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Contents

"WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST"

DIVINE STANDARDS

CHILDREN IN SUFFERING

"WE HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST"

1 Corinthians 2: 6-16; Hebrews 9: 15

J.A.G. I was thinking on the Lord's day about this final sentence: "But we have the mind of Christ". It impresses us with the greatness of the assembly as capable in capacity to enter into the fulness of divine thoughts and to answer immediately to headship, and to understand what is presented in the deep things of God. The local meeting at Corinth is, in that case, to be "a habitation of God in the Spirit", and the conversation is wisdom among the perfect. What holy converse that is! "God's wisdom in a mystery", the things God had in mind for those that love Him which have been "revealed to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God". I wondered if the furnishings of the sanctuary, set out in Hebrews 9, give us some help and insight into what is involved in the deep things of God. It is a divine abode, divine dwelling, Christ is there, His glory dominant; gold is stressed, the greatness of what is divine. Man is shut out completely; his mind is shut out. Things are spiritual, communicated by spiritual means; it is a different language (we need to learn the language, I suppose), not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit - marvellous privilege to be in a position where the Spirit of God is free and recognised! Holy possibilities are opened up to us.

R.T. Before we come to the last verse there are other things; it says "God has revealed to us by his Spirit", and then "But we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God". Is it the enjoyment of these things that brings us to have the mind of Christ?

J.A.G. Yes, I think the mind of Christ is a capability to apprehend, but the faculty needs to be exercised. I think it is very wonderful that there is that intelligent faculty to apprehend all that God has brought out in revelation, and that is in the local meeting. You do not have to have hundreds of people locally to touch it; you need persons who

have the Spirit, where the Spirit is free, and then the whole divine realm is opened up to us.

F.C.M. Is it not most encouraging that there is not only the side of revelation but that God has endowed us with faculties so that that revelation can be enjoyed and answered to?

J.A.G. Yes, it is indeed. I think it is very wonderful that the Christian has capacity to enter into the great things of God. The furnishings of the sanctuary were made by the people, were they not? Moses had the pattern; therefore in the principle of it the mind of Christ was there amongst the people to answer to the pattern. So we have these wonderful suggestions in the sanctuary as to Christ and His glory, and the saints in their glory too - the table of shewbread, the candlestick giving light. We did not read it, but you can think of the service of the priests, Aaron and his sons, working in the light; they are not in darkness, the light is there, moving in the light of Christ and their own position as accepted in the Beloved. These are wonderful things. Paul wrote this letter, as far as we understand, from Ephesus; He would be thinking about speaking wisdom among the perfect up there in Ephesus.

J.W. Do you think that the Spirit needs to be made room for so that there is formation? Paul had these things in his heart and would have loved to expand them in Corinth, but he was hindered. I know it is a negative thought - the next chapter brings that out - but do you think that as we commit ourselves to the Spirit and see what is here, there will be formation in manhood so that we have the capacity to take in these things?

J.A.G. I think so; that is why, I suppose, in every chapter in Ephesians the Spirit is mentioned. We do not want to occupy ourselves of course with negative thoughts, but Paul is anxious to bring what is positive into Corinth to lift the brethren up; get their consciences going, of course - that is negative - and deal with the situation, but then what he has in mind really is could they possibly arrive substantially at the man in Christ?

E.C.B. Does this lie behind what he says in chapter 1; "that in everything ye have been enriched in him, in all word of doctrine, and all knowledge, (according as the testimony of the Christ has been confirmed in you,) so that ye come short in no gift"? The word there is *logos*, 'whatever is the expression of a thought formed in the mind', according to the note.

J.A.G. Yes, I think that is exactly what it is. We are set up with all the facilities that are required for the enjoyment of God's presence at the level at which He has in mind that they should be enjoyed. The word of the Christ confirmed amongst them, awaiting the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the hope burning in their hearts - the local meeting becomes a very beautiful place when this is the case.

R.T. I am sure we would all feel that we come far short at times, but initially do we need to lay hold of this by faith? Paul spoke of these things at Ephesus, but he still spoke of them at Corinth, did he not? In the faith of his soul he would have this working in every local company.

J.A.G. Yes, he would have it in every local company. Then, as we have been taught, the brethren in Corinth, got help, they came to it. Who was it remained in Corinth? Erastus (see 2 Tim 4: 20); Paul was able to leave him there. So this is the standard and this is the ideal for every place.

S.D.K.R. What would help us to make more room for the Spirit to be the power for these things?

J.A.G. The answer is so easy - to get finished with ourselves, get finished with self, be like Paul, nothing save Jesus Christ. Now that gives great coverage; you have there the whole of the four gospels. It is not exactly that you knew only Jesus Christ and Him crucified; it says, "For I did not judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified", which brings out the greatness of divine thoughts.

R.H.B. Why is it spoken of as hidden wisdom, "wisdom in a mystery"?

J.A.G. I think it all shows the necessity for the shutting out of the natural man, and the Spirit searches it and brings it out, so that we are shut up to the Holy Spirit; "the Spirit searches all things", that is a great feature of the Spirit's service. You sit down with your Bible and ask the Spirit to help you, you search out certain things (use a concordance of course) and we shall find that we are getting substance, things are coming into the soul; you begin to apprehend the scope of what is in the divine mind.

E.C.B. Does this reference to hidden wisdom connect with what is said as to Jesus Christ: "more than Solomon is here", Luke 11: 31?

J.A.G. Yes, great wisdom. I think that bears on the Lord's headship; wisdom is the hand maid of love. You go into the sanctuary, you see the furnishings and you marvel at divine counsel ; and if you reflect on your own history you marvel at divine counsel and see how the hidden wisdom is in operation, guiding and helping in bringing about what God had in mind. You did not think so at the time maybe, but there it is.

J.W. Why is it that Paul speaks in this setting of these things being prepared for those that love God?

J.A.G. As far as I can see, he has in mind to lift the Corinthians up to the divine level, those that love God. How God loves those that love Him! There is no shortage of them, is there? It says in chapter 8, "if any one love God". I think the great idea in the local meeting here is that there is intense intimacy with God: He has the thousands of those that love Him, and you cannot miss them because they are like the rising of the sun in its might, they are radiant as consciously loved by God and loving Him. So we get the reciprocity (I suppose that may be a brethernism) but it is the reciprocity of divine affection. Persons are moving in God's house; it is God's habitation, God lives there, and they are moving in the love of God. God in His house is very free, very happy, very relaxed, reconciliation has been effected, the fatted calf is there, the place is prosperous.

F.C.M. Is not one evidence that we love God that we are intensely interested in the things that have been given to us of God.

