

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 162

September 1986

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WAITING

Luke 12: 29-38; 42-43; Philippians 3: 20-21; 2 Peter 3: 11-16

W.S. These scriptures speak of what we await, what we expect; each has an application for us at the present time. We are on our way home; we do not know how long the journey will be – we may have just the last few minutes to go – but the Lord would have us to be in this spirit of waiting and expecting. I feel the need to be revived in it because we get so accustomed to the ways in which we have gone along, and the fire does not burn enough in our hearts. I am sure the Spirit would help us to see the positive gain connected with this waiting. The Spirit has taken us up, and His direction is towards Christ. As Rebecca was ready to leave, she says, "I will go" (Genesis 24: 58), and it meant a lot. She left everything behind, took the journey and then she said, "Who is the man...?" That is what is before us and it may soon be actuality. The Lord wants to have us in this expectation. He would know that those who wait for Him would be different in every respect because they have left their old resources and where they have been before. That is what we find in Luke 12. This is generally viewed as referring to the coming of the Lord but it has also a present application: we expect Him to come at any time. He would like to visit those who are ready for Him, who open the door for Him. We will face difficult times, I think, as to our circumstances. Some brethren may have more experience of this than others, but the Lord is comforting His disciples and is comforting us, so that we should not be worried or care for things as the nations do. We have a wonderful resource, and everything we need is available, and more.

J.R. It says, "Let your loins be girded about, and lamps burning; and ye like men who wait on their own lord". Is that your exercise?

W.S. Yes, in the main. In this gospel and this chapter, there are surrounding circumstances. The Lord is saying what He has in mind for them. He says even, "And ye, seek not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, and be not in anxiety". We may think it is a simple

matter – too simple perhaps to speak about in a reading – but the Lord's word about these things is very real and may become more real for us in the days ahead.

J.R. "Fear not, little flock" would be a comfort, would it not, to persons who are prepared not to be over-concerned about what we eat, what we drink and so on?

W.S. Yes, and the great thought of "your Father" – He brings in your Father; everything that was given here He relates to your Father. "... your Father knows... "

A.C.C. Is the Father's care set to relieve us from all anxiety that we might the more be devoting ourselves to waiting for Christ?

W.S. That is right. Here it speaks of those of little faith. Some circumstances sometimes test our faith more than others, but He wants to make us free for what the Father has in His mind. We should seek His kingdom, and then, "Fear not, little flock, for it has been the good pleasure of your Father to give you the kingdom". It is more than we need.

J.R. Would it not be a question whether the Lord is real to us or whether His coming to us is real and means something to us – not only coming for us, as you said, but coming to us?

W.S. And that would be our main object. It would lift us above circumstances, above many matters which would keep us down. What it is to have the experience of the Lord coming in and serving us! He likes to do it.

J.G. Do I understand that we can come into the enjoyment of this kingdom now?

W.S. Yes, I am sure. It would involve all that the Father has to give. It is a very rich area.

A.C.C. You said it was a rich area. I think that is pretty descriptive – a rich area. Is that intended also to help us not to be distracted. It says in chapter 10, "Now Martha was distracted..." (Luke 10: 40), and to be distracted is one great danger, is it not?

W.S. That is good. Mary lived in the gain of this rich area. She was free of all such hindrances. I think she experienced the Lord's service, sitting at table, enjoying with Him what He would enjoy.

R.S.R. The Lord speaks of treasure, "a treasure which does not fail in the heavens", and then He says, "For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be". Would there be a question as to what we consider to be treasure?

W.S. That is where it is: the Lord has in mind that it is in heaven. Everything will fail here, we can be sure. If we are younger we may think about many things and that will really hinder us from getting this treasure. We will lose time; that is the trouble. We lose time which we cannot in a way make up. Time is lost.

R.S.R. He speaks of providential things, for which we are thankful – our food and so on – but is not our real treasure where Christ is, and our affections bound up with Him where He is?

W.S. Yes, and the Spirit has come from Christ glorified to show us where the real things are, things which cannot fail.

A.T. The word is, "Sell what ye possess". Did the Lord set the matter on Himself? He sold all that He had, did He not?

W.S. Paul would help us in Philippians as to what it means to give things up and give things away and to change the valuation of things for the better. 'Sell what ye possess' may mean that we know what it is to give things up.

J.R. It is quite a challenge and a test, "Sell what ye possess and give alms; make to your selves purses which do not grow old, a treasure which does not fail in the heavens". We tend to gather in these days, do we not?

W.S. That is true, and the background would be that we do not have this expectation in our hearts. Things become more valuable to us than the presence of Christ.

H.P. It says, "For it has been the good pleasure of your Father to give you the kingdom", and then it goes on to say, "Sell what ye possess". If we sell these things, the Father has given us

something; He has given us a kingdom. He grants everything we need, and we are able to sell.

W.S. We have come into a realm of unspeakable giving. Divine Persons have shown themselves to us in this giving way. Paul speaks of His unspeakable free gift (see 2 Cor 9: 15).

E.J. Was that not seen in the beginning of Acts in chapter 2 when they sold their possessions. It was a very happy, enjoyable company.

W.S. And the background to it was that they expected Christ's coming back. They did not think it would be long, and that should be so with us. All that we do, that we think, all our plans, everything, shows where we really are in our spirit. We may say things and show things but the reality should be that we expect the Lord, and our great joy for the present time would be to get a fresh impression of His presence.

G.A.B. Is the treasure a concentrated kind of wealth? It might not be very big outwardly, but it is what it is worth that matters.

W.S. In a way it is hidden, but our hearts will be there. If our hearts are on things down here it shows that we do not value a treasure up there, but we can enlarge this treasure; we can do it! The Lord shows it to be so here. We can lay up things there at the present time. It will be too late when the time of testing is over; it is at the present time that we can enlarge this treasure.

J.S. Do you think as He comes in the second watch and in the third watch that He repeats these comings and He would make us conscious of what the treasure is?

W.S. Yes surely. It is interesting that He does not come in one watch or the other; He comes in one and in the other one too. He repeats. The Lord likes to come, He likes to have us ready. What would be involved in, "Let your loins be girded about"?

J.R. I was just looking at that. Apparently it is so that when He comes and knocks they may open to Him immediately. Loins girded about would be in view of movement, would it not? Lamps burning,

would be active in the light. But does the Lord come and knock, do you think?

W.S. Someone would notice His knocking. In Acts there was a girl who heard the knocking and she recognised whose the voice was.

In the Song of Songs one was not ready when He knocked. We should be ready. What governs us at any time when we are together is that the Lord may come in and serve us. It is a great thing.

J.R. We would need to have the expectancy you spoke of earlier to discern the Lord's knocking. We may be so busy ourselves that we do not hear or heed the knocking.

W.S. It may be by a remark from a brother that some impression is given of the Lord being present.

R.S.R. In Exodus 12 they were told to have "Your loins... girded, your sandals on your feet" (v.11) in view of leaving Egypt. Should that be our present attitude in view of the imminence of the Lord's return?

W.S. That is a good scripture to bring in. It shows that readiness to go should be a prime matter with us, ready to leave.

R.S.R. I would like to ask the question, is this world 'a wilderness wide' to me? I take it that the wilderness is the constant application of the death of Christ to everything here. We cannot understand what the wilderness is unless we have left Egypt.

W.S. Singing that hymn I am often reminded that one of our early brethren said – It is a test to sing this hymn. Is the world really a wilderness to us?

J.R. "'Tis the treasure we've found in His love That has made us now pilgrims below;" (Hymn 139)

D.R. Paul speaks about having girt about your loins with truth (see Eph 6: 14). Say some more about the loins.

W.S. It would refer to our strength to move. We should always be ready to move: we should be ready to go. When the Lord comes we will leave everything behind, and we should really be ready every

time to go. It would help us very much: it would be a testimony too.

I think what the Lord brings in here is a testimony to those outside.

He speaks at the beginning of this chapter of the attitude of man.

There are those who have many good things laid by for many years – that is what is around us, and that is what we are involved with too, but only for 'many years'. But the Lord has in mind that we should be rich towards God, and our loins girt would be that we know where true wealth and riches are.

W.W. It is well worth while giving up what is material, which is terminated by death, for what is spiritual, which is eternal but which by the Spirit we can enjoy now. I was thinking of wisdom's word in Proverbs 8 as to, "My fruit is better than fine gold, yea than pure gold; and my revenue than choice silver.... that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasuries" (v.19-21).

W.S. I think we are much tested as to the reality of these matters. I do not think the Lord is too much interested if we just get on in terms in relation to the truth. He wants to find the reality of it.

D.R. Do you think girt about with truth would involve that we are regulated by the truth? We not only know its terms in our minds, but our movements are regulated by the truth.

W.S. We should be lovers of the truth. The truth is really the test – love for the truth is the test in these last days.

J.M. The word "consider" comes in twice in verse 24 and verse 27, considering the ravens and considering the lilies. Do you think it would be important that we learn how to consider in view of being released and ready to go?

W.S. I think that things may become more real to us in days ahead, but the Lord will bring His saints through and the Father will give us everything we need. We have examples in the Old Testament, how He cared for the prophets and for the widows; it is wonderful, and He will do it. When the assembly has gone there will be testing times in relation to these practical matters to those who do not have the sign on their forehead and on their hands, but the Father is sufficient for

everything, and we are more than the ravens or lilies. So the Lord says, "Blessed are those bondmen" and again, in the other verse we read, "Blessed is that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find doing thus". It speaks about the attitude of those who say, "My Lord delays to come". That is not a Christian expression. He does not delay, says Scripture. That He does delay is not an expression we should use. (See Heb 10: 37).

A.McB. Are the experiences we have of His coming to us, to quicken this expectancy of His finally coming and our being with Him? But meantime there is work to be done the saints to be served.

W.S. And we can only do it rightly if we have His coming in our hearts. We know for whom the Lord longs – we know He longs for the assembly, we know how precious the saints are to Him, and that should make us all ready and happy to serve in the small measure He may give us. The saints are great, they are greater than any servant.

W. L "Men who wait their own lord". Does that mean that His Person is very precious to us?

W.S. That is interesting – they "wait their own lord". Yesterday we read in Daniel. He says, "My Lord"; not just 'Lord'. It says, "And no one can say, Lord Jesus, unless in the power of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12: 3). Lord Jesus is the expression of love: it is like "my Lord".

R.S.R. The blessing comes as we are watching, according to verse 37. It is more active than waiting, is it not? The Lord says in Mark "But what I say to you, I say to all, Watch' (Mark 13: 37).

W.S. That is right. It would be that we are alert and we like to listen. He is knocking and He is coming in. It may test us to watch; we get sleepy.

R.S.R. Blessing comes from that attitude.

W.S. Our brother referred to our being quickened in our affections. That would help us to be watchful, watching for Him.

P.B. Does the principle of stewardship enter into it?

W.S. Yes, Paul refers to this in Corinthians faithful stewards (see 1 Cor 4: 2).

J.R. And food seems to be related to stewardship, "to give the measure of corn in season".

W.S. Food would always refer to Christ; corn – Christ as risen and ascended. The Spirit gives us everything necessary. Paul says "and what hast thou which thou hast not received? " (1 Cor 4: 7) but the Spirit will fill our hands. He will help us.

A.C.C. When He comes to us, does He expect us to be busy? It says in verse 43, "Blessed is that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find doing thus". He is not taking it easy, he is not resting on his reputation or on his office, but he is busy.

W.S. He does all that he can to care for the household of the Lord, but then, in the verse before, He makes us restful. The Lord, if He comes in, makes us restful. It is wonderful that in the Gospels whatever they had, however little, was given into the hands of the Lord, and He multiplied it.

Now in Philipians we get a similar line, I think. In Luke we get that there is one scene and we are delivered from it, and in Philipians Paul speaks of people "who mind earthly things". But he says, "Our commonwealth" – or our "associations of life" (see note h) – "has its existence in the heavens". It is a present thing already; it is not the future. It will be future of course too, but it is already available for us and we live in this wonderful realm, in these wonderful associations.

J.R. So that the world may be a hindrance, but the earth too: "earthly things", could hinder us, could they not?

W.S. Yes; that is what we found in Luke. Material things belong to the earth, but we have a wonderful commonwealth and it has its existence in the heavens, and from there we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. The Lord would encourage and comfort the saints in relation to our bodies of humiliation. We are in this body now, and some feel it more than others. We think of accidents, and of

brethren who get older with all the sufferings in their bodies – the body of humiliation – but we wait for the One who will transform our bodies into conformity to His body of glory. What a wonderful expectation!

J.R. The Lord is spoken of in Ephesians 5 as "Saviour of the body" (verse 23), is He not? Would that include this final transforming of our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory?

W.S. I think it does, and it is "according to the working of the power"; it is not just the power which is there, but it is the working of the power which he has.

R.S-e. It does not say 'enemies of Christ'; it is "enemies of the cross of Christ". The cross is always the test.

W.S. That is another great subject, the cross of Christ. Paul brings it in in relation to the truth of the local assembly, the cross of Christ, the word of the cross, and Christ crucified. It is the end of man after the first order, and it shows that it has a practical effect. We cannot have these things only in theory, but our ways should be according to it, our practical living.

R.S.R. Is this the fullest title of the Lord Jesus? (The "as" may be put in to complete the English). "Lord Jesus Christ Saviour" – what a title He has!

W.S. It is wonderful that we have Him as Saviour still for this final thing. Salvation is a full thought – it includes the body.

R.S.R. Is it not wonderful that we have a link in affection with such a glorious Person?

W.S. And He has already given us a place in this wonderful sphere where He is. Our names are registered in heaven. What a wonderful title the saints have! Do we use it enough? Where are our associations of life? Would it also include at the present time the thought of eternal life, heavenly relationships?

J.R. I was thinking that we get the idea of a model in verse 17, "Be imitators all together of me, brethren, and fix your eyes on those walking thus as you have us for a model", and then, leaving out the

parenthesis, "for our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens". Do you think that when we are younger we ought to learn from older ones – see how they live and their associations of life?

You were speaking of the practical character of this, it not being just theory.

W.S. Yes, and there is variety of course in the saints but there is one model. There are not different models; nobody can choose this as a model or that, but "you have us for a model" (Phil 3: 17); it is one really. It is a representation of Christ, His features.

J.M. In your first scripture was the idea of a bondman; Philippians begins with bondmen, and also we have the One who was in the form of God taking a bondman's form (see Phil 2: 6,7). Are the features of a bondman necessary in the waiting time?

W.S. You think of the Lord as the great Model of a bondman; none is like Him and He helps us and He serves us. He has; this wonderful attitude, and everything has to take character from Him. His bondman; it is brought out in Revelation, the thought of the bondman. (See Rev 1: 1). It is a wonderful thing to be able to serve the Lord Jesus even in a small way, an unseen way. Most of this service is not public; most of this service is hidden. We do not know about it, but every thing is treasured, and this service is for His own; it is a great joy for God. But I was just thinking of this scripture here and of what we await – "from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour". There are great things before us, things we have not touched, but we can be in the realm already. Heaven should not be a strange place for us; we should be acquainted with heaven.

Our treasure is there, our heart is there, and now we await our Lord Jesus from heaven. What a wonderful thing it is, what a comfort if we feel the body of humiliation. Paul I think felt more of it than we may think.

W.G. What an outlook for the believer it says, "... into conformity to his body of glory". What an outlook to think that we will be like Jesus in that sense, a body of glory. Paul also says in this chapter, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (verse 8). He

must have had an impression of how wonderful it was and that it was something to go in for.

W.S. And this was the real source of the energy of the apostle. Christ was before Him and it was a pleasure for the Spirit to support this man. What a joy for the Spirit if we look to Christ, long for Him and get a right valuation of everything.

D.R. Do you think this involves being on good terms with the brethren, good relations between the brethren? I was thinking of the word 'our', "our commonwealth", and then it says 'our body', "our body of humiliation". Do you think there is a great need at the present moment to value the saints and what is of God in the saints and to foster that?

W.S. And if we were more in this we would be more united, and other things would just pass away. What troubles us are earthly things and worldly things, and the background is that we are not waiting, this burning for Christ is not in our hearts.

A.C.C. Would it raise the question too as to where we find our life?

W.S. Yes, where is our life? It could only be there. There is no life really anywhere else.

A.C.C. It is a real question now, especially perhaps with our younger brethren, as to whether their life is found within the area of the commonwealth, or whether they are finding it outside.

W.S. We were reminded of Rahab recently. She lives in the middle, in the centre; she lived among the people of Israel. (See Joshua 6: 25). She had known what the outside was. She knew what the life of Jericho was. What a privilege to live in the centre, and the young ones should be in the centre of this wonderful realm. Anyone who is on the border will fall. It is dangerous to be in the border district but we are invited to be at the centre where there is plenty of room; the centre will never be over-crowded. That is a wonderful thing. The place in the bosom of Jesus is the place where there is the most room.

J.R. That is why I thought that some ought to be models, or some ought to be a model. This thing can be modelled, can it not, according to verse 17 and on to verse 20? "Our commonwealth" would be persons literally who are a model, but then it is the privilege of each one of us if we are prepared for it.

W.S. It says in Timothy, "Be a model of the believers" (1 Tim 4: 12). The brethren should be encouraged, young ones should be encouraged to be examples to others for good. That is serving really; a bondman's attitude is in serving one another. One brother serves another brother, one sister another sister. Let us be encouraged. What trouble it would be for one to fall in the wilderness.

H.P. Our commonwealth does not exactly mean that we have to work up to it, does it? It is something which belongs to us, for young and old together. It is the real joy of the heart.

W.S. Yes, the Lord says, "Rejoice that your names are written in the heavens" (Luke 10: 20). That is a wonderful thing; your name is written there and you have full rights there. As already said, we have not to work up to it, it is the work of Christ, His precious blood, and the presence of the Spirit which makes us at home there, the oldest and the youngest. Do not think that an old one has more rights in this commonwealth than a young one.

H.P. Do you think it becomes a matter of how we can attract one another into this?

W.S. Attraction, that is the thing, not pushing. It is said we are attracted into heaven, we are not pushed. But still we are here and have our responsibilities, and also there is some thing which has to be protected. There are certain limits. We should not over-stress grace and patience. It says in Corinthians in relation to our responsibilities that there are things we cannot do. It is not a matter of grace or patience, we *cannot* do things. That we have to accept.

Sometimes when we are young we think we may go as far as we can, and if there is no limitation it is to our danger, to our damage. It

is good if brethren show us that there are limitations, there are borders which cannot be overstepped.

H.P. Putting our hands to the loaf would mean that we are governed by certain restrictions, would it not?

W.S. Yes, restrictions for our salvation, not for our disadvantage.

The Lord has helped us in ministry, especially by Mr Taylor, not to have certain things, and that is for our salvation. It is not any disadvantage. For instance, he warned the saints in relation to the radio. I read a reading where he brings out that inability to refuse a radio could mean not being found in the book of life. We understood as we thought about the terrible time we had in our country under the Nazi regime and now that ministry was given just at the time when the radio was spreading. The first thing the Nazis did was to build a little radio – very cheap, very small – to be in every household to listen to the voice of that terrible man. Mr Taylor said that those whose names are in the book of life are resistant against what is antichristian, and the radio is an antichristian vehicle. You find this in the reading "Witnessing" (Vol. 96, page 224): it is a very interesting reading. We may think there is no harm in these little things but let us listen to what the Lord has given us in ministry; let us be obedient and it will be for our salvation.

J.R. It speaks in the next chapter of certain persons whose names are in the book of life (v.3). We have no doubt about these persons, have we?

W.S. This should come into expression, divine life, the power of the Spirit to resist things. But the wonderful thing is that "our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens". I think when we look at the heavenly city we see all the glorious things where our commonwealth is. It is future in a way, but still we have come to it already. Hebrews 12 says we have come to it. It is by the Spirit we can enjoy these wonderful things.

Now, may we just have a look at Peter. It is another great expectation; we wait even for the eternal day. Who waits for this? There are mockers and materialists, and they are mentioned at the

beginning of the third chapter. But the saints know what is to happen. We have to fulfil righteousness but everything else will go, everything! Nothing will remain, nothing at all. We can look at anything down here and nothing will remain, but we have come to things which remain. What a wonderful thing! And it is as knowing this, "All these things then being to be dissolved, what ought ye to be in holy conversation and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God". We wait for the Lord Jesus to come, to come for us and to come with us, but then there is a wonderful end, "the day of God" when righteousness dwells. There is no mention of the need of rule, just dwelling.

H.P. What does it mean by, "hastening the coming of the day of God"?

W.S. It seems that we can shorten this time of waiting, and it will be shortened if we are occupied with these eternal things. The waiting time will be short because we do not think of the time. What do you think?

H.P. It is something like the journey of Rebecca. She had Isaac in her heart and the journey really was very short, was it not?

W.S. Yes, and so the woman of worth in Proverbs is occupied with things for her husband, and the time will be short. But we should be affected by it. It speaks of holy conversation and godliness; things are not to be without practical effect in our lives. That is what the truth should be. We are not together to speak about things just to entertain one another, but it should have an effect on our souls, and we should come out from every meeting changed. There should be some change with us, and it should be seen by others that we are changed, our fellow-workmen, our neighbours, they should find that there is a change going on with us all the time. It speaks in 2 Corinthians 7 of "perfecting holiness in God's fear" (verse 1); there should be an increase of holiness. Holiness is not by faith, it is by love.

R.S.R. Should we have the testimony in mind in all our movements, because people look at us, and they expect to see a certain

decorum, and they are right, because we have so much light?

W.S. Yes, there should be a testimony. I was impressed on reading JND's letters about that (see Vol. 3 page 25 etc.) He speaks in one letter of brethren being a testimony to the ruin, but it has a special application because there was something they assumed to be. This is in one letter. But in the other letters he was concerned that the brethren should be a testimony to the thoughts of God as in the assembly.

R.S-e. Would the change take place through looking on the glory of the Lord all the week through, not just in the morning meeting, but all the week through?

W.S. Yes, there would be transformation going on.

J.R.C. There is something quite attractive in this that Peter links on with Paul when he is speaking about these eternal realities.

W.S. He would not allow that some servant should be used against another. That was the Corinthian trouble. If this is among us, it shows that we are babes in Christ; we have not come to any growth. Paul speaks of them as a model, one thing. There should be no preferences for this brother and with others for that brother; we need all the servants because they all represent something that the Lord may give. One man does not have every thing. Paul speaks of himself and of Apollos as one. They are one: they have different services, but they are one.

J.R. It speaks of Timothy, "For he works the work of the Lord, even as I" (1 Corinthians 16: 10).

W.S. That is very affecting. We know that Paul had to rebuke Peter at one time, but now Peter is right, he is linking on with Paul and he says, Paul has more than I have; like Barnabas, he looked for Paul.

Peter says, "As ye wait for these things, be diligent to be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless"; and of the time of waiting he says, the longsuffering of our Lord to be salvation" – salvation for me and for you, for everyone of us.

G.A.B. Why is it the day of God which is said to be hastened and not them millennial kingdom?

W.S. The final thing would be in mind here I think. We look for eternity when everything is settled for the joy of God. We have only a few scriptures which refer to what is eternal but our hearts should be filled with what is final. God will have all His pleasure, and we will serve Him for ever and ever.

J.R. It is a challenge whether we view our lifetime here as a waiting time. It speaks in verse 12 of "waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God", verse 13 "we wait for new heavens and a new earth", and verse 14 "Wherefore, beloved, as ye wait for these things". This ought to be a waiting time for us, ought it not?

W.S. Yes, and the Lord is waiting too. "The word of my patience" (Revelation 3: 10). I think it relates to His waiting. He would rather take up His rights, but He is waiting and we wait with Him. It is not a waste of time, it is a positive time. It is wasted if we are not occupied with His coming – it is a lost time; but it is not lost or wasted if we wait for Him.

J.M. This would be a fine approach to the Supper tomorrow morning, as those that are waiting for the Lord, as persons who are ready to go.

W.S. I think the Lord would recompense the longing of our hearts. We find that He longs for the saints, and we long for Him.

W.W. Should we always be living in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ? Paul says that "while present in the body we are absent from the Lord... we are confident, I say, and pleased rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Wherefore also we are zealous, whether present or absent, to be agreeable to him." (2 Corinthians 5: 6-9).

W.S. That is good. The judgment-seat of Christ is to be a real force at the present time. When we are there we will be in glorified bodies, but there will be a review of every thing to His glory, but the

real force of the judgment-seat of Christ should be now, and we want to please Him; that is the great thing, to please the Lord.

R.S-n. Would the sense of mercy too deepen with us. This second epistle begins with, "Simon Peter, bondman" as if that would grow and preserve us, do you think?

W.S. Yes, true bondmen – what a privilege for the saints now to be bondmen!

A.C.C. Would you say something about "to be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless"? When He joined the two going to Emmaus, He did not find them in that state did He? Suppose the Lord chose to join us sometime in our walk, how would He find us? It would raise the whole question as to our integrity and the purity of our life.

W.S. And we need to be more exercised about it as to the coming of the Lord draws near. It says in John that "every one that has this hope in him purifies himself" (1 John 3: 3). His public appearing speaks to our responsibility. Where will the Lord find us? It is a test. Some young one with some conscience said to me, I did this and that and I was very anxious: the Lord could have come. It is good to have this conscience. We may lose it if we go on with a lawless life, but it is real. Where will the Lord find us? He should find us waiting, ready for Him. He knows about our weakness and He has every help for us in relation to this, but He cannot support us if we are disobedient. Meetings should not encourage disobedience: meetings encourage obedience. In the soul of the young believer there should be this desire to have delight according to the inward man in the law of God. You should follow up this matter. There is a positive line in you that is by the work of God and it is a wonderful thing that you are able to follow it up. You are able to fulfil responsibility by the Spirit's power. The Lord does not demand from us what we cannot fulfil. He gives us the power to do it, but obedience is one great feature we should look to – obedience – which was displayed in the Lord Jesus Himself in a wonderful way.

W.G. This word "diligent" would be expressed. Peter says, "Wherefore, beloved, as ye wait for these things, be diligent to be found of him in peace... " The two on the way to Emmaus who said, "Was not our heart burning in us... ?" (Luke 24: 32) became recovered. We are recovered persons, are we not? When we get a touch from the Lord He recovers us and our hearts would burn within us.

W.S. Yes, they were disappointed. They had the wrong hopes; they expected something other than what the Lord had in mind and sometimes we are the same. Our hopes are not in the right direction, but our hearts are right. It says of the bride, in Song of Songs, "My heart was awake" (chap 5: 2). It was right in her heart, and the Lord in type takes up at this point to recovery and He will recover all of us. Our Lord is so long-suffering that we get recovered to His thoughts.

R.S.R. Peter in his first epistle speaks of "the rest of his time" (1 Peter 4: 2). We cannot do anything about what is past, but for the little that remains we should be found in diligence, should we be here for the pleasure of Christ?

W.S. That is a good word, "the rest of his time". Each one knows himself in the presence of the Lord – the time we have wasted time that will never be recovered, time that has gone. It is now the rest of our time. We do not know how much is left.

A.C.C. Peter had read all Paul's epistles and he knew what was in them; "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things", he says. Is it a good occupation for us while we are waiting to be reading the epistles, reading the Bible?

W.S. All of "these things" – that in relation to eternity where the glory of Christ appears, but also the practical things. We cannot forget it. We are in Corinthian conditions and we have to look at these matters carefully.

J.S. Would they have to do with our salvation? Paul at the time of the shipwreck says, "Ye ought... to have hearkened to me" (Acts 27: 21).

W.S. All the sailors ought to have hearkened to Paul, and the ministry of the recovery is for the opening up of Paul's teaching, and we have to listen to it. Listening is the great matter. Who has an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies? That is not one assembly. What He says in one place He says to every assembly.

D.S. The matter you raised as to obedience is a very real one for all of us, old and young, but young people need to be encouraged into it. It is not obedience to a set of rules or obedience to what someone thinks up. You spoke of Corinthian conditions. It says in 2 Corinthians 10, "And leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ" (v.5), the great Model we have, the One who could obey and was found perfectly in the will of God. Is this the kind of obedience into which we would want to encourage each other?

W.S. Yes, that is right, and Peter begins with this thought of obedience, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by sanctification of the Spirit, unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1: 2). We start with obedience. It is obedience of faith and not some thing optional, doing this or that without obedience, but our expression of the divine work. It is joy to be obedient. We are not obedient by nature: we have been sons of disobedience.

J.R. Peter in that first chapter of his first epistle speaks about "Children of obedience" (v.14). That is a very fine expression, belonging to a family of obedience: not only obedient children, but "children of obedience".

W.S. It is wonderful to Whom we are to be obedient. It is a Person who loves us, who has shown all His love. It is like children in a family. Obedience is not normally an awkward matter. It should be a matter of affection and love, and if we are disobedient we cannot enjoy the love of the parents; as it is in family relationships, so it is in the assembly. We are unhappy because we are not being obedient.

EDINBURGH

12 October 1985

Key to initials – *all Edinburgh unless indicated*

G.A.Brown; P.Buchan, Kirkcaldy; A.C.Craig, Airdrie; J.R.Cumming;
7J.Gray; W.Grosse; E.Judd; W.Lamont, Cumnock; J.Marshall;
A.McBride, Grangemouth; H.Pfeiffer, Endbach; J.Renton;
R.S.Renton; D.Robertson Cumnock D.Scougal; W.Schubert,
Cologne; R'.Stenhouse: J.Strachan, Dundee; R.Swan; A.Thomson
Lochgelly; W.Wallace, Hamilton.

DISTINCTIVENESS

W.Schubert

Jeremiah 15: 15-21, 35: 6-11, 18-19; John 14: 21-23

I had the impression, dear brethren, that the scriptures we have read would apply to us at the present time and tend to encourage us to think a little over the history of the testimony and of the present conditions in which we are. I can only take up a few points in relation to the verses we have read, but one thing is sure, when God does something it will be distinct. If God brings a person to Himself, he is added to a realm of things down here to express His thoughts.

I do not think it is in God's mind to save a person and to add this person to the confusion which is in Christendom. This would never be in the divine mind. It happens, we have to confess, but it was never the divine mind. So it is with us personally. We should see that if we have been bought with an incomparable price – nobody can compare the price which has been paid for everyone of us here – then God has in mind to make us distinct personalities, not according to men but according to His own plans. If there is not distinctiveness, we should take it to our hearts and turn to God about it and perhaps also confess that we have lost this distinction. If God does take up and start a special movement by His Spirit, if God does it, it must be distinct. He would not start any movement or a revival just to add to what is not pleasing Him in Christendom.

So I thought Jeremiah would help us in this. He was distinct. He was young when God took him up. He was – as we find in this book – a shepherd, and it was not easy for him to give up his work as a shepherd. He says somewhere in his book that it was not an easy matter for him to give it up, but God took him up, and he speaks in the beginning of this book about what he should be; he should express His thoughts among the people of God. There was not much hope for recovery of this people to their former condition, and it did not really happen, but in spite of this, he was the full expression of what God had to say to His people. It could apply to

other men at that time, but he did not depart from it; that is the encouraging thing. He had his discouragement, as we have seen in this chapter here; he got down, he became discouraged because of the conditions. We have to think of John the Baptist, great man that he was he got discouraged when he did not see things running as he thought they should. He said, "Art thou the coming one? or are we to wait for another?" (Matthew 11: 3). What exercise this meant.

The Lord did not rebuke him, He brought out what kind of man he was. And so here the Lord recovers Jeremiah. He is listening. He knows the burden of His servants, He knows every burden and He is very feeling about it. But Jeremiah was distinct in what he represented. He served for perhaps fifty years and he had to go down even to Egypt with a rebellious people, but he expressed the divine thought. Dear brethren, we are a few left, but should we not be reminded that God has something distinct in His mind, even if there are only a few? Let us not take on other thoughts less than what God has in mind. We see here another point, He took up Jeremiah, and it was difficult for him because he had always, as expressing the divine thoughts, to stand against the majority of the people of God. He always had to say something that was not pleasing to them. If things are in such a state, if we ourselves are in such a condition, we are not pleased to hear the truth.. I was thinking of the brethren with whom we are linked. God reckons them in a special way. When we think of the beginning of the revival and what God did, it was not a great people, not people recognised in this world, but they bore testimony to the divine thoughts as to Christ's assembly, for which He suffered. Oh, these dear servants, and the saints unknown to us, who have suffered for the truth's sake! He says here, "For thy sake I bear reproach". He was depressed. It was a time of weakness with him. We can feel a little as to it; we can feel with him a little, but he must have felt it very much, "For thy sake I bear reproach". May our reproach be for Christ's sake, not for our failures or our mis behaviour. It should be that we suffer as Christians. Another thing I want to draw attention to is that he had to say, "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor exulted: I sat alone because of thy hand". How many of our dear brethren have to

experience this, that they are alone. I once heard someone saying about a sister sitting alone because of the truth she valued, 'She could have plenty of company; it is her own fault'. Jeremiah says, "I sat alone because of thy hand. You are privileged to have quite a number of brethren here, but there are certain places in the world where there are brethren sitting alone and the Lord comforts them.

We find here that the Lord comforted this prophet, and He has comforted others who are alone, because He Himself was alone. It says of Him that "He is... left alone of men" (Isaiah 53: 3). He was alone because He was distinct from every other man. He was alone, and He could have remained alone if He had not died. It says "Ye... shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me" (John 16: 32), but the Lord Jesus Himself felt the loneliness and He can comfort His saints if left alone. He was alone in the fullest sense of the word when He was left by God. He was alone. Note, the word 'alone' is never exhausted by the creature, but applied to the Lord Jesus only He experienced fully what it means to be alone.

Paul knew something about being alone. He brings in a word similar to that found in Jeremiah. He writes to us that, "All who are in Asia... have turned away from me" (2 Timothy 1: 15). It must have been a great sorrow for Paul. It was not his fault, not his behaviour, that the brethren left him; it was because of the truth they left him.

He had to say these words when he stands before Caesar, before the great power of Rome, that he was alone. He says, "At my first defence no man stood with me, but all deserted me" (2 Timothy 4: 16). It is used in relation to the army sometimes, desertion, but it is used too if a friend leaves you.

Paul had trusted the brethren to be with him, to support him, but he experienced that he was alone; he says, "... no man stood with me, but all deserted me". He was not complaining, he says, "May it not be imputed to them. But the Lord stood with me, and gave me power". May all those who are alone because of His hand, because of the truth, be encouraged to see that the Lord is able to use them as a testimony to His thoughts. He used Paul here for the nations, the great proclamation; nothing was lost. One man stood

·against all the powers of the world and the Lord stood with him, so we may be alone, but not all alone; the Lord is with us in these exercises. The prophet had to face this; it was because of the truth but He says, "If thou return, then will I bring thee again, thou shalt stand before me". The Lord is encouraging the brethren. He would encourage everyone, every locality to return, to return to first principles, return to what the brethren held fast at the beginning of this revival. Why should we not do this, dear brethren? Our desire should be in experiencing the service of the Spirit in filling out in these last broken days what is pleasing to God as to His testimony.

There may be a few. I would encourage the younger brethren to see the privilege they have in these few days before the Lord comes, to take on what is handed over to them, to take it on in a faithful way, and in spite of all that is against us all opposition, the Spirit in us is greater than the one who is in the world; the Lord is greater. Oh, how great He is! He would help us. Let us not give up what has been given to us. We are in great danger of giving up and being Just as Christendom, no taste, no distinction Why should it be? Why should it be, dear brethren? Take courage, especially those who are younger; take courage, use all the energy the Spirit gives you to stand for what is pleasing to the Lord in your own life, in your own surrounds and in your own locality. Do not mind if someone is looking at you and thinking you are quite difficult or silly to be in these modern days as your fathers have been. Do not mind it. Be with the Lord. The truth has never changed, the truth cannot be modernised. It is always the same, it is always up to date. Let us stand for it in all simplicity, in a humble spirit. The Lord will help us, I am sure, and He will bring things back to what He promised before.

We know that the brethren in the beginning used this word, "Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them". Let us look at what the divine standard is and let us hold to it, and let us return to this, and let others get help by it and not be confused by what we hold or practise in our local assemblies. "And I will make thee unto this people a strong brazen wall... but they shall not prevail against thee". That is what the Lord's word is as to the assembly, and it

belongs to each person who would be faithful. We can experience the power to maintain what is pleasing to Him.

Now I have read in Jeremiah 35 and as we think about it, what an encouragement it must have been to Jeremiah to find a family, a tribe, which was firm and was not among those who gave up. They kept what their father Jonadab had said to them. Obedience is marking this family, and it is a fine word at the end of verse 8, "We, our wives, our sons, and our daughters" – old people and younger people, all united in obeying what their father had said. It was difficult what he said to them, very difficult, but it was workable. It may be difficult when we have to maintain separation, when we have to stay away from many things which are displeasing to God, but it is workable. There will be strength to fulfil it. There will be strength for obedient persons, always strength. They lived, as we find here, similarly to those whom the Lord refers to in Luke 12; they were cared for by God. They had no seed, they did not plant vineyards, they have not even to sow seed, like the birds the Lord refers to. He is caring for us if we are faithful. He will look after everything, look after things even in a practical way better than I can look after things for myself or for my family; He will do it. But they were a testimony; by the government of God they had to come into Jerusalem, and they lived in Jerusalem unchanged. Why should brethren change, why should we be different from what brethren have been many years ago? Why should we take on features of the world, features of Christendom around us? Why should we be like them? Why? It is not the expression of the work of God. It is the expression of weakness and of unfaithfulness and of disobedience. These people were obedient. What an exercise it must have been for them, but there was something distinct in their minds – their father. We have fathers, a few. There are many instructors, but not many fathers.

But there have been fathers in the revival of the truth – for me they are fathers. We may not have many things we can rely on, but for me it is absolutely sure and safe if I listen to what they have handed to us; there is no doubt about it. It is a wonderful thing I am sure, brethren, when we keep to it, when we value it. It is not man-made

ministry we have; it is given from the ascended Christ. He has given it, so let us value it, and if we keep to it we will receive strength to go on. I do not think the people here felt strong enough to continue in faithfulness and obedience. They must have had the same temptations and testings as we have, but they kept to it, and God used them at the end in Jerusalem in the last days before Jerusalem was invaded; He used them as a testimony. He could point to them for they expressed His thoughts. They listened to the servants; "And I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets rising early and sending, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way" (Jeremiah 35: 15). They represented the result of the service of all His servants and all His prophets, and the promise is given, "There shall not fail to Jonadab the son of Rechab a man to stand before me, for ever". What a thing to have this promise; all things will fail if we continue in disobedience as to the truth. Localities will fail, the testimony will fail. Only with those who are prepared to continue in obedience, obedience to this word, obedience to what the Lord has given to us, will there be this result, will there be a man standing before Jehovah, "Before me, for ever". That is what John has in mind, that things should remain. When Peter was asking, "What of this man? ", the word is, "... he abide..." – the thought is abiding (see John 21: 21,22). So we read this scripture in John 14 which is a great encouragement to us. He speaks in the surroundings of the Supper, and we should think of these chapters as we go to the Supper. If we have the Supper in our minds and our hearts, we should think of these chapters here. It is all in the teaching surrounding the Supper. He says, "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me". We can easily say, 'Lord Jesus, we love Thee', but the Lord wants to have reality. He wants to feel things are true. His commandments would remind us again of the Corinthian epistles. The Lord has given commandments; He gave a new commandment that we love one another – that is a new commandment. And then Paul speaks in the epistle to the Corinthians of the Lord's commandment; you cannot change anything about it. It is not up to us to choose this or that. The whole teaching is His commandment. It says elsewhere that His

commandments are not grievous, divine commandments and 2 Timothy 2 would be a commandment too, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord withdraw..." (v.19) – that is a commandment. I think we can say of the whole teaching of the apostle (because Paul says in 1 Timothy 6, "Keep the commandment" (v 14)) – that was nothing grievous. Sometimes there are difficulties with commandments in these democratic times but there is divine commandment, everything is ordered in the creation by God. No heavenly body can choose its own course everything is ordered; and so also in the spiritual realm, everything is under His hand of blessing and under His power.

So it is interesting for us to look at the Lord's commandments if He speaks to those who have them. He does not mention people who do not have them: "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me".

I think of these chapters in the epistle to the Corinthians. Sometimes things are weakened in these days, the teaching of the Lord, the teaching of these letters. People say, It was only the mind of Paul; it does not matter. It does matter; it is of all importance. Think of the commandments; the Lord's supper is not really a commandment, but it is included in the teaching, and in the teaching surrounding the Supper (we mentioned it already), there is also plain teaching in 1 Corinthians 10 which is needed for us to look at to protect the fellowship we have been called into, "Ye have been called into the fellowship of His Son..." (1 Corinthians 1: 9). What a place, what great things we have been called into, and we mentioned before that there are things we cannot do. Things have to be looked at, dear brethren – certain things we cannot do. There were two companies in Corinth before Paul came – there were Greeks and Jews, two different bodies, two different people, different customs; but there was now the most important one, the assembly of God. Therefore, we should be without any offence to Jews or Greeks and the assembly of God, but if we do what we like, we may be offensive to the assembly of God. Sometimes it is said, and I think we cannot agree with it, that the inward side is important, the outward does not

matter so much. That is not true: the inward and the outward is balanced in Scripture. The inward is what God can see; no man can see your heart, your thoughts; but the outward is what angels see, what men can see, and there will be no testimony if the inward could be right and the outward not. Be sure, there is no testimony in it and God does not approve of this. We may speak about practical matters: we all have exercises in our localities. The younger brethren should be encouraged to look into this, that you cannot do certain things. Mixed marriages: they cannot be. If sisters cut their hair, it cannot be. It is not a matter of patience: I do not agree with this. It cannot be, it is no testimony. It is not testimony according to 1 Corinthians 11. That is the difference as to Jews and Greeks: they may do what they like. It is not right for them to do what they like, but it is not our matter; our matter is to look at what is with us where you cannot do what you like: otherwise there is no blessing linked with it. You are not in joy if you just get on as the world. I know there cannot be joy with you; half a Christian is not the divine thought. We should be fully in it. The price has been paid in a full way, not in part but a full way, and God gives in full measure, everything is unreserved. We come to the Supper tomorrow morning and we find the emblems, and they remind us that there has been unreserved giving, and our response should be without any reserve. The Lord would be full of joy. It says here, "And I... will manifest myself to him". What a wonderful thing that the one who has His commandments and keeps them, "He it is that loves me". It does not say, 'He it is that obeys me, is obedient' but "He... loves me". Love is a very exalted thought. Things have come to us out of a realm where love is at home, and love should work among us and should be responded to. God is desiring to give to those who love Him – not to those whom He loves but who love Him. Oh, we are very small in our response to Him, but He will pick up every little feature of love for Him. And the Lord will enlarge that person. It is mentioned so to one here, but it is, as I said, in the surroundings of the Lord's supper; it will not be on an individual basis. We spoke of Jeremiah that he was alone. No-one would choose to be alone. Circumstantially it may come about, but no one need be alone with

his own thoughts, his own desires. Even if it is spoken here to one person, it is, I think, experienced in the assembly; the assembly is in mind. The Lord says, "I... will manifest myself to him", and then He adds, "If any one love me, he will keep my word". It is a wonderful experience that "I... will manifest myself to him", that we get His word more intimately, it is near ness linked with this word of the Lord, "and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him". What can we ask more, dear brethren, as a result of faithfulness, obedience and love than to have the experience of this wonderful visit of the Father and the Lord Jesus, and we can realise it by the presence of the Holy Spirit? God has in mind to make Himself known to men. He wants to have us under the fresh impression of His love and His desire to be with men. It says in Revelation that God will dwell with men. It is His desire really, it comes out from Him. We would never have thought about this, but He desires it and He wants us all in it, young and old. What progress young sisters and young brothers will make if they start with this experience and with this expectation, with this promise the Lord gives. He will not fail. He will respond and He will answer. May the Lord help us and strengthen us! For His Name's sake.

EDINBURGH

12 October 1985

LIFE

D.L.Stewart

John 2: 1-3; 4: 20,49; 5: 4; 6: 27,51-69; 10: 10 (last half of verse)

I would seek help to speak about life as it is in these scriptures. The Lord Jesus says in the verse that we have just read that He has come specially for the purpose "that they might have life, and might have it abundantly". It is in the divine mind for everyone of us to have life and to enjoy life. Young people setting out want to enjoy life and to choose the way that to them seems to lead to the kind of life that they want. Now God has in mind a character of life that is quite different from what is ordinarily thought of as life. Men often live in their business, one man in that, another man in his family and so on. The family of course is a great matter with God. The first verse I read was a family matter – the marriage occasion is a great day in the life of a young man and young woman. But then the wine was deficient. What is natural, and natural affection and family life is of God, but it is not the character of life that God has in His mind for us. It belongs to nature, but it is not really life. Paul says, "Lay hold of what is really life" (1 Timothy 6: 19).

I just wanted to touch on these early verses that I have read in John and for a moment or two speak on what we might call the negative side of things. Nature, wonderful as it is, and in the sight of God beautiful, is not really life. In chapter 4 the woman says, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain", that is tradition. There is a lot of tradition about. People seek to live in tradition, what their fathers did, and what has been handed down – but it is not life. We could be like that ourselves. The meetings could become a kind of tradition that we have been brought up in – but that is not life. God has something greater for us in the way of life. The courtier (also in chapter 4) must have been a man of society. Many a person tries to find their life in what is social. We can even have what is social among us, and it is not life. God has something far greater for us

than that, infinitely greater. The courtier says, My child will die. There is death connected with that side of things.

In chapter 5, the pool of Bethesda speak of what is providential and that is another feature in which persons seek to find their life. What God provides in this way for us is right and good. In this incident the angel comes in and somebody gets the benefit. It is not a real picture of life, persons lying there "sick, blind, lame, withered, awaiting the moving of the water". Yet God comes in for them in a limited kind of way, and He does come in for us. He provides us with many, many things in this sphere of His providential dealings, but what is providential is not in itself life. We are to be thankful for it. In this country there is a great deal of what is providential and persons, and we ourselves, tend to live in it, but it is not life. So the Lord says in chapter 6, "Work not for the food which perishes". It is provisional, it is only for a time, it is a necessity, but He says we are not to work for it, not to put our life into that kind of thing. Many of us might do that. Men may live in it, we could live in it – live in our business, live in getting a bit more, a bit- more expansion. It is only provisional, "Work not for the food which perishes".

I wanted to speak a little on the Lord's own words in chapter 6, His own setting out of the great subject of life, what will yet be our portion and yet what we are to come into the gain of, and would desire to come into the gain of, now. I must say that I am hesitant in speaking on John 6 because it is so great, but there is no other way of life. The Lord speaks of it Himself and says, "I am the living bread which has come down out of heaven: if any one shall have eaten of this bread he shall live for ever; but the bread withal which I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (v.51). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves" (v 53). Now I just seek to point out what comes out in these verses. "Unless ye shall have eaten", that is to say that we have not begun to live unless we have appropriated for ourselves what is involved in the fact that the Lord has gone into death. He makes a remarkable

use of these expressions, "my flesh" and "my blood". To the natural mind it is not a matter of life.

It is nauseous in a sense, but it is His blood and it is *His* flesh. "Unless ye shall have eaten". On an occasion like this we would almost assume that everyone might have had an initial experience of the blessing of partaking of that which speaks of the death of Jesus. We have no part in Christianity, we have no part in life, we have not started on the way of life unless we have appropriated this great matter of the Lord having gone into death. He lay there, He lay in death for us.

Then He goes on from that and says in the next section, "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal" (v 54). "He that eats". It is not what is past, it is not something we have done, it is a characteristic feature that is to be found with those who are in the gain of the death of Christ. It is something that is meant to be continuous with us, something that is meant to be characteristic of us. This is the kind of food that we are to eat, the kind of food that we are to enjoy, that relates to His going down into death. And then He goes on from that to say that "*He* also who eats me shall live on account of me" (v.57). That is Himself in His present place. There is what is past – "shall have eaten" – then the characteristic line of going in for the kind of food that relates to His death, and then "who eats me", relating to Him where He is now. We need to challenge ourselves as to how much we are found appropriating this kind of food. It means life. It is the only thing that means life. I would like to call attention to verse 57. He says, "I live on account of the Father, he also who eats me shall live also on account of me", and in the note Mr Darby says, "I live by reason of his (the Father's) being and living". The Lord lived because of the Father, He lives in the area of the Father's realm and the Father's affections. He lived there and makes it evident that we could live on account of His living, that we could be here in this scene depending and drawing our resource and what we need for the sustaining of life from Him, because of His living; not only that He has gone down into death, _but it is because of His living, because of His present position, His exaltation His

glory, His present place with the Father'. So this is the kind of food that is to sustain us, the kind of food that we are to go in for. You can understand that some persons thought this was hard – "this word is hard" – and in that connection He says, "If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where he was before?" (v 62). That relates to His Person, His Deity, His own act in ascending. That is the Person in manhood that we feed upon, that same Person, but He speaks of Himself as ascending up. It is to lift our eyes above this scene and above all these negative features that I spoke of, things in which there is no life, but there is a character of life that depends on Him where He is, live on account of His living.

He says, "It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing" (v.63). These are things which we have to come to, "the flesh profits nothing": four words, perhaps among the most momentous that have come to us through Him. "The flesh profits nothing". What a lesson to learn! For the sake of the young people I will tell you an experience that I had myself as to this verse. As a young man keen to get on at that time, I got hold of a book one day, a bound volume of old magazine ministry in the last century. I looked up the index and saw an entry which said, "What shall I study" (J.N.D.), and I thought that is just the very thing I want, so I looked up the page number and thought I was going to get a great deal of help from Mr Darby as to how to learn to study, what ministry I should read and how I was to build up my knowledge of Scripture.

To my surprise there were only two lines at the bottom of the page, and it said, "Do you ask what shall I study? Study well these four words – *the flesh profits nothing*" (J.N.D.). It is a life-long lesson.

We are still studying it. Right to the end of the day we are going to study it, "the flesh profits nothing". As we study that, we think of the One who ascended. What a subject! What an inexhaustible subject! Let us fill our hearts with it, fill our souls with it. Oh to be engaged more with the One who has ascended! He has gone up there and He has everything in His hands, He has control of the whole divine arrangement of things. The world that is yet to come is His; in what is past, in His work and His death He has secured the basis for it all.

At the present time He would have us living in His life. A life that has such a quality about it, there is nothing else that can be compared to it, and so in the light of all this He says to His disciples, "Will ye also go away?" (v.67).

The Lord is presenting things to the disciples which are eternally great and challenging as He would challenge everyone of us whether we are going to go on, whether we are going to go in for that character of life, that emanates from Him, have our beings saturated with it, circumstances affected by it in detail every day.

How little one can speak about it. We seek to speak about such things; perhaps we say a great deal that is very challenging to ourselves as to whether we know what this kind of life is. "Will ye also go away?" He says. I think the Lord felt it, felt it as to persons who had come under the sound of such remarkable ministry. Never had it been uttered in the ears of men before: He says, "Will ye also go away?" "To whom shall we go?" says Peter, "To whom shall we go?" It is not a question of where or of what. The question is as to the Lord Jesus being the centre. "To whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal". Think of having Him as the centre and drawing from Him words of life eternal. There was a great controversy on the subject of eternal life, but it has been well said by another that the best way to know what eternal life is is to go to the One who has the words of it. We need these words. We need them every day, as the days proceed, as the weeks proceed, we need the words of life eternal, need to feed upon them. We spoke of that this afternoon, about the word that would sustain us; it is His word and He would come near to us in relation to it.

I trust the Lord would encourage us and help us to go in for these things, not to be among those that go away, but of those that are going on, cost what it might. The tests come, the difficulties come, but go on, and in going on be in the enjoyment of this kind of life that depends upon Him alone.

May the Lord bless His word to us.

BENDIGO

14th September, 1985

THE CHILDREN'S CLEANSING

Young people may not be conscious of the deep stain of sin. I did, however, hear of a girl of about ten years of age who felt that God could not allow one sin in heaven because one sin kept Adam out of Eden. How wonderful it is that the very God against whom each one of us has sinned has Himself provided the means of cleansing. This is the shed blood of Jesus and the water which came from His side after the crucifixion.

There was once a product advertised that would remove all stains from cloth – 'sure to do it, never known to fail'. Be that as it may have been. God caused the prophet Jeremiah to cry to the people that if they used the best soap of the day, made with nitre and potash, their sin would still be "marked before me". Another prophet said that a fountain would be opened for sin and uncleanness and we may be sure that this would be effective with everyone who would come to the fountain. We often sing of Jesus that 'Thousands have fled to His spear-pierced side'. Some have tried the fountain of self-improvement, and with praiseworthy desires, but the stain on the conscience would still remain. This is illustrated by a little incident.

Staying one day at a wayside hostel down one of the valleys of southern Europe, a traveller noticed that the floor was dreadfully dirty. He had in mind to advise the landlady to scrub it; but when he realised that it was a mud floor, he reflected that the more she scrubbed it the worse it would become. A new floor was needed!

So it 'is with the conscience. But the God by the light of whose word we behold our own need of purging, uses that same word to begin in the needy one a nature that will gladly bow to the Lord Jesus and have the benefit of His work of cleansing. What a majestic word of Scripture it is that Jesus "having made by himself the purification of sins, set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high". Have you heard Him say to you "I will, be thou cleansed"?

J.C.Evershed