to know a person to be able to say how they lived, what they did, how they moved, what they gave expression to. That is a very comforting scripture in Ezekiel; there is the pattern of the house, and if you feel confounded at your iniquities, convicted that you have not really come up to the pattern, then there is help for you. I think that would apply to everybody in this room. I do not think there is a person here who would be free to say, who would have the boldness to say, that they are equal to the pattern. If we see the pattern I think it would promote depths of self-judgment with us and make way for Christ in our hearts. Mark at one point lost the pattern; when he went back he was not operating according to the pattern, but as the pattern came before him what depths of self-judgment there must have been because what a setting out of the life of Jesus he can give.

Matthew and Mark, and Peter I suppose, more or less go together, but Luke goes along with Paul. So I felt free to read these verses that we might perhaps get some help together to increase in our appreciation of the kind of Man that Jesus is. What a Man He is! This is the oblation, I would think, that is before us, the fine flour, the evenness of that humanity, unruffled, unable to be ruffled, because He is moving totally in dependence upon His Father. J.G.Deck's hymn (No.230) is very beautiful as he sets out the whole period of the life of Jesus; he says: 'Unmoved by Satan's subtle wiles'. Jesus was showing what man ought to be here in this world, for the pleasure of God in the midst of all the evil that is rampant. Beloved brethren, that is a very wonderful thing, that that has been shown, it has been manifest, a Man has been here, sin apart, entirely for God's pleasure, in the very conditions in which we are and He has yielded pleasure to God at every footstep of the way. There never was a moment when the Lord Jesus was not pleasurable to God.

Those are the steps we are to follow; we are to follow in His steps; He has left us a model to follow in His steps, and we are to be sustained in the following in the power of the life in which He now lives, because He lives to God.

Well, I think the young brethren need encouragement, and I would like to be able to do that if I can. In the first section that we read in Luke Jesus is coming out publicly and we get some insight into the kind of Man He was, the kind of Man He is. He came into fellowship, you might say, this way, took His place along with the remnant of Israel; it says He "became a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God" (Rom 5: 8), that is how He came in, identified with the Jewish remnant; He took His place with them – "To him the porter opens", John 10: 3. He did not come in to set everything right and cause an upheaval, but He came in and identified Himself with the work of God that was there. How beautiful that is! We would like to be able to do that, just go on with what God is doing in a place; that is what Jesus would do. He would certainly encourage it and increase it, and greatly set it forward, but primarily that is what He did, He identified with the repentant remnant of Israel, carried forward, I suppose, from the end of Malachi. It says: "all the people having been baptised. and Jesus having been baptised". Now He is not a pushing person, Jesus is not like that. "All the people having been baptised, and Jesus having been baptised": He took, you might say, the last place. That is a thing that we might ask our selves: Do we like to push ourselves forward a bit? Or are we prepared to take the place that has been given to us, prepared to take the last place? Very great blessing accrues to us if we are prepared to take the last place, because some day somebody is going to come along and say to you, Friend, go up higher. That is the way to elevation, go up higher into the hill country, you might say. Chapter 2 of Luke is a setting out of moral and spiritual elevation and the function of the body of Christ; the conditions are so good that life is operating there; one sister speaks to another and there is the evidence of life inside her, there is the quickening touch inside her. Would you like to be like that? These things are set before us in this gospel; these are

the conditions into which God brought His Son. There is an old man there and he had been told that he was not going to see death until he saw the Lord's Christ; God wants to give people that kind of promise, give you something for your own personal encouragement that you might step forward. So he embraces what is brought in, he holds that Babe – very wonderful! Then there is that old woman and she gives praise to God. Happy people, joyful people, moving, you might say, in the blessedness of eternal life, proving the greatness of all that God is in His faithfulness to His promise. So here is Jesus, and He has been baptised and He is praying. I would encourage the younger brethren, as I need to encourage myself, to pray. Jesus is dependent, He was baptised, took the last place; He was not looking at other people to see what they were doing, what place they were taking; He is moving into this matter in the dependence and in the appreciation of His links with the Father, and the heavens are open to Him. Have you ever had the heaven open to you? Do you ever feel when you are praying that the heavens are like brass? Probably it is because of unbelief in your own heart; I find that, it is unbelief. This is Jesus – O, the delight that heaven has in this kind of activity! If you move like this you will meet with divine approbation. Would you like to meet with divine approbation? This is the kind of way in which God says, Friend, Go up higher. Have it in your own soul for yourself; measure the pattern, look at the pattern, see how you are measuring up alongside of it; you are confounded at your iniquities, you go to God, you are needing help, you are feeling a bit guilty; forgiveness is available right away. They were confounded at their iniquities; God would open the thing up to them; that is what God would do now, open up to us all that He finds His delight in, in His beloved Son. O, what food for our souls, beloved brethren, there is in the life of Jesus! And that life is to be manifested here in our mortal flesh in these conditions. Publicly He is rejected, and publicly if this is manifest in us we will find rejection. Paul in chapter 4 of 2 Corinthians is straitened, their way not entirely shut up, he is having quite a rough time to get through, but God is with him, God is supporting him; God is bringing this thing through. This is the testimony; he is carrying the ark like the sons of Zadok. He had

Christ in his heart and what is shining out is the radiancy of the glory of the glad tidings. How wonderful that is!

So it says here: "and a voice came out of heaven, "Thou" – "Thou" – "art my beloved Son, in thee I have found my delight".

Have you ever had God speak to you, beloved, and give you some impression of His approbation of you? Dear young brother or sister, go to God, just be simple, ask Him what you can do more, how you can be more conformed to the expression of all that He found His delight in in Christ, receive a touch from Him; He will confirm you in the way in which you go. That is Christianity. Pray, be true to your baptism. That is what Jesus did; He came into this position, He identified Himself with the remnant in baptism, He came on to other ground. That is what you have done in your soul, been baptised, come on to other ground, the world to you is a wilderness, there is nothing there to minister to your heart, to minister to your taste; if there is, there is something wrong. You need to go to God and pray, ask Him, Why is it that I do not like going to the meetings? Why am I not keen to come out to the care meeting? Tell God about these things. Why is it that I find some of the meetings a bit boring? Be free, He is your Father, speak to Him, tell Him what you think, He does not mind; many others tell Him these things, but you will find God in the blessedness of His heart will direct your mind, will direct your affections, into these channels that are so delightful to Himself.

Do not go along as though you are just putting up with things. No, be like Jesus, be wholly in it. He speaks about being in His Father's business. Paul writes to Timothy to be occupied with these things.

Have your heart in them, and if you feel your heart is not in them and you are a bit cold, well, go and tell God about it; you can tell the brethren, you may confide in some fathers, maybe you do not fee!

free to do that, you may think that there is nobody in your meeting who gives expression to the features of fatherhood. Maybe there is not but I doubt it very much; but then you have God, He will tell you, He will give expression to all the features of fatherhood that you could ever have desired. Be free. to tell Him; say you want to grow in your soul, you want to overcome, you do not want to be overcome

by the world or these things that I find in myself warring against God's work in me. Be like Jesus! What does He do? He reverts to the Scriptures: "It is written"; He uses the word of God. Get acquainted with the word of God, read it, there are plenty of expositions that will help us to understand; find out what the various books mean. I remember once when I was newly breaking bread we started locally to read Isaiah, and somebody told me Mr Darby had a synopsis on all the books of the Bible and I thought, fine. I obtained the Synopsis and I started to read Isaiah in the Synopsis and I was more puzzled than ever. This is practical experience: what are you going to do now? You go along to the meeting and the brethren are speaking about things that you do not have much of a clue about.

Go through it all and get something coming into your soul, some of these precious touches. One thing might be left with you in a reading, just one; somebody may have said something; well, nurture it, cultivate it, go to God with it, ask Him to show you how it can be enlarged in the Scriptures, find out how to obtain something for yourself. Do not try competing with those on the front seat about interchange of thought spiritually and that sort of thing. It says as to Jesus that He grew up before Him as a tender sapling. How beautiful is growth in Jesus! How normal! How precious!

It is a strange thing, and yet it is not a strange thing, that we may find it more difficult to be occupied with Christ wholly and solely than with anything else. We can be pretty good at minding other people's affairs, and spending lots of time on various pursuits, trivial as they are, but God would have us be occupied with Christ as He is occupied with Christ. Now we need to take this exercise to God in prayer and in earnestness of heart, and say we would like to be able to live in the life of Jesus. He greatly delights to promote, to make way for us as we are on that line. How precious to the heart of God to see the manifestation of the life of Jesus here in persons in their mortal flesh! He has Christ before Him in the fulness of His Manhood, every beautiful trait and feature shining out absolutely in Him; and down here is the new man, Scripture calls it the new man; it is the expression of Christ here in testimony. God would like you

and me to be more in it. So we need to read the Scriptures, need to get to know what they mean. Deuteronomy is a very fine book. You have to find out what is meant by Deuteronomy: why should there be a second giving of the law? Why do brethren say that Deuteronomy is Moses with the people? How did they arrive at the things they say? There are remarks in the reading; brethren say, for instance, that the numeral ten relates to responsibility, and it does; well, who arrived at it? The number seven, they say, sets out perfection; the numeral eight relates to what is eternal – how did they find out? You find that out for yourself with God. What an experience Christianity is! Marvellous! Would I have been able to bring out this verse in Deuteronomy if I had been tempted? There was Jesus, the perfection of humanity; He is establishing the right of man in flesh and blood to live on the earth for ever; what a triumph that was for God! Marvellous! Wonderful! A Man here who has justified God in every one of His thoughts relating to man in flesh and blood – how beautiful that is! The devil comes at Him in every possible way and cannot get an inroad at all. Jesus is binding the strong man and He is doing it by use of the word of God. The very reason why Adam fell was because he refused to hearken and obey and to move on the principle of the word of God; he did not listen to God, he listened to his wife, who listened to the serpent. Jesus is here and He is related absolutely to the word of God, and He is related to the word of God in that Deuteronomy position, which means, I suppose, that He was ready to go into heaven at any time. That book is very wonderful.

You begin to link it up with what Paul says in Ephesians 3 about his intelligence in the mystery; really what he is saying is, you will get to know that I have some knowledge, some experience in the mystery. Well, Moses is like Paul, he is able to tell them more about the land, and he had never been in it, more than any of those who eventually went over. Why was that so? Because he lived in it in his heart, that is where he lived. Is your heart in the land? Is your heart in heaven? These things are all available to us, beloved brethren, for that is where Jesus lived. Could you spend a night abroad on the mount of Olives? Could we sustain a night on the mount of Olives in that spiritual environment with God? Are we prepared to have our

ear opened every morning, to take the place of the instructed? That as Jesus: "He wakeneth morning by morning, ·he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the i structed" – Why? – "to succour by a word him that is weary", Isa 50: 4. O the wonderful disposition of divine grace! 'see too how Deuteronomy bears on the new covenant, the great expression of God in love. Why does it say; "Hew for thyself two tables of stone" chap 10: 1? Are you exercised, have you enough exercise to do that? The ark is the ark of wood. Hew for thyself two tables of stone and write the law on it; do the thing for yourself, make it your own, that is what God is after; He wants persons to be in the enjoyment of Christianity for themselves. It is all right quoting what Mr Taylor said, what Mr Raven said, what Mr Darby said: it is all very blessed, but let me make that my own in whatever measure I am able to do it.

Now the Lord here is related to the Scriptures, so I went on to Luke 9. I would like to speak a little about spiritual experience. This was a wonderful experience in Luke 9; a Man who was here in flesh and blood conditions sin apart, for the pleasure and glory of God' and the establishment of every feature of God's will, is ready to go into heaven; He could have gone right into heaven then in that condition. Is that not wonderful! But He thought about you and He thought about me, thought about other things, but He was thinking about us. We know the teaching, we are coming to the sections that deal with the dying of Jesus. Are we prepared for that? – the putting to death of Jesus, the every-day experience of that, being delivered to death for Jesus' sake. It tests us very much; it does me. What do we know then about spiritual experience? It is the foreshadowing of the public display of the kingdom of God. Peter, one of the chief fathers of the Levites, is writing so that we might know that they had not followed cleverly imagined fables; he says: "but having been eyewitnesses of his majesty" 2 Pet 1: 16. That is a very wonderful setting out of what happened here on the holy mount, and Jesus is entering into the wonder, you might say, of the privilege. How much do we enter into it, beloved? There is no cloud, no distance, between Him and the Father on this mount of transfiguration. Some

brethren were there and were asleep, they did not know what was going on; the bondman was committing Himself in principle to serve for ever, that is what He was saying; Moses and Elias were talking with Him about His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. He was not going right up to heaven, no. He was saying in principle, I will not go free. "Ourselves your bondmen for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor 4: 5): could it be so with us, beloved? Could we speak of one another in love like that? The great desire of Paul's heart was that Jesus might be promoted amongst the brethren.

As here, He is in the presence of the officers and the judges, having His ear bored through with an awl, saying He will be His bondman for ever. Nobody has ever been able to say 'I love' like Jesus has. Think of the outgoing of Mr Darby's heart when he said, 'O Jesus, Lord, who loved us like to Thee?' (Hymn 249)! Nobody has loved you like Jesus has loved you; He has committed Himself to serve in love. There He is; Moses and Elias, great personalities, are talking with Him, they are speaking about "his departure which he was about to accomplish in Jerusalem". Can we sustain conversation at that level? Come Lord's day morning (and I speak with all humility) it becomes a real challenge to us as to how long we can sustain an impression in the presence of divine Persons. Think of Abraham, in type, able to detain Them until he prepared that meal. There was the evidence in Abraham of moral superiority as he sits in the tent door in the heat of the day. In that sense there is the evidence, the manifestation in him of the life of Jesus. What a discussion this was! They spoke of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Could we enter into that holy conversation in any measure? It may be we get oppressed with sleep; I know it happens, we become almost oblivious of what is going on. You may be in the presence, beloved brethren of the greatest things, the finest things, the most spiritual things, and be quite unmoved, quite oblivious of what is proceeding. And then we want to make something; we miss the manifestation, so we are like Peter. How often we revert to that line; grace is not sufficient for us, we have to make something; when we seek to make something it is

usually going to be derogatory to the uniqueness of Jesus. What Peter said, "it is good for us to be here", was right; and it is certainly good for us to be here. Then he proposes making three tabernacles. Well, the brethren know the teaching of that. Let us drink into the fulness of the purity of the spirit of divine grace that is manifested in Christ, and absorb the wonderful communications that proceed, not only between the Father and the Son but between the assembly and Christ in this 'holy realm of divine response. God intervenes and He says: "This is my beloved Son", He is unique; you are not to bring Him down to the level even of the greatest man – great person ages as these were, Moses setting out the authority of the truth, Elias bringing the brethren back to it in a broken day, prophetic ministry having that in mind that the saints should be brought back to the greatness of divine principles established through the authority of Moses. That was all in mind but they are not equal to Jesus. Jesus is unique, He is distinctive. Beloved, is it so in our hearts? It was so with Paul; he says: "For me to live is Christ, and to die gain", Phil 1: 21.

Now I want to speak a little on chapter 22, because I think there is a very vital point here which I have missed many times. He comes to Gethsemane from the point of view of the mount of Olives. He is committed to the Father's will. The great stress, I think, in the section is in prayer – prayer. It is very important and most essential that in times of conflict there should be intensity of prayer. You might not be able to get into a place, and there might be hearts that you cannot touch, that it is impossible to contact. I think beloved, the word of God for us from this section would be that we should persevere in prayer, and if we are in conflict we should pray more intently, because the great aim of the devil, when pressure comes upon persons, is to come in between them and their links with God and weaken that link so that that person is drawn away from God, and consequently, may eventually be lost to the testimony. O, how Jesus shines here in the wonder of His dependence, and the great desire that He has for the salvation of the apostles in urging them to pray: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation". Temptation, beloved,

can be far too much for us. How we need to have our footsteps guided aright in the holy path of God's will that we do not fall into temptation. O, the beauty of this section: "and having knelt down he prayed". What a priestly action that was! Here is the bondman, He is not going back on His word, He is not going back on His committals. They knew that; this is what they talked about on the mountain, it was the subject of their conversation. The Father was never tense; He never looked on with any apprehension as to whether the Lord Jesus would withdraw, whether He would yield or give in. No, there is perfect complacency between the Father and the Son. Mark, as having measured the pattern, brings in that beautiful touch of holy intimacy when the Lord Jesus says, "Abba, Father" (Mark 14: 36); the pressure brought out the intensity of the relationship. O, beloved brethren, let us see, let us anguish in prayer, that it would be the case with us if pressure comes upon us, that we would be more cast upon our relations with God and find strength in them. It even says here: "And being in conflict he prayed more intently. And his sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth". How intense was the prayer of Jesus! How He felt this thing! It is all to do with your sins and mine: it was nothing to do with Himself. It is the accomplishment of the will of God, which, of course, in its fulness goes way beyond the question of sin. Yet He was here in this situation because of us; let us never forget that Jesus is our Saviour and He has saved us from our sins.

Let us never think for a moment that we are free from sinning, that we do not sin, because if we do we deceive ourselves; no matter how well taught we may be or otherwise, as long as we are here in these conditions we are liable to fall into temptation and come short, and to give expression to some feature of the flesh which is sin. So there is a lesson to be learned here: "being in conflict he prayed more intently. And his sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth". Jesus goes through His prayer here, He is going through the exercise of it, He is going through with God. How wonderful that is, beloved, to go through a thing with God and to come out the other side with God! The pressure is relieved from His spirit; He is going forward into this. What teaching there is in this!

We can follow Him in grace from the mount of Olives and through this way that He goes, but, once again, alas, there are persons sleeping from grief; they cannot sustain the pressure. We need help from God to sustain an exercise right through so that we come out of it triumphant, victorious; and through it is the manifestation, and the increasing manifestation, of the life of Jesus. I think that is very wonderful.

He goes after them in chapter 24; He recovers persons, brings them back to the city. How beautiful that is! Have you ever seen Him in another form? He manifests Himself in another form. You would not think it to be He but it is. In the tenderness of His grace He pursues persons, and He can arrange circumstances and do wonderful things as persons are ready to retrace their steps, to come back to what has been spoken of as God's ideal of a city, back to Jerusalem, back to the assembly, back to the great sphere of privilege. They are back to touch and live in this area of things that is beyond death completely; it is not related to flesh and blood. What privileges are ours beloved brethren, in these days! We can have assembly experience, we can touch the assembly despite the brokenness of the day. You might say, and it might be well for all of us to ask ourselves, What is the assembly? What do brethren mean when they say we are going together in assembly? That is Lord's day morning, we come together in assembly, the formal convening of the assembly. If you do not know what it means ask the Lord, ask God. There are plenty of things to pray about; the Lord will open your understanding, He will give you to understand the Scriptures so that you can see things clearly, then you begin to know what the brethren are talking about. What is the assembly? What is a local meeting? What is a local assembly? We are to know these things by experience as well as by way of light. But He has gone up in blessing, beloved brethren. How wonderful that is! And He is coming again in blessing. There is no difference, it is the same Jesus, the same blessed Person; He is going to come in the manner in which He went up – very beautiful! – come again in like manner. He does not exude condemnation, He does not make people feel

depressed, does not make you feel you are not wanted. He never embarrassed anybody: that is not Jesus; and if the life of Jesus is manifested in our mortal flesh there will be the expression of Christ amongst the brethren. What rallying there will be to the truth, because the work of God, being what it is, always comes to the expression of the truth, at least acknowledges it.

Well, beloved, let us measure the pattern, it is available for us. There are the gospels; there is the pattern, measure it; see how we come up to it morally, for that is in the area of right and wrong. The moral side largely relates to the earth, the wilderness. How are we in it? Are we in it like Jesus? He has left us a model to follow in His steps-very beautiful! It says: "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when reviled, reviled not again", 1 Pet 2: 22,23. "Neither was guile found in his mouth" is a thing we might think about, because we come along in the fellow ship, we have a bit of experience, and sad to say, – it has to be faced, you know – you begin to see that some brethren can be a little bit political, and there is guile, that sort of thing is in evidence, under the guise, it may be, of wisdom. Jesus is totally transparent and so is the holy city. "Neither was guile found in his mouth": He has left us a model to follow in His steps. Let us seek to do that as individuals, not looking at somebody else to see how they are getting on. Peter looked at John to see how he was doing; the Lord says, That is nothing to do with you, you follow Me; you be the thing yourself. Oh, what a blessed experience! Get your eyes off persons, get your eye on Christ, let your eye be single. He commends that in the gospels; "if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light", Matt 6: 22. As a brother said in the reading: "that they may see your upright works, and glorify your Father who is in the heavens", Matt 5: 16. May we be encouraged, beloved brethren, to seek grace and help to find that we are able to give expression to and enjoy in a fuller way the life of Jesus as it is currently in expression.

LONDON

18 January 1986

THE JOY OF THE LORD

Ruth 3: 6-13; Hebrews 2: 11-13; Zephaniah 3: 14-20; 1 Kings 10: 1, 8, 9

J.A.G. I had some impression today about the depth of the joy that the Lord has in what He finds when He comes amongst us at the Supper. It may be that He would encourage our hearts by giving us some touch of His own joy. I thought of this scripture: "Boaz ate and drank, and his heart was merry", he is so appreciative and thankful in all that he has secured. I suppose the heap of corn where he lies down and finds his rest is like a finished product; it is the result of his own sowing, the fruit of the travail of his soul, you might say, and he finds great satisfaction in that. I think Ruth adds to his joy; she draws out the depth of feeling from him. Boaz is the great redeemer, the mighty man of wealth; what he does he does happily and joyfully. He finds great satisfaction in it. The Lord finds great delight in the assembly, and in people like Ruth who feel a great need of Him,.

Not only is He the Redeemer but He is the Purchaser, later on in the book. I believe that He might also give us to share with Him in the great joy that He has in leading the praise to the Father, leading the praise to God. How full and happy His heart is as He sings in the midst of the assembly! What liberty He enjoys with the Father, the great response in praise and worship to the expression of all that has come out in the Father.

This is a well-known scripture, indeed they are all well-known scriptures and have often been used. Perhaps the prophet would give us to see the joy that the Father has. Think of the Father exulting in joy, singing, in all that has been brought to Him. The result, I suppose, would be in testimony, There is the evidence of happiness and satisfaction, without trying to put on anything; it is there, in evidence. Persons come and they see it, the result of the declaration, you might say, of the Father's name, in the thought of his fame in connection with the name of Jehovah. I wondered perhaps if we could speak about these things. There would be many other scriptures and impressions amongst the brethren today. The Lord's

day is a wonderful day, very restful. Brotherly contributions help us to appreciate greatly the family side of things amongst the brethren.

E.C.B. The joy set before Him includes what He sees in the face of God: "Thou hast filled him with joy by thy countenance", Ps 21: 6.

There is what He finds for Himself and what He finds in the saints.

J.A.G. Yes; I thought of that scripture. He has the whole scope of things before Him. "He rejoiceth as a strong man to run the race", Ps 19: 5. What vitality there is about Him as He has the whole circle of things before Him! His heart is full of love, the outgoing of affection. I can hardly find words to describe how I feel about the delight that the Lord Jesus has in all that is before Him as He seeks to bring into effect anything that is for the heart of God Himself.

J.C.E. Do you think that Boaz is seen here as one who is competent to secure for himself on a righteous basis all that he desires to do, even if there is someone who seeks to exert another claim? He says, I will do it.

J.A.G. Yes, exactly. He is the mighty man of wealth; he has the means and the resource to bring about everything. He is prepared to draw off his sandal. Very affecting, that! He took on all the responsibility.

D.J.H. Say more about the difference between redemption and purchase.

J.A.G. I do not know that I could say much more about it. When you come to the line of purchase it is not exactly connected with past history. The idea of purchase is in the pearl relating to what is wifely. Perhaps you could help us.

D.J.H. I had not thought of anything when I asked the question, but what you say seems to indicate that he sees intrinsic beauty in the pearl, and that led Him to purchase it.

J.A.G. Yes, I think so. "All the gate of my people knows that thou art a woman of worth". That was remarkable testimony. Value was in Ruth.

D.A.B. How do you understand the scripture in Acts 20 – God "has purchased with the blood of his own" (v 19)? I suppose we link the blood with what has met the history.

J.A.G. Yes, but it is more than what meets the history. I think "purchased with the blood of his own" is to give us to understand the great value that God places on the assembly. "The assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own". It would help us to appreciate the value that the assembly is to God, because it is His eternal dwelling-place. What do you think?

D.A.B. Yes, I thought you would say that, but I would like to be enlarged as to what the blood does relate to that is beyond what is moral and relates to history.

J.A.G. Well, that is all I could say.

E.C.B. We were enquiring here recently whether we are inclined to think of the blood too much in relation to the side in which it has met judgment, and whether the value of that life laid down for God is not another aspect of it. He is securing it for Himself, is He not?

J.A.G. Yes, it is for Himself, and that is how much He values it. The knowledge of God has come to us, in one sense, through the blood of Christ: "who by him do believe on God", 1 Pet 1: 21.

D.J.H. The assembly is not flesh and blood, is it? The most precious life there ever was in blood and flesh, that of Jesus, has been terminated so that there should be a new order for God in another condition.

J.A.G. Yes, exactly, another condition; it is not flesh and blood, it is flesh and bones. It says "we are of his flesh and of his bones", Eph 5: 30.

B.W.W. You spoke about Boaz's heart being merry. The thought of happiness comes into the book; there is the happy relation between Boaz and his reapers, and at the end there is the happy expression of the women as to the child that had been born. That thought of happiness should be found with us in a general way, should it not, in

the light of all that has been brought to us and into which we have been brought?

J.A.G. I think it is most important that it should be, otherwise things become burden some. Brethren are prepared to carry burdens, but in the book of Ruth the conditions are so felicitous that a spirit of doxology runs through it. That is what we would like to get in the meetings, and to seek to minister to that line of things, to promote joy and happiness amongst the brethren, and not to radiate doom and gloom and all the rest of it which helps nobody. The Lord Jesus has never been on that line.

C.G.H. Could a little more be said as to the blood. I gathered that what was being said would emphasise the width of the result of the shedding of Christ's blood, going beyond what meets moral conditions, because the blood is the basis of redemption seen in its entirety, is it not? (I remember the late Mr William Phare telling me that Mr Darby, visiting a brother, was in the garden and stopped at a rose tree, and said to the flower 'I love thee for thy Redeemer's sake').

J.A.G. Well, I think we should appreciate every feature of God's creation. The blood certainly covers the whole line of redemption, for which we shall be eternally thankful. I think it is very wonderful to contemplate it. God's nature is manifested in it. It is very wonderful. Well, let us get some more about this purchase.

D.A.B. Is it represented in the heap of corn? That is not exactly history, is it? Is it potential, and does it have a future look in what has been secured for Christ's heart?

J.A.G. I think so; it is the many grains. Maybe that is too simple, but I think that is what it would- be. I think it is what is of Himself, His own kind, "after its kind", Gen 1: 2. That is not flesh and blood, is it? It is the product of the deep sleep.

P.S.W. Redemption comes into this book of Ruth. It was not so much her own personal history that was involved in redemption but that the clearing of the encumbrance that was upon the whole situation?

J.A.G. The problem was her being a Moabite. The one who had the right of redemption would redeem that inheritance of Elimelech, but it is the Moabite; that is a different question. He could not defile his own inheritance but Jesus has done it. He drew off His sandal. The whole thing is legally settled. It is very wonderful. It was the matter of custom in Israel concerning redemption and concerning exchange. To confirm the whole matter the man drew off his sandal. The Lord Jesus has taken on the liability, and He has taken it on cheerfully. It is all included, I think, in the joy that was set before Him.

E.C.B. Have you some impression of that in the prophetic word in Jeremiah 31: 26: "Upon this I awaked... and my sleep was sweet unto me"?

J.A.G. That is a very helpful scripture. He did not do it grudgingly. He was very happy to do it.

E.C.B. I was impressed, in reflecting on the gospels, that He speaks often of His death, especially after a certain point in the synoptic gospels, but it is not until Gethsemane that you get any sense of burden or weight on Him in that regard. He says to them, You will sorrow but instead of that you will have joy. But there is clearly something that sustained Jesus above whatever was going to occur.

J.A.G. Yes, I think so. He was conscious of the great blessing, joy, that was brought in. It might be in His mind in John 17, because He does not refer to certain things. He says "I have completed the work" (v 4). He does not refer to the cross or anything like that. He was going straight to glory. "I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it". I think you can understand how He despised the shame; He was completely above it.

H.A.H. Are you thinking of the taking off his sandal as akin to laying aside His garments?

J.A.G. Yes; it says if he was not prepared to do this they were to spit in his face (see Deut 25: 9); it is just the shame. Jesus took the whole thing on and carried it through. Wonderful, that is! I think He would impart to us some impression of the depth of joy that fills His

heart, as the hymn says: 'That myriad sons with Thee should find their part' (No.226).

B.W.W. Do you not think that it is good for us all, as individual believers, as each belonging personally to Jesus, just to allow the thought that He loved me enough to die for me, and He owns me, to let that cause some joy in my heart? Those lines of Mr Darby's:

'O Lord! 'twas sweet the thought
That Thou wast mine;
But brighter still the joy
That I am Thine!

To have a sense that the Lord Jesus has joy in each of us would be something to carry along every day.

J.A.G. O, I think so; that is what we need to drink into. I connect that sort of thing with drinking. Somebody said that the drinkers got it when the thinkers missed it. You have to eat; Boaz ate but he also drank. Drink into the spirit of it. It has a great subduing and formative effect upon us. It forms the affections, makes them like His own. That is what the assembly is.

D.J.H. Though He was here as the Man of sorrows, what sustained Him in that path was His joy, was it not? The woman in Luke 7, for instance, and Mary sitting at His feet; these instances all along through the gospels brought joy to His heart, did they not?

J.A.G. Oh surely, indeed they did, and He could see the assembly, see what He was going to secure, and I think we really need to touch the joy of our links with Christ, you might say the joy of eternal life; otherwise things become burdensome. We do them, but we do them because we have to do them. We fulfil responsibilities because we have to, and that is all right maybe, but I think if we drink into the Lord's own joy many of these responsibilities become privileges.

G.A.P. So while she says "thy handmaid", he says "my daughter". Is that how we would take on affections of this kind?

J.A.G. I think so, because these are all relationships. We have to read Christianity into this, and the Lord would confirm us and

establish us in our relations with Him. I do not think we really believe in active faith many of the things that we say we believe. He certainly wants to make us happy.

D.J.H. John writing in his first epistle speaks of their fellowship with the Father and the Son, and then that we might have fellowship with them, but "that your joy may be full", chap 1: 4. Is it that in these last days we might be sustained in the joy of these relationships you are speaking of?

J.A.G. Yes, I think so. That scripture helps us to see the light into which God has come, and to walk in the light and have fellowship with one another, enjoy the blessedness of Christian fellowship and the great gain that is to be had from it, so that you do not come to the meeting because you have to come. You come because you are going to get something for yourself.

W.J.R.B. Was there not a joy in the Lord saying to Mary: "Go to my brethren", John 20: 17? The same word comes into Hebrews: "I will declare thy name to my brethren", chap 2: 12.

J.A.G. Yes, His heart was full: "Go to my brethren". Do not touch Me, He says. It is a new condition. "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father". Think of the Lord as a quickening spirit, a making-alive spirit. That is very wonderful. The last Adam is a quickening spirit, to make us live.

E.C.B. Is it this character of things that will preserve us from brethrenism, or any other ism for that matter? Is it therefore needed?

J.A.G. It is needed. Brethrenism cannot contain it, nothing that is sectarian can contain it. "Joseph is a fruitful bough... His branches shoot over the wall", Gen 49: 22. Something breaks the rules. If we are going by precedent, somebody comes in touch with Christ like this and whatever rules and regulations there are, are going to be broken. Judaism could not contain Him.

J.C.E. Ruth had to give an account of herself. Is there anything with us that requires that? She had to say who she was and what she

needed. There was a resilience with her in what she did in simplicity, and I just wondered as we have the Lord's things before us and enter into them, and the Father's things, if we are able to give an account of ourselves while we are there.

J.A.G. Yes. Ruth is a personality. "Who art thou, my daughter? " She has capacity. I do not know if we all have cloaks as big as Ruth's. What do you think?

J.C.E. She had several gallons in it, gallons of dry measure of barley.

J.A.G. Well, can you carry an apprehension of Him like that?

J.C.E. I think there is that kind of thing in Christianity. We do not want to be occupied with ourselves exactly, but the thought of the King coming. in to see His guests, for one thing, I think implies that we have to give an account of ourselves.

J.A.G. Well, that all happens before we go to the Supper, or should. You go to the Supper, you have your cloak, six measures of barley.

The emblems are there; you gave out that hymn this morning: 'We view these emblems' (No.203) and we hear that voice. It is going on in our minds and hearts as we are sitting there, calling Him to mind.

This six measures of barley is our own distinctive, personal impression of Christ. If Paul was sitting at the Supper I suppose he would be thinking according to all these things he says in Colossians 1; that would all be in his mind, the kingdom of the Son of His love.

Think about that. He must have the first place in all things.

R.W.F. I was wondering whether a true experience of the joy of the Lord has a lasting and powerful effect upon us. Ruth had to give an account of herself to Boaz, but she later had to give an account of herself to Naomi, who said "Who art thou... ?", as if there had been a great change with her, a result of this encounter, this joyful experience with Boaz.

J.A.G. I think so. She is changed from glory to glory, is she not?

There is something striking about her, something distinctive; she has been in other company. She has been in great company, and

that is where we have been – if we have been. So we go to the Supper; we speak about being freighted with spiritual wealth and so forth, which is very good. All that is available for the Lord to draw upon, and He delights in it: He really does, you know. That is what He lives for, you might say. He is gladdening the heart of His wife, and He gladdens her heart by ministering joy.

E.C.B. I sometimes think that these six measures of barley are like:

'Jesus! our Saviour, Shepherd, Friend,
Thou Prophet, Priest, and King'.

(No.54)

J.A.G. Yes, I think that is what it is. It embraces all these things that Paul can say about Him personally in that epistle (Colossians), which is a secret epistle: how you get into heaven, – if you get in – secretly, on that line. It is another way, put there to help us, to stimulate us, to sustain us on the way through. Our hearts are filled with His glory, like the magnification of Joshua.

W.J.R.B. We had an impression this morning of the greatness in John 17. The Lord lifted His eyes to heaven and said "Father", and at the end of the chapter: "the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them" (v.26). The greatest joy you can conceive, is it not?

J.A.G. I think so. In one sense you might say it is finality and maturity, to be able to love Christ as the Father loves Him. That is very wonderful, to arrive at that state. Your cloak then is really full.

D.A.B. That is the fruit of the Father's Spirit, is it not? You were speaking of it yesterday as developing what is fatherly. Another aspect of it is that the Father's Spirit stimulates appreciation of the Son, does it not?

J.A.G. Yes, as was said in a word this morning, Abraham gave all to Isaac. The Father's Spirit would make everything of Christ, and when that happens, when He dwells in the heart through faith, He turns everything to God, and He has great joy in doing it. Think of the Lord singing in the midst of the assembly. He is out of death, freshly out of death, He has declared the Father's name to His

brethren, as was referred to; the immediate answer is that He is going to sing His praises in the midst of the assembly; that is, He is in the hearts of the brethren, He is in the heart of every person.

E.C.B. When He says "in thy presence is fulness of Joy" (Ps 16: 11) (A.V.), He is contributing to it.

J.A.G. He is indeed. If He was not there it would not happen. "He that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one". That is going to be Ruth and Boaz. The service of God is in mind, David the king and all these singers that David produces, persons who can sing, the levitical position, heads of the families give character to the response. It was a very fine setting out of things as they will be – the courses.

B.W.W. All this emphasises the need of our coming ready and expectant. The Lord is expectant, is He not? He is expectant of the response, looking for it, ready for it, and the more ready we are on our side, the more rapidly (while He is always the Minister) we shall reach what is before Him.

J.A.G. I think so. We need to engage our hearts with Him, let Him be our object. It is all right to bring ourselves in, but I think if we are really engaged with Him and what He does and what He is going to do, other things will happen normally. Think of the joy that He has in answering to the Father in the midst of the assembly, the Lord coming on to our side to lead the praise, singing in the midst of the assembly.

D.J.H. It is wonderful that we should be brought into the Father's joy and appreciation of Christ, is it not? We had a sense of that this morning, we are sharers of His joy in having Christ there and ministering to Him.

J.A.G. Well, we can only touch it in part, but you can get some idea of the immensity of it, that God's purpose, what He planned before time was, has been secured. He can rest in His love. Love has wrought it and He can rest in it. Not one thing failed; that is very marvellous. The Lord Jesus, on our side, answers in the midst of the

assembly, with the assembly, to what the heart of God always desired. How great sonship is!

E.C.B. That scripture in Zephaniah is interesting in the way it speaks: "he will rest in his love", that is as if He has secured everything that His nature desired, and all in suitability to it. There is a reference in the Psalm to God of the gladness of my joy", Ps 43: 4.

J.A.G. Yes, I think that is very beautiful. "He will rejoice over thee with joy". Everything has been secured in complete accord with very thought of His, not a thing missing. It is just exactly as He would have it, and He is free to let His heart go out in this wonderful outgoing of joy and love, resting in His love, exulting "over thee with singing". We see the breakdown but I think we should also see enter into the scope of, all that God is going to do, to recover all these things, bring them all back to the greatness of His own thoughts. He really would make us happy and cheerful.

D.J.H. It says in verse 15: "the King of Israel Jehovah, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more"; that is that for us everything is settled, is it not? But then in verse 17 it says: "Jehovah thy God is in thy midst, a mighty one that will save"; that is that everything is yet going to be secured universally. But we can enjoy what it is for Him to be in the midst and joyful now.

J.A.G. O, I think so. We get an impression of the greatness of the security that there is in God. "Let not thy hands be slack"; get on with it! There is much to do, I suppose. The prophet would really lift us up to see the greatness of what there is already for God, and what He is yet going to bring in.

E.C.B. That reference there to Jehovah, the "mighty one that will save", brings out how great salvation is, does it not? David speaks of "the joy of thy salvation" (Ps 51: 12), and there are other scriptures that connect salvation with joy. We perhaps limit it too much to the idea of having our sins forgiven, but it is placing us in another world.

J.A.G. Exactly. "Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise", Isa 60: 18. Think of what Isaiah 60 says of Jerusalem, what

it will be. Does your heart throb? It beats under the powerful impulse of what God has done. "The rams of Nebaioth shall... come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will beautify the house of my magnificence" (v.7). What scope God has to bring into effect amongst His people every precious feature that He finds in Christ! "Beautify the house of my magnificence"! I think we should rise to God's great thoughts, see the loftiness of them and relate them to the local meeting. Start looking at the brethren like that; it makes a tremendous difference.

W.J.R.B. I was recently struck by a remark by Mr Taylor; he said that the sufferings of Christ are not the main thing. He said, God forbid that I should lessen the sufferings of Christ, but there is the glory and greatness of His Person. It should override every thing, and that is what it will be in eternity.

J.A.G. I am sure it will be. John the baptist said "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world", John 1: 29. None of the disciples left him at that point, but then when he says "Behold the Lamb of God", two of the disciples left him and followed Jesus. They were right inside. The sufferings of Christ belong to the court, but when you go into the sanctuary it is the fragrant incense, the fragrance of His humanity, who He is in Himself. That is the Lamb of God, is it not? That is the Person whom they followed.

W.J.R.B. That is what you had prominently before you in your address, the glory of the Person, is it not?

J.A.G. I wish I had Him more before me.

R.W.F. Isaiah seems to present salvation as the source of joy: "And with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation", chap 12: 3. It is not presented there as an end in itself, great though it is, but as a source from which we may draw, and continue to draw joyfully.

J.A.G. I think we need to do these things, enjoy Christianity, enjoy everything that has been wrought for us, simply enjoy it. There is always the tendency with us to see if we can add something to it, but there it is, the whole thing has been done. "With joy... draw water out of the wells of salvation", appreciate the Saviour, appreciate all

that He has done, seek the Spirit to draw our hearts nearer to Him, to help us to think less about ourselves, more about Him come into His joy.

D.J.H. We have been concerned about things being attractive, particularly to the young, but if things are just rules and tenets of the brethren, and so on, things are not going to be very attractive, but if there is the joy relating to salvation, and to see that these things are salvation from an order of things that can only bring sorrow, it is to bring us into joy. All this would be attractive, would it not?

J.A.G. It is bound to be attractive, and it is only attractive, and we are only attractive, as we are walking in nearness to Christ; as you reflect, you radiate Him. If something comes from the brethren, something may fail, or some trouble may come. You may attach to a person, but finally he lets you down. If you get to Christ, and there is nobody else between you and Him, you are bound to be attractive.

That is how it will be with the city, I suppose; it will be so attractive that they will come to the gates of it, drawn to it, because it radiates the glory of God, because "the lamp thereof is the Lamb", Rev 21: 23.

J.C.E. This scripture in Zephaniah would help us to look on the earthly people as a hidden treasure to be brought to light, do you think? It has been hidden, and it will be brought to light with joy.

J.A.G. I think you have to carry them in your heart. The names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel are on the gates of the city, they are written there. We carry in our hearts the whole scope of divine thoughts, every family – if we can. There is room for them all in His house.

W.J.R.B. Even the children are affected playing in the streets of Jerusalem (see Zech 8: 5). The same feature will mark the earthly city, will it not?

J.A.G. Well, Jerusalem is a very safe place. Old people can be there, and will be there literally, and children can play in the streets. You could not do that now, could you?

B.W.W. I think, if we can all be encouraged to carry away something of what you have said these two days, it should be for uplift for us all, and that is always good. You said some thing like this yesterday, that any of us, young or old, could take anything to the Father, and you have now been speaking about our seeking to draw nearer to Jesus. Are not these things in which, as we are helped to practise them, the true life of Christianity will be found?

J.A.G. I think so; it makes for great expansion because we are always inclined to limit ourselves, to brethren we know, it may be, to those with whom we are in fellowship, or maybe we meet a few believers. Can we relate ourselves to the scope of the work of God on the earth at the present time? The nearer we are to Christ, the more we will be able to.

C.G.H. I think we all ought to be exercised to discover some more of our spiritual relatives.

J.A.G. I think so. The breadth – that is what he starts with in Ephesians 3 – the breadth and length, and depth and height should be more before us, and then I think perhaps we should be expressing more what our own personal links would be. Now we conform to certain things that almost become pattern. We develop – and it is probably helpful up to a point – a way of communicating. The brethren use certain terms, and so forth, and that is all right as long as it is sustained in life. You can get by on it up to a point, but there is no vitality in it and underneath could be anything.

E.C.B. Recently, we have felt locally that the Lord has been helping us to have our view enlarged about what He has on the earth, and to move into greater simplicity in relation to the expression of it. What you are bringing before us is something that should help us to desire to be released into it. I think that is where a lot of the clue is: do we want to be released from the formality into which we have been moulded?

J.A.G. Exactly; because in one sense we find a certain protection in the mould and we are scared if it is broken, of what is outside of the mould.

E.C.B. Or what would somebody say.

J.A.G. Or what would somebody say. Can we leave the mould and walk on the water and go to Jesus?

E.C.B. It is a bit like John 11 and 12, is it not? Take off the grave-clothes, and then someone has such a heart for Christ that the house is filled with it.

J.A.G. Exactly; it is filled with the odour of the ointment. You do not have to try to make yourself attractive: it is a natural consequence, or a spiritual consequence.

D.A.B. We do not want to become enigmatic, do we? The Queen of Sheba had enigmas. Her breath was taken away when she saw the wisdom of Solomon. She did not have to be clever to see that there was something there that was ordered of God, and people happy in it.

J.A.G. Yes, and the whole system reflected the great ability that he had in connection with the name of Jehovah. Well, the Lord Jesus has made the Father known; this is the result, this is the answer to it; persons are really happy there.

D.A.B. Would you say something, linking with what we had yesterday, about that reference to the name of Jehovah; she came on account of it. I suppose you might say she did not really know God, certainly not as Solomon did but there was something in the testimony of those who did know God that had reached her and drew her.

J.A.G. Yes; it says a great deal for her that she came such a distance. She must have had a bit of exercise about it, and if we have that the Lord will certainly honour it. She has substance, which she may have thought was going to impress him, but she becomes one of the special contributors, and we could all be like that. Every one has something special that they contribute. There was "no such sandal-wood" and "no more such abundance of spices", 1 Kings 10: 10,12. That is distinctive to herself.

J.C.E. She became a contributor to this.

J.A.G. That is what happens. You get the wealth in your soul. It is very fine that: "there came no more such abundance of spices as those which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon". I was thinking of these verses, because there is something distinctive.

Everybody brings, and we need to make room for everybody. Some people will be a bit timid, maybe; others of us maybe talk too much. Well everything gets regulated.

D.J.H. It seems that the final touch. That affected her was the ascent by which he went up. She seems to be occupied by the order of his table and his servants, but particularly by the ascent by which he went up.

J.A.G. Yes, there was no more spirit left in her. Well, you think of the Son going to the Father, the glory and dignity of that, how He moves. He would teach us how to do it. I think that is very wonderful. "I come to thee" He said (John 17: 11); as going up He said "I ascend", chap 20: 7. We do well to seek the Spirit's help to have a little more enlargement in our hearts, to appreciate the movements, the divine movements in glory and dignity of these wonderful Persons. And He brings us with Him.

E.C.B. It says there were no such spices. They would in a sense be consumable and would have to be renewed, but Solomon made a balustrade of sandal-wood, that is something that remained as a permanent contribution to his house.

J.A.G. Yes. Next time there would be something different, something for the moment for. the heart of God; all under the hand of Solomon. I think there is a lot in it that we could maybe go into.

Very wonderful that the Lord should impart to us some impression of the joy and satisfaction He finds with us! If we look into ourselves and we become introspective we get so depressed, we begin to wonder if He has any pleasure in us at all. Well, that is not the case.

R.W.F. There is sufficient in the joy of the Lord to affect each one, is there not? "Happy are thy men! happy are these thy servants." The servants might be like those who attempt to conform out of duty, which may at times have been true of us, but they rose above that

limitation, they rose above the level of servitude. They were happy, and observedly so.

J.A.G. I think so, yes. They "stand continually before thee" and "hear thy wisdom". Think of the wisdom that comes from the Lord. I think wisdom is one of the great features of headship. How much wisdom we need, and it is all available for us: "made to us wisdom from God" , 1 Cor 1: 30. "God's power and God's wisdom" (v 24): that is in Corinth where the mind of man can go rampant at any time. We all have to judge ourselves on these lines because many a time your thoughts run riot and you would seek to put that into expression in the meeting , and there is nothing but confusion. We have to make way for " Christ God's power and God's wisdom". There is power to put into effect, into expression, what would come to us from Him by way of wisdom.

C.G.H. Knowledge is valuable, but wisdom regulates its use.

J.A.G. Yes, exactly, it knows what to do. We need to be wise. We can all look back and with hindsight wish we had had a little more wisdom, but the Lord would help us not to be discouraged or anything like that.

R.W.F. Would the scripture in Zephaniah help us to understand what God has set on Himself for His pleasure. There is salvation and joy, and there is rest and there is singing. All this God has set on for Himself; it is not a question of what we rise to exactly. It is what He has set on.

J.A.G. Yes, what He has set on and what He is going to do, so that we do not need to be discouraged. That is a fine word to Jerusalem: "Fear not, Zion". "It shall be said to Jerusalem" (I suppose that is what we are in responsibility) "Fear not; Zion, let not thy hands be slack". There are two sides there. "Jehovah thy God is in thy midst, a mighty one that will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will exult over thee. with singing". His heart is going out in its fulness to us.

R.W.F. Does that mean that God Himself sings?

J.A.G. I think that is what is conveyed. It is to convey the happiness, the joy that is in His heart. There was a time, I suppose way back in the fifties, when there was much talk of did we hear the Lord singing in the midst of the assembly? You almost had the impression that some people were straining their ears to hear a voice, or something. We need to see the spirituality of the Scriptures.

E.C.B. Zephaniah prophesied in the days of Josiah. Does this last chapter show that there is something yet to come that will be greater than any recovery?

J.A.G. O, I think so. I suppose you could refer to the scripture in Haggai about the latter glory, "greater than the former", chap 2: 9.

E.C.B. Yes.

J.A.G. There is much yet to come.

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Key to initials

(all local unless otherwise stated)

D.A.Burr; E.C.Burr; W.J.R.Brodie, Ealing; J.C.Evershed;
R.W.Flowerdew; J.A.Gardiner, Aberdeen; C.G.Hitchcock, Ealing;
D.J.Hutson; H.A.Hutson; G.A.Palmer; B.W.Ward; P.S.Warren.

DOORKEEPERS

D.L.Stewart

1 Chronicles 9: 24 – 31

I looked up this passage in connection with the thought of spices that was touched on Lord's day, and I found that the emphasis was on doorkeepers. The thought of the spices is very fine, the frankincense and the spices and compounding the ointment of the spices. These are for the heart of Christ. We were reminded that there was no such abundance of spices as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. Think of the Lord's delight in what He finds that is for Himself alone! One of the hymns says:

'Lord, in this vessel chaste
Incense is found;
All that delights Thy taste
Doth here abound.' (No.361)

I think it would be evident from this passage that if there are to be the spices for Him, there is great need of doorkeeping. This chapter, while it comes in Chronicles, links on with the book of Nehemiah; the names that are mentioned can be traced in that book. It belongs to a time like our own when things are very weak and broken ; yet there is that which is for Christ Himself and that only emphasises the need of doorkeepers. It speaks about them here as being "toward the east, west, north and south". The enemy is bent upon breaking in upon what is for the heart of Christ in His assembly. We have a vigilant foe. Ephesians speaks about the armour, the panoply of God, the need to stand, and having accomplished all things to stand.

Another feature that comes into this section is that of trust. We are reminded of what has been entrusted to us in our day. Towards the end of this dispensation great things have been entrusted to us.

Paul speaks about the good deposit entrusted. In his day, in view of his absence, he would pass on these things to Timothy, and so they have come down to us in spite of the enemy and through much

conflict, but what is special for Christ is entrusted to us. What tremendous wealth spiritually has come to light in the time of the recovery and we are found through mercy among those to whom this has been entrusted. In our own day we have seen the enemy's activities, and we have been through a time when it almost seemed that the enemy had succeeded in ruining what had been recovered; yet each one of us here is to be found amongst those who would commit ourselves to guard what is for Himself, for His own peculiar pleasure and satisfaction. Earlier in this chapter (v 20) we have a remarkable reference to Phinehas: "And Phinehas the son of Eleazar was the ruler over them formerly; Jehovah was with him".

What a doorkeeper Phinehas was, prepared to rise up and meet the enemy head-on, take his life in his hand. That is the way things have been preserved to us, through faithful men and women. The Supper has been preserved to us through suffering. I was greatly struck by reading about a woman, a sister, who suffered at the stake simply because she held that the Lord's supper was a matter of remembrance of the Lord Jesus. This is the way these great things have come to us and the challenge is that we should be found trustworthy. These persons stayed round about the house of God during the night because the charge was upon them. The opening thereof every morning pertained to them. The instruments of service – think how much is involved – the vessels, the holy instruments and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices, they are all meant for God and His service. Yet these things could be lost if there is not doorkeeping. The maintenance of trust, standing for what is right, meeting matters that the enemy might introduce subtly into our midst, things that have a weakening effect upon the testimony, we all know what these things mean and I would just leave the word with us all that we might be encouraged to be found standing, as the apostle says, having done all to stand (see Eph 6: 13); maintaining until the Lord comes an area, a protected area, where He can find His pleasure, where He can come and where He can taste of these wondrous things for His own pleasure.

May the Lord bless His word.

MELBOURNE

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THE CHILDREN'S TRUST

We have the word of scripture prophecy in Psalm 22 that Jesus was made to trust when in the perfection of His earliest infancy. There is of course in this something that is beyond us to understand, but we wonder at it. We also have the words "I was cast upon thee" and "thou art my God" from the moment that the holy Babe was cradled in the manger. Then His whole life was one of dependence upon God. As the fulness of the time came for the great atoning work, what deep feeling is foreshadowed by the words of the same Psalm "Be not far from me for trouble is near; for there is none to help"! Then, in completing that work He had to cry "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This was on our account and you will read the words with awe and sorrow. But how our hearts are touched to put our trust in Him and in the value of His work!

The aged apostle John sent three special messages to little children – no doubt obedient ones! – wherever his epistle should come. The first message was that "your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake". The renown of Jesus in completing the work of atonement readily secures this. Then he wrote also "ye have known the Father". This draws out our trust, just as children have confidence in the love, wisdom, strength and nearness of the family father. If the apostle had written of God instead of the Father, it might have given some feeling of distance.

Thirdly, John wrote "Little children it is the last hour" and warns of constant danger from persons who speak and preach against Christ. You may think that it is an early 'hour' in your life, and so it is in youth and opportunity. But in this time of Christian witness it is still the "last hour" which may close at any time by the coming of the Lord. Are you redeeming the time?

J.C.Evershed