J.A.G. Yes, it is your whole business; the psalmist speaks of what his occupation has been as touching the king (see Ps 45: 1). I think that is very beautiful, that Christ becomes so great to your heart that there is room for nothing else.

D.E.R. The apostle is attracting the Corinthians into the greatness of Christianity and what God has in view for them, and as attracted into it they would be helped in facing the moral exercises which needed to be faced.

J.A.G. I think so. He sets this before them before he says he has not been able to speak to them as to spiritual; he says, you are not up to this, you have lots of things to look into, but this is all for you - once you get yourselves sorted out you will come into the gain of it. So you would hurry up and get these things cleared and resume what is normal in Christianity. What is normal, of course, is that the local meeting is the habitation of God in the Spirit.

E.F.W. There is what God predetermined and that is not subject to subsequent conditions or anything else; it is a definite word that God has thought about, speaking reverently - "Let us make man" - and then what God had predetermined. That is very encouraging, is it not?

J.A.G. Yes, it is tremendously encouraging - "before the ages for our glory". That is all in the purpose of God; it is not going to fail and it is actually going to happen. It was said at the close of the wilderness, "What hath God wrought! ", Num 23: 23. You might say that was tremendous admiration, enthusing. Look at what He has wrought! Think of what you were before you were converted. Think of what God is doing; you see some older brethren ready for translation - What has God wrought! What a place the local meeting is because that is where it all goes on. We should not in any sense think less than the divine standard with regard to any local meeting. There it is, 1 Corinthians, there is no place like it. We need to be above Corinthian conditions; there is a lot of Ephesian features and

character amongst the brethren, and maybe they do not know it. Did not Mr Darby say of Mr Wigram that he had the enjoyment of certain things that he perhaps did not have the doctrine of? I believe that is the truth. Godly sisters and godly brothers have the enjoyment of things in their souls, and maybe they cannot set it out from the Scriptures; they enjoy the Lord's presence. I think what you say is very fine, "predetermined before the ages for our glory". The world does not know a thing about it, "none of the princes of this age knew", they were completely void of the knowledge of God; yet He uses them.

W.S. Do you think the wisdom that you have been speaking about is seen in the way Paul himself does not go immediately into local conditions but sets out in the first two chapters what you have been mentioning, which is normal Christianity?

J.A.G. "What will ye? that I come to you with a rod; or in love, and in a spirit of meekness?" (chap 4: 21); he did not go. Notice his letter. Paul's letter was effective - all letters are not so effective, but this one is. Look at the help the saints have received over the years from the letters to the Corinthians. He wrote one, and then another the complement to it. It speaks in the next one of some experience that he had fourteen years before he had written to anybody about it. He knew a man in Christ, knew what it was to touch the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.

R.T. You were speaking in prayer about another world; is that what we are led into in the local company? It says in the previous chapter that He has been made unto us wisdom. He is the centre of that new world. In this chapter we get a new way of speaking, a new way of thinking in that world.

J.A.G. That is very beautiful; made unto us God wisdom. So that Christ's headship, the mind of Christ, divine thinking in Him, is what regulates the whole position in that world. I remember a brother who will probably be in physical limitations for life saying, Well, I live mostly outside of this body anyway. What patience is demonstrated in brethren like that! They accept the suffering, they accept the

limitation; they do not live in that, they are living somewhere else, and this is where they live - the upper districts is the way to Ephesus.

E.C.B. Does this correspond to the kingdom come in power? Before Paul says, Shall I come to you with a rod or in a spirit of meekness, he says, "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power", and the kingdom in power is really Jesus glorified and the Father's pleasure in Him.

J.A.G. Yes, I think so. You referred earlier to Solomon; his wisdom exceeded all the wisdom of the children of the east; there is a dominance there that is above everything. He has the answer to whatever it is, he can talk about whatever it is; the little thing that springs out of the wall he can tell you about, the hyssop, and the cedars of Lebanon and so forth and that all looks on to Christ; and there is tremendous scope, limitless scope that the Lord Jesus has. So when they are criticising Paul at Corinth he says, I am interested in His words, I want to know His power, and that is where the power comes from for living here.

E.C.B. Is Solomon's kingdom connected with the wisdom?

J.A.G. Yes, I think so, the whole thing is bound up together. Then there is great liberty amongst the brethren, everybody is enjoying their own relations with God. You sit under your own vine and your own fig tree and enjoy it. You do not live just on quotations from Mr Taylor or Mr Darby, you have your own links with God. You find that all the ministry is true, really it has brought you to this position.

D.E.B. Paul is quoting from Isaiah: "according as it is written". That had been written hundreds of years previously and had never been enjoyed until then, had it?

J.A.G. Yes, it was written for us, we read it. Things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction. Isaiah was writing, and interested in what he wrote, but he was not too clear about it; how could he be? I think the epistle to the Romans gives us the working out of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When we touch the mystery we are on the way to the tree of life. It is a fine study to think of 'good', how good is presented in the epistle to the Romans.

D.E.R. Having set out the greatness of what is in the divine mind for us, the attractiveness of it Paul then raises the question with the Corinthians that we may know the things which have been freely given to us of God, which would arouse exercise with them as to the extent to which they were in the enjoyment of the deep things of God, and of all that God has determined for us.

J.A.G. I think so. That is a very beautiful verse: "which have been freely given to us of God" - freely - freely - it is God's mind, God's disposition, that is how He is disposed. That is yours, He says, now go and enjoy it. And as you say, it should stir up exercise and concern that we come into the enjoyment of it. Everybody starts on the same' level, because the Spirit is what is needed for it. You do not need a degree, you do not need a B.Sc., you do not have to be anybody, you need the Holy Spirit, and there it is, it opens up beautifully like a flower.

P.M. "But we have received", he says; that embraces a great deal, does it not?

J.A.G. Yes, go on and tell us more about it.

P.M. I was just looking at the verse: we have received, and then speaking follows from what we have received. I suppose we speak from what we have received.

J.A.G. Yes. "But we have received ... the Spirit which is of God": that was totally different from anything that was in the city of Corinth, great as Corinth was intellectually and architecturally. A building is going up in Corinth the like of which has never been and never will be; "ye are God's husbandry, God's building", 1 Cor 3: 9. That is a very substantial thing, and that is all proceeding under the hand of Christ as the true Solomon, by the Spirit of God. It is great to see the work of God amongst the brethren; there is nothing like it. Why occupy ourselves with anything else?

P.M. So is there a great system of help, both here and in what Paul says in Philippians, about what we have received in Him?

J.A.G. A tremendous system of help. He says, "ye come short in no gift". "Ye have been enriched in him ... (according as the testimony of the Christ has been confirmed in you,) so that ye come short in no gift", 1 Cor 1: 5-7. They had been in Joseph's land and the testimony had been confirmed amongst them, and then they go and do these stupid things. Why should they do that? Forgiveness is available, the cleansing system in 2 Corinthians 2 was there; they are slow to see that the man had the gain of it. This is a tremendous encouragement to all our hearts to seek to go on and increase in this line of wisdom in the things that God has predetermined before the ages for our glory. They belong to us.

W.S. Solomon in his wisdom preserved the living child. Do you think he was able to bring out where affection lies; you can see where Paul's affections were when you come to the second epistle.

J.A.G. Yes, he knew in type how to use the Scriptures I suppose; he took the sword and said, Give half to each. It is bound to bring out what is right. Imagine somebody being so cold and half-hearted as to allow him to go ahead with that! How wise he was and how simple was the exercise! It is Christendom, two harlots in one house - cannot maintain the child alive, it was dead in the morning. Christendom has never brought forth a living child and I believe that is the truth; there is always some kind of deformity. A living child is brought forth in an area where these conditions are prevailing, normal assembly conditions; then you get life and life prospers.

R.T. Say something about words "taught by the Spirit", and then there is the "communicating". There is the teaching and the communicating; it is all by the Spirit, is it not, "by spiritual means"?

J.A.G. Yes, the whole thing is in the Spirit. Then I suppose we need to come into the experience of it, what the language used by the Spirit means.

F.C.M. That is encouraging. If I am young and perhaps nervous about taking part, the Spirit will not only furnish impressions but words suitably to convey them.

J.A.G. Yes, very fine that! You have experienced that in your own soul, words come into your mind by the Spirit. I remember the first time I took part in the morning meeting, I was all shaking and all of a tremble, but I had a touch in my soul about Isaac, Christ as the heavenly Man; I may have said two sentences, if that, and sat down before I said Amen. But we are conscious of power and help and the brethren are carried by it. I would encourage the younger ones to be free and not to feel that they are being overlooked, and that the older brethren are overbearing upon them, anything like that. In one of the magazines this month there is a fine word of Mr Meek's on 'Diffidence', an address in Plainfield on persons who might be diffident; he sets out the exercise so beautifully. The Spirit helps you, and the next time it is a bit more. Then the next time, when you maybe think you have done very well, it falls flat; we get that experience as well.

J.W. One thing that impresses me in this section is how God has taken the initiative in things, what God has done, what He has prepared; and the Spirit now is ready to take initiative if we let Him, is He not?

J.A.G. Yes, the Spirit is always available. So Paul received word about Corinth, and how terrible, how awful, he must have felt about it. He would have thought about their getting converted, about Priscilla and Aquila, about the Lord peaking to him and telling him not to be silent: "I have much people in this city" (Acts 18: 10), and then the enemy comes in like a flood in the grossest line of things - in both lines actually, he comes in in the corrupt line in chapter 5, but then he comes in on the line of the Philistine as well, and that maybe is worse. He has to deal with that in 2 Corinthians 10. That chapter is very militant, as we know, but he uses the meekness and gentleness of the Christ; those are the arms of his warfare. I wish we used that more, what a difference it would make! Love the brethren. Paul loved the brethren at Corinth, he did not hate any one. It is not in the divine nature to hate people; it is awful if brethren do not love one another.

R.T. I thought that would come into the communicating by spiritual means, that there is not only what may be right or what may have been taught, but there is the way and impression of God in the communications.

J.A.G. Yes, it might be a handshake, it might be a pat on the back - how are you getting on? I mean there is a conveying of sympathy, and all that is binding the brethren together. It is not that I go out of that door and you go out of the next one; we are together, integrated. But this maybe is not answering your question.

J.W. I was thinking about diffidence and things like that. Is it a question of having faith that the Spirit will take the initiative if you get up and speak. You may not have much but let the Spirit take the initiative.

J.A.G. Yes, so you find then that something else comes in to your speaking; you have something added, and that is Solomon: "thou shalt add to it", 1 Chron 22: 14. Think of Christ and the Spirit serving in so real and practical a way in your local meeting, and it may be only two or three, but that is how it happens.

R.T. Does what we are saying bear on the experience of "because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father", Gal 4: 6? There is an internal power working that is suitable in response to God by the Spirit.

J.A.G. Yes, that is very fine. What a standard that is! - the Spirit of God's Son. He has sent out that Spirit so that we answer to God as Christ answers to God. I do not know that 'answer' is too good a word because it can be rather mechanical - it can convey that idea - but it is the intimacy between the sons and the Father as it is between Christ and the Father.

J.H. Would you say something about the human wisdom spoken of here. It may find a place with us sometimes and the Holy Spirit is set over against it, is He not?

J.A.G. Well, we have tried it; I do not know anybody who has not had a go at it. Invariably it fails, there is no power in it, there is no

help in it, it is an innovation, it is powerless, it does not carry anybody. There was plenty of it at Corinth, I suppose. The house of God is ruled by divine principles and they never fail either. This is the standard in it; all these things are the background to the enjoyment of what we have here in this section. Divine principles never fail and Corinth can work out its own affairs without anybody else trying to help them. Maybe that is saying too much; they were open for help, so should we be and not be like the West Highland gentleman who said, I am always open for adjustment but I have never met anybody that can adjust me.

E.C.B. Does this "communicating spiritual things by spiritual means" connect with keeping the unity of the Spirit?

J.A.G. Yes, I think it does; it is like those twelve men who brought back the fruit of the land, carrying things spiritually; spiritual things are being communicated. How are they going to be received? They are received; everybody said it was fine, it was a great land but so few are prepared to go up into it. Now we come back to faith. How much faith is needed, beloved, active faith, which brings us, I suppose, to John's gospel where faith is to be active. It will not fail; no matter how much unbelief is in our hearts, if we depend on the Spirit, - if we have faith in the Spirit, He will never let us down. What a thing that is for brothers and sisters alike! You say, Come down to Barnet and serve. What are you going to do? You can do nothing of yourself, and if you try you will really make a mess of it. It may come down to the morning on which the meetings are to be held; have I anything? If you have faith in Christ and faith in the Spirit, the Lord will give you something. That is a marvellous experience and it is not related only to gift or to brothers serving; it is so with all the exercises amongst the brethren, in fact it relates to life, because it is a life of faith.

D.E.R. Human intelligence, human personality, appealing to human imagination, everything of that character can never build up what is spiritual. We are entirely shut up to the Holy Spirit, and that is the lesson to be learned.

J.A.G. Exactly. I think that is very helpful because you can let your imagination run wild. That is important for all of us, especially young people. I would encourage them to get the Synopsis and find out what the interpretation, the literal interpretation of the Scriptures is; what do they mean? It is important to get the interpretation of the Scriptures and what they mean, why they were written in the first place and what they were written for; then you can have all the applications you like.

J.W. Paul speaks about things here, not just words but things, spiritual things and spiritual means. Mr Raven spoke about getting the thing and then going to the Scriptures to find what we had.

J.A.G. Yes, well, a thing is substantial. Get the thing first, you get the concept, you get the impression, then you go to the Scriptures and you find that the whole thing is fitting in and is expanded.

R.H.B. That is the way that the Spirit teaches, is it not? You spoke of Mr Wigram and others being in the enjoyment of things of which they did not know the doctrine. Is it not the reverse of human teaching where we learn things from words? We learn the words from the enjoyment of things. The reading that you have exhorted us to do is helpful because it enables you to identify what you have reached in your own soul.

J.A.G. Yes, that is right, you identify your experiences. You think someone else has said that and this is what it means, it opens up, it expands, you enjoy the thing. We had a brother, probably before the war, and he preached, he was keen to preach. The brethren did not think he was a very great preacher, but a man who was in the fishing boats said he would come along to the preaching, and he came along and it was this brother who was preaching and the brethren wished it was somebody else. So the next day in the market someone saw him and said, How did you get on? He said, I never heard anything like it in my life; I have been to sea with that brother and he can stand up and read the Bible and he can speak for about an hour; he had no notes, no papers; the man up the road (a high church parson) would not be like that. That preacher was a man

taught of the Spirit; the fisherman thought he was a great preacher, he had never heard anything like it; of course the local brethren felt a little rebuked because it was not what they thought would be the preaching. Spiritual things, as you say - the experience.

R.T. All this gives us confidence in the Spirit, that by our failures we prove that there can be no confidence in the flesh and we come to have confidence in a divine Person, and that helps us forward, does it not? We may not see the way but we have confidence in a Person who has come to see us through to the rapture.

J.A.G. Yes; so it is very important that on this line we come to prove and realize leadership - led by the Spirit of God wherever you are in the wilderness; that is the leadership. We grow in the experience of it and finally the Spirit and the bride will say, Come. It is a very real and practical thing and it is bound to develop amongst the brethren; the Spirit is true to Christ glorified and to His death, and He is bringing out Christ to you, Christ amongst the brethren.

E.C.B. Is this the character of the way in which Jesus speaks about the Spirit in John's gospel where the objective is to glorify Me and not at all to occupy us with the confidence of the flesh?

J.A.G. Yes, it is a very blessed thing to contemplate. You are looking for some impression, you are looking for something from the Lord, from the Spirit, and it has not come. You say, Well, maybe the Lord has not given the Spirit the word, for what He hears He shall speak (see John 16: 13). John is very beautiful; what is the word? - communicative associations. John is not exactly doctrine, it is communicative associations - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God", John 1: 1. That comes out throughout the gospel. John's gospel is communicative associations, and that belongs to the revival, beloved.

R.T. It is very beautiful and the source of them all is from above, not in ourselves, is it not? There is a source from which these communications are flowing and we would seek to be in the flow, setting it forward on our part.

J.A.G. Exactly, so it is "taught by the Spirit, communicating spiritual things by spiritual means". If something has come into your soul from the Lord, come through a brother or a sister, you do not let it stop there because you know that it has come from Christ, by the Spirit.

R.T. And there is certain enhancement in the communications like those of Mary and Elizabeth in the hill country; the word is there and the doctrine is there, but there is certain enhancement in the communicating by the spiritual means, is there not?

J.A.G. Yes, I think so, and Mary's state is so beautiful. I have often thought that Mary there is an example of what Mr Darby means when in Romans 8 he is not sure whether to put a capital 'S' or a small 's'. It is not as though something special happened to her state, the state was there equal to what was given to her. It was a very fine situation in those early chapters of Luke, the communication is such that persons are quickened; some body speaks and somebody else is quickened.

J.T.G. The Spirit has come and "he shall guide you into all the truth", John 16: 13. It is the Spirit's day now, is it not?

J.A.G. Yes, the Spirit's day, and He is very tender and loving in His guiding into all the truth; He shows you what it is. No, He says, that is not the way, this is the way; you go this way, that is how you should do it. Maybe you get a little more refined as you do it the next time, so you are becoming a little more like Christ: less of you and more of Christ, which is the object of the Spirit's service.

E.C.B. Would that guiding into all the truth be the consequence of the Spirit searching the depths of God?

J.A.G. Yes, I suppose it would be and that is very beautiful. Why should it say that - "for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God"? You say, God knows it, but I think it bears on the place the Spirit has taken in the economy, He has taken that place, He searches all things. The Lord took a place in which He did not know the day nor the hour when the rapture will take place. Divine Persons arranged Themselves in view of the local meeting at

Corinth; They did not have to do it for Themselves, though it is for Themselves, They accommodate Themselves to us in our creature condition.

F.C.M. How generous God is! There is nothing in this realm that the creature can comprehend but He wants us to lay hold of it affectionately and intelligently.

J.A.G. Yes; you take the furnishings of the sanctuary, what would that mean to a natural man? It would not mean anything. To a spiritual man, with spiritual thinking, it is all gold, the divine presence, God in revelation; He has come into these lowly conditions. He is shining there; it is radiant in Christ; the mercy-seat is there, the cherubim, the blood on the mercy-seat; the veil, His flesh; the candlestick giving light over against itself; the table with the loaves; the altar of incense; the priestly function of Aaron and his sons, first of all the families. What a place it is!

R.T. Yes, and the natural man could never have penetrated this golden pot that had the manna in it. These things may have been described before, but there is something here added - the golden pot that had the manna - alongside of these things.

J.A.G. Yes, that is very beautiful. It is laid up before God, so God is always feeding on the lowliness of Jesus. It is called the hidden manna, I suppose, in Revelation. Think of the wonder of it!

S.D.K.R. Would the presence of the censer give an atmosphere to the holiest?

J.A.G. Yes, it does indeed, the fragrance of Christ's humanity, and that comes out in the brethren too; there is a fragrance about the brethren. The spouse in the Song of Songs comes up perfumed "With all the powders of the merchant" (chap 3: 6); that is how she has been with the Spirit - marvellous! - that is how the local brethren have been through the week; they come up on Lord's day morning, they are freighted, loaded with all the powders of the merchant ready for the service of God. What the Lord's day is! What the Lord's supper is! and Paul put it right into Corinth. You might have said, They need a lot of help in that place, I do not know that it should be

put there; but Paul says, There it is. There is prescription regulating it, but there it is, and the full thought of remembrance is linked with it.

E.C.B. Does Moses who heard the voice speaking to him from off the mercy-seat embrace the deep things of God?

J.A.G. Yes, I think there are spiritual communications, not only his speaking to God but God spoke to him.

R.H.B. It sets out the vast scene in which God's glory is displayed in Christ. You would not have had that impression from the outside, would you? In its outward appearance it would easily have been passed by, but inside that was set out and was only appreciated by those who went in.

J.A.G. I think so; the outside is badger's skin. You see these people, they do not go to the football matches, do not go to the pictures or the theatre, do not join associations; there is nothing apparently attractive about them except that they do not do things; and if you look under that you will find ram's skins dyed red. What is that, beloved? It is the love of the Christ which constrains them, that is why they do not do these things. And why is that? They are saved in the power of His life; that is the boards, is it not? they are standing up, fulfilling responsibility, and in their heart is the Christ. What a system Christianity is! You look on the brethren and you see these loaves sustained there on the table by the border of gold; it has been said that the jailor saw that with Paul and Silas the border of gold was maintaining them at a divine level. I was thinking of Mr Cunningham, and about the Apostle and High Priest. Have you ever told them that Mr Cunningham once heard Mr Raven pray?

R.T. Yes, he said he used to pray every Monday evening, and his prayer was always to the Lord as the Apostle, for the Apostle maintains the calling at its height, and as the High Priest He maintains the people at the height of the calling.

J.A.G. That is right. That was a marvellous impression to convey, and he prayed it every Monday night. I must say it has never left me since I heard it. Now Paul and Silas were in the jail and the stocks, the apostle was maintaining the calling at its height and the High

Priest was maintaining them at the height of the calling, so they were right inside at the altar of incense. Maybe it is more than prayer, it may be doxology.

J.W. It certainly was in Philippi, doxology to God, their hearts going out to Him.

J.A.G . And so the wonderful power and joy and blessedness of living in the divine abode.

D.E.B. This exposition of the loaves is interesting, is it not? - something set out for contemplation; but then it is to be fed on.

J.A.G. Yes, I think so, to be fed on, it was always fresh; they put on loaves, they put on fresh bread.

S.D.K.R. What do the loaves speak of?

J.A.G. They speak of the brethren, saints in their order before God, twelve, partakers of the divine nature in fulness; there it is, Christ sustaining it, sustaining the brethren before God in the consciousness of divine love. How wonderful that is! It is not just those we break bread with, it is all the brethren.

E.C.B. "All that in every place".

J.A.G. That is right, "all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours", 1 Cor 1: 2.

F.C.M. The tabernacle actually was quite small, you could get it into this end of the hall no doubt, yet there was in that small structure an expression of God's universal order. Does that relate to the wonder of what can be in expression in a local company?

J.A.G. I think so; that is very beautiful. The footnote was called attention to, it is the expression of the universal order of things that God has in mind in Christ. He is going to head up all things in the Christ. Ephesians 1 is in that structure that you refer to.

D.E.R. In the holy of holies everything speaks of Christ, and Him alone.

J.A.G. Yes, you go in there to contemplate, do you not? We have contemplated His glory; they were in the holy of holies.

R.T. Is this not all getting up to that verse later in the chapter: "For the Christ is not entered into holy places made with hand ... but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us" (v 24)? Is that not the stability that comes into the soul that this is leading up to.

J.A.G. That is what it is, the great stability, and you are moving in the blessedness of reconciliation in your own soul, because chapter 9, as you would know, is the great day of atonement, when the high priest made atonement for the sanctuary, for his house, and for the whole of the people. The position is reconciled; God put Himself in touch with the people on the basis of the blood. How wonderful that is! That not only clears the liabilities but it brings out what is in God's heart, it brings out the love of God, and that is the new covenant.

R.H.B. Had you any more in mind about the golden pot, because when they kept the manna overnight it became corrupt? This pot with the manna in it was laid up for their generations. What is your thought as to that?

J.A.G. I thought it brought out God's appreciation of how Jesus was here in humiliation, lowliness; every morning it was there, whether your spirit was good, bad, or indifferent. If you went out there that was all the food you would get for the day - the lowly humble Jesus. But what more could you want? They tried to grind it and add to it, and we are surrounded by that kind of thing, beloved, the great systems of men where the natural mind has run riot; they tried to manipulate the manna. We should feel these things because we go into God's presence and there it is, you can see it, what it is, Jesus here in lowliness, but Jesus here in power. The manna and the ark in that sense go together, Christ in humiliation but Christ in power.

R.T. And what about the rod of Aaron?

J.A.G. It is the answer to rebellion, is it not? One Man out of death, only one - nobody else is out of death yet - but Christ. Everybody takes a rod and they are laid up there all night, but it would be very humbling when you take it back in the morning and it is still the same, nothing has happened. The whole house of Levi, the whole of

sonship is covered by it; the sense of the height of the calling is sonship. The rod of Aaron for the house of Levi, and there are the buds, and there are young people, fathers, young men and little children. He sustains everybody, He sustains little boys and little girls who love Him, He sustains them in life in their measure. We maybe hardly believe that because we are inclined to harden our hearts, but Jesus sustains them, every stage of growth is sustained and He brings them on to ripened almonds.

J.H. That is actually in the holiest of holies in the ark itself: would you say something about that.

J.A.G. It is all the provision that brings out the greatness of divine resource that is there available for the wilderness. It is a remarkable thing here as well, that the ark is covered round in every part with gold. Why should he say that? Why should he emphasise the greatness of what is divine in Christ?

J.S.P. Just following up what you said about the ark being covered round in every part with gold; it speaks of divine glory shining out in the temple, does it not, in the holy of holies? The entrance into the holy of holies is something which, I suppose, we can experience, but in doing so we see the glory of Christ as He is before God. Is that right?

J.A.G. That is right, it is all divine, which ever way you look at it it is divine, a different humanity altogether.

R.T. Did the hymn-writer sum that up when he says 'Tis Jesus fills that holy place Where glory dwells, and Thy deep love'? Is that these cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat - another fresh impression of Christ?

J.A.G. Yes, I think so. I have had to be adjusted in my thinking about righteousness. Even at the back of your mind is the thought of demand, righteousness, and then you get rather scared to speak about righteousness because the brethren may think the demand line is there as well. But now righteousness of God is manifest without law and He has set forth Christ for a mercy-seat through faith

in His blood. There is evidence of divine righteousness, the glory of it. How wonderful it is! And there it is, all before you in the meeting.

R.T. Mr Raven has said that the form that righteousness takes in this dispensation is the outshining of grace.

J.A.G. That is exactly true.

S.D.K.R. Does the gold too carry the thought of the divine nature?

J.A.G. I think so, it is all divine. There is the Lord's Person; He is God in His Person, and the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. You do not look into that ark; the men of Beth-shemesh tried that, they looked into the ark.

E.C.8. We often say, and rightly say, He retains manhood for ever - this is the Man, and the Man was first known in lowliness and humiliation in incarnation.

J.A.G. That is right, born in a manger. What lowliness! What humiliation! What a start to life! That is Jesus, that is how He was, He adorned the circumstances wherever He was, and was never overcome by them.

F.C.M. And being covered round in every part means not only do we worshipfully contemplate the outshining of His glory but we are given some apprehension of His inward perfection.

J.A.G. Yes, I am sure, and His distinctiveness in humanity. In a sense it is like the glory, the glory of the Son of God; the outshining of divine glory from "Let us make man", and before that, right through to the eternal day. The ark is never added to; the dimensions remain the same whether it was in the wilderness, at the Jordan, or wherever it was, the glory was there, it is Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith.

D.E.R. It is the wonder of the present dispensation that righteousness is supplied, but on our side we are to pursue righteousness if we are to come into the gain of what has been supplied to us.

J.A.G. Yes, it comes in the Spirit; life is righteousness, "the Spirit life on account of righteousness", Rom 8: 10. So we had these meetings away back on Fulfilled Responsibility; the Spirit is life, that is how you fulfil righteousness, you live to God.

R.H.B. In your first passage the apostle speaks of the Lord of glory being crucified, his mind is full of that scene, the Lord of glory, and here the cherubim are spoken of as the cherubim of glory. It is a unique reference to them is it not? but it is in keeping with the scene that is described. Could you say something as to that?

J.A.G. That is very beautiful, the Lord of glory; the cherubim of glory covering the mercy-seat, it is all of a piece. Think how Paul must have felt about them crucifying the Lord of glory. That is how he held Christ in his affections. We believe he wrote this epistle, and as you said, he brings in these unique touches, the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat.

S.D.K.R. May I ask what you understand by the cherubim of glory?

J.A.G. I think they are symbolic as related to the rights of God, and all that is in Jesus, shadowing the mercy-seat; there is a certain protection and care, and concern, you might say, about the cherubim of the mercy-seat. I remember Roy Hibbert saying that they do not speak, they are looking intently on the blood. You marvel at it.

E.C.B. Did not Mr Taylor say in regard to the cherubim looking down on the mercy-seat that it was like the Father saying, Thou art My beloved Son?

J.A.G. Yes, that is very fine, because the idea is probably expanded in Chronicles, the cherubim stretched out their wings to cover the house, they were so delighting in Jesus.

E.C.B. Does this come into Corinth in 2 Corinthians 3, we all looking on the glory of the Lord?

J.A.G. It surely does. It is the ark of the covenant here, and that links with 2 Corinthians 3, the greatness of the Mediator, the wonder of it, as we are looking on the glory of the Lord. They wanted a letter of commendation; imagine asking for a letter of commendation from

a man who could speak like that! Did you ever hear such nonsense? But he goes on with them. I remember Mr McCallum saying about 2 Corinthians 3 that Paul does not dwell on the volume of the blood as in Exodus 24 but he goes to the glory to lift the brethren up; and that is what is needed - the glory of the Lord with unveiled face.

R.T. Are you not connecting all this with the local company in Corinth?

J.A.G. Yes, all there in the local meeting in Corinth, every single bit of it and more; because we have the priesthood at Corinth, they are able to deal with evil, they are able to maintain the kingdom of God, to deal with things in a way that God can honour by bringing in recovery. We do not need to write down the brethren in Corinth because they were some people, people who were able to recover others as they did in Corinth, still, they needed help, we know. But the cleansing system was operating in Corinth, the man was clean; maybe they did not know it; they are told to show grace toward him; but not speaking to him and turning your head the other way when you meet him, that is not how to treat anybody in any case. Show grace and encourage; he might be swallowed up by excessive grief; there was the evidence in the man of the ram's skins dyed red, there was a work of God in him and he was restored; then the glory of the covenant comes out. And we are looking on things that are eternal, there they are, not on the things that are seen but on the things that are unseen; then you are ready for heaven, ready to get another body and to get a house from heaven not made with hands. Then you want to be separate, you would not join up with any other thing. The Lord God Almighty is going to be a Father to you, and you are going to be sons and daughters to Him, and that is in the wilderness.

BARNET

28 November 1987

Key to initials

R.H.Brown, Barnet; D.E.Burr, Redbridge; E.C.Burr, London;
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DIVINE STANDARDS

J.A.Gardiner

1 Kings 19: 19-21; 2 Kings 2: 8-14; 6: 14-23

I thought, beloved, to say a little about divine standards. Elisha was impressed with the standard of things in Elijah, whose mantle reflected the measure of the man, what kind of a man he was, the capacity that he had; and the standard of things in type is set out for us here, for they are in Christ, God's standard. We speak about standards, about normal standards and keeping up standards, and it is right and proper that we should do so. The great exercise for us

as individuals is to maintain the standard in ourselves. I think Mr Raven said, if I recall rightly, that we maintain the truth by walking in it. That is how the truth is maintained, how it is held.

Now Elijah had sunk a little below the standard, he had not been equal exactly to what his cloak represented. Of course, things were pretty difficult for him, ministering in the time of Jezebel and Ahab, and surrounded as he was by the deadness of things in Israel. Christendom is like that, a name to live but dead; how solemn that is! All the wealth of God is available but the Holy Spirit is by and large shut out. Elisha here has all the brethren in mind, he is not a party man; his outlook is not less than 1 Corinthians 1: 1-9; he has twelve yokes of oxen before him, he is ploughing, he is doing basic work - ploughing is turning over the earth, it has in mind a result, it has in mind a harvest, a crop. He is beginning to think about death, for I suppose that is in mind in ploughing, preparing for the seed to be sown. He is thinking too about resurrection, thinking about power, thinking about multiplication, thinking about the yield; all that would no doubt be in his mind. Elijah comes and casts his mantle upon him although he was only told to go and anoint him, but he casts his mantle upon him in view of his being impressed with the divine standard in measure. It is rather like reading the gospels; you read them and you find that there is a standard in Christ, a marvellous divine standard. It is what God had in mind, as a brother said in the reading; when God said, Let us make Man, He was thinking of Christ, thinking of the divine standard and of what was in His mind and how it was to be expressed. You see how Jesus met things, how He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil.

Well, here is Elisha and he is ploughing and he has these twelve yokes before him. I think Mr Darby says that he is regarding the brethren as more excellent than himself. So the question is, how we regard the local brethren. You are not thinking of your own qualities; no doubt Elisha had qualities but he was not thinking of them, he was regarding others as more excellent than himself. Oh, beloved, how serviceable such a person is! How amenable is he to

the Spirit! How ready he is to provide spiritual leadership. That is what he is doing, and the prophet comes and casts his mantle upon him. What did that mean? It says, "And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and I will follow thee". I think what is in mind is to lead him into the great things of God, lead him into the great area of the testimony, and to lead him into the fulness of what is proper to the Corinthian position; and, thank God, he comes into it and how wonderfully he does so. He is impressed with this mantle of Elijah for a start, he is impressed with the standard of things. It was different from his own mantle; he had some sort of mantle no doubt, he had his own garments, he had his own ideas it may be, his own thoughts, but we need to have God's thoughts. That scripture, 1 Corinthians 2, is very beautiful - it thrills my heart to think about it - that God has given these things to us, He has given us the means to enter into them and enjoy them, and to hold the truth by walking in it; that is a very positive suggestion. You hold the thing in your heart because you walk in it, you grow in it, you are moving in the great sphere of eternal life, the joy and happiness that is proper to the local meeting. So at Corinth God was known. Someone comes into the meeting and he has to say, "God is indeed amongst you" (1 Cor 14: 25); there is no doubt about it. That is in Corinth, beloved, it is the ministry meeting at Corinth and somebody gives a word, then somebody else gives a word, and maybe there is one with a revelation sitting by. How blessed it is! You may speak, but then you know it is time to stop, you are conscious that somebody else has something, there is a revelation to somebody sitting by, he has an impression and he may get up and say, I want to link on with what has been said. But now an unbeliever comes in and he says, God is amongst you, this is different from any other place I have been to in the town, I have never had this experience before. He falls down, there is power there in the meeting, the kingdom of God is there, divine speaking is there. It is like God speaking out of the tabernacle, for the door of the tabernacle faced toward the east and the tents were pitched in relation to it - a beautiful setting. Think of God speaking in the Son out of the tabernacle; somebody comes in

and says, There is power in this place, and he falls down and he says, God is indeed amongst you.

Well, Elisha is going to come into all that, and his state here is, I think, very beautiful because he has all the brethren before him: "and he with the twelfth; and Elijah went over to him, and cast his mantle on him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah", and then he says, I want to go back and kiss my father and mother and I will follow thee. The Lord does not make demands upon us, it has to be an answer from the heart. Any of the Lord's commandments are regulatory in Corinth, so he says, If you are spiritual or a prophet, where the commandment is recognised you will be regulated according to God; it is apostolic authority and regulation. All that line of prescription underlies the Lord's supper. Now he wants to go back and kiss his father and mother. Well, Elijah says, "what have I done to thee?" I have just shown you a divine standard in principle - that is what has happened, given you an impression of Christ. That is what the prophet would do. If the mind of God is coming through him you would get an impression of Christ, of the divine standard, how Jesus was, the kind of a Man Christ is, how He went about things in the gospels. Jesus was in public service for only three-and-a-half years, a young Man, a very young Man, but how full these years were, how He set out manhood in its fulness and its beauty! In our meetings now, the servants are to serve in such a way that we "all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ", Eph 4: 13. That is what is before the prophet here, the fulness of the measure of the stature of the Christ. What beautiful language that is! and we are to arrive at that, all Christians are to arrive at that, to come to the position where the body works for itself, to its self-building up in love. All these things belong to the local meeting. Gift is not local, of course, it is universal, but it is worked out in local places and Elisha is getting an impression of this. The Lord loves us and He wants us to follow Him, and if you want to go and kiss your father and mother He says, What have I done to you? He wants an unreserved committal in affection, and as the

blessedness of the Person of Jesus comes before us and the measure of the fulness of the stature of the Christ impresses itself upon us, our hearts are to be drawn after Him, we follow Him.

So Elisha does that here, he "took the yoke of oxen, and killed them, and boiled their flesh with the implements of the oxen, and gave to the people, and they ate". That is very beautiful! There is the manifestation, the increasing evidence, of the Spirit of Christ in Elisha. That is the answer, the first answer you might say, to the mantle of Elijah. He has these things now in their proper perspective and he is holding what he has for the testimony of God. He is seeking to feed the brethren, to give them food. He used what he had, he "took the yoke of oxen, and killed them, and boiled their flesh with the implements of the oxen, and gave to the people, and they ate". He is free now, largely he is free from self-consideration. That is a big statement: how do we measure up to it? Jesus is never marked by self-consideration; He could have been; He had a will of His own; under the most extreme pressure He said, "not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. The Spirit of Christ is coming out in the prophet here and He would have it developed in us in having the brethren before us; you regard the others, you regard not your own qualities but you esteem those of the others also; you regard the brethren each one as more excellent than yourself. All these things are here working in Elisha; you can see the suitability that is in the man formatively for ministry, he has been made equal, and he is equal in measure to what is ahead of him. He has to go from this place to Gilgal before he is officially taken on, but there are qualities here that God can take on officially in the testimony, and He is looking for that amongst the brethren, He is looking for that especially amongst young men and young women - devotedness of heart, real consideration for the interests of Christ, and application to that consideration. It means self-sacrifice; it means lack of self-consideration, from which we all need great deliverance. I would like especially to encourage young brothers and young sisters, young couples, to be committed to the local meeting and to serve the brethren on this line. If you are committed on this line God will take

you on officially; you will not have any special mark of officialdom, but you will find that God is promoting you and divine support is coming into your soul. How blessed that is! And there is a great need for it for there is a great lack of it. There should be this kind of devotion. I think of Mr Lyon when I think of this; the old brethren on the Moray coast held him in affection, and he held them in affection; and how fine it was to see these brothers and sisters, old men and women at that time in the fifties and late forties, to see them and Mr Lyon talking and shaking hands, and patting each other on the back. It was a great thing for them when Mr Lyon was coming up; they treasured him in their hearts. I am not saying he was perfect any more than anybody else is perfect, but I am only calling attention to his devotedness and what it can lead to. You find that you get a minister of the assembly coming out of a local meeting, irrespective of how big or how little it is. God is not concerned exactly about numbers, He is thinking of moral qualities, and He says, That is a person whom I can trust, to whom I can commit something.

So finally he goes from here to Gilgal, and he is taken on at Gilgal. Now let us come into this area where spiritual things are being communicated by spiritual means. Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal; it is the cutting off of the flesh. It is on the landward side of Jordan, the reproach of Egypt is rolled away. What it is to be free from Egyptian features, completely free from them - independency, wrong links - and, as the hymn (No 76) says, 'Egypt's food no more to eat'. We do not want to have these things in the assembly at all. Alas, they had come into Corinth, so that the apostle had to write, and the brethren began to judge themselves, and Gilgal was in operation. The ministry of Joshua began to find its place in Corinth, by the Spirit of Christ leading the brethren and dislodging the enemies in the inheritance. Think of these awful elements that sought to intrude into the divine abode in Corinth! Paul met them and, you might say, broke the power of them with the edge of the sword. That is the force and power of the word of God. Hence, when the man comes in, he says, God, God is amongst you; I know that power, it must be of God. He falls down on his face, he is in a

sense in abject weakness, in the presence of the power of God's word; but God would have that person in mind for blessing, He would have him in mind for salvation, He would want him to come into His house. These are all the normal on-goings in the local meeting. Well, he is taken on here from Gilgal and he goes round these places with Elijah, going round them, you might say, with Christ, getting the Lord's view of these places. How beautiful that is! How the Lord feels about Gilgal! How He feels about Bethel and Jericho and the Jordan! To walk with Him around these various areas is freighted with spiritual suggestion. Spencer Jay gave a fine word once in Aberdeen on this chapter. Go to Gilgal, he said, We are the circumcision, that is Gilgal, learn that with Christ. Bethel: we worship by the Spirit of God. Jericho: we boast in Christ Jesus, for that is the ark, no other hope; nothing else but the power of Christ, and the power of the Person of Christ in your affections, will bring down every worldly feature, every stronghold, every fortress, every obstacle that the devil would seek to raise in your pathway so that you cannot penetrate into the inheritance and gain Christ: that is Jericho. Boast in Christ Jesus and do not boast in the flesh; that is the Jordan. I thought that was a very fine and beautiful suggestion. We should think about these servants, beloved. I am not speaking about praising men, I am seeking to value the qualities that have been amongst the brethren, and the Spirit's part amongst the brethren, for it is wonderful to look at the work of God amongst the saints. Do you think Elijah would take Elisha around these places and point out all the negative things that were going on? I do not think so. Go round and see the place, see Gilgal, what it meant; see Bethel, what it meant, the whole of Jacob's history in relation to Bethel; and then Jericho and the Jordan.

So it says that Elijah went with Elisha to these places, and now Elisha is beginning to get some help, and he is going to understand something of the power of Christ, the power of the stature of the Christ, not just that there is a stature but there is power connected with it: That mantle is powerful. Paul says it is very powerful, it pulls down strongholds; it maintains a standard in Corinth. He says, We

do not conduct our battles according to flesh; no, he says, The way we work is in the meekness and gentleness of the Christ, we overthrow strongholds and every high thing, and we lead captive every thought, lead it all captive into the obedience of the Christ. How beautiful that is - to be able to operate in a manly way with stature as he did, so that the brethren are saved, and he can tell you about his spiritual experience. How beautiful to have a spiritual experience like Paul had. I suppose it was unique to himself. We can have these spiritual experiences in the assembly according to our measure, and the Lord would help us to increase our measure. Think of the power now of this mantle, as Elijah took it and wrapped it together and smote the waters "and they were divided hither and thither, and they two went over on dry ground. Elisha is learning now what it is to be risen with Christ, the power of that risen life. So it says "that Elijah said to Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee". Now comes the great question in our hearts of the need of the Spirit. There is the mantle, there is the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ; there are these four beautiful gospels, so full of substance. The believing Jews had their own point of view in principle of what the mantle was, what Jesus was here, they had their own impressions about it, and yet it was merging beautifully in detail in the Acts wonderfully merging with these gospels into the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ. The knowledge of the Son of God is limitless. I know in preaching we come to limits, but let us go as far as we can let us explore the inheritance as much as we are able to, let us explore the glory of the Person of Christ as much as we are equal to. Persons say, You have to be careful because the mind of man cannot intrude into this. Well, let us enjoy what we can enjoy, and let us seek to penetrate into what it is possible to penetrate. Think of the blessed Spirit searching all things, even the deep things of God. It is for our sakes, beloved, that He may take them and show them to us, and guide us into all the truth, that He might consciously serve us so that we might be conscious that we have the earnest of the inheritance and have been given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. Think of what God has done! He who has anointed us, it says, "Now he that establishes us

with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God, who has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts", 2 Cor 1: 21,22. What provision we have, beloved brethren, in the fact that there is a divine Person here, the very Spirit that was in Jesus; it is the same Spirit, it is not a different Spirit. It is the same Holy Spirit that came down as a dove and rested on Christ, and was with Him, and He did things by that Spirit, it is the same Spirit. The same Spirit that was there ten days in heaven when Christ was there in glory, the same Spirit that came down at Pentecost and has remained till the present time. And Elisha said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me". I am not equal to this, he says, the thing is too great for me. That is what Paul said; but then he said, "but our competency is of God; who has also made us competent, as ministers of the new covenant", 2 Cor 3: 6. And that is what Elisha is learning to be, he is going to be a minister of the new covenant, he is going to manifest divine love and divine grace in its fulness to the people irrespective of what the situation might be; and the situation is quite different in the various chapters, but Elisha has the resource to meet it and to meet it according to God. He therefore represents what the testimony is at the divine level and standard, and that is Corinth, and as it is in the mind of God. We can see how Christ Jesus "has been made to us wisdom from God", 1 Cor 1: 30. So he says, "let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me", and Elijah said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so to thee". What does this mean? It means that he is going to keep looking at Elijah. You must have the Lord continually in your heart. He has to fill your gaze. I know it is easy to say this. Some of the old brethren would often say, Keep the Lord before you; and I may have added, And read Mr Taylor's ministry. And that was all true - keep the Lord before you. You might say, that is too objective, it will never get you anywhere, Christ is in heaven and we need to attend to things down here, which is true too. But the power of objective ministry draws our hearts after Christ where He is; do not let us ever be afraid of it. You get subjective, and there is nothing wrong with being subjective - the truth has to be worked out in local meetings according to God in the power of the Spirit, but

it is to be worked out in the light and blessedness and in the full blaze of the glory of Christ objectively. So that we have the statement that the Spirit is the truth down here; Christ is the truth in glory. These are marvellous things, beloved; we need the Holy Spirit, we need to make way for Him in faith and simple dependence. God knows our capacity, He knows mine; He knows your exercises; He is well acquainted with the various details of all our lives, and in them let us commune with the Spirit. That is another blessed feature known in Corinth; Paul wants it to be known, communion, the communion of the Holy Spirit - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit", 2 Cor 13: 14. Have you ever asked for more of the Holy Spirit? You say, I do not have to really, I have the Spirit. Ask God for it, do not be afraid, He will show you how to make more room for the Spirit so that you are becoming more spiritual, able to apprehend spiritual communications. You do not have to be clever; you do not have to have a great flow of oratory, although it may help to be able to speak well. Barnabas and Paul spoke in such a way that persons received help, they so spoke, it says, "that a great multitude ... believed", Acts 14: 1. That is how they spoke, all words taught by the Spirit, and they were able to communicate spiritually, spiritual things communicated by spiritual means.

So Elisha is learning the power that is in Christ. Elijah now is going up to heaven. It says, "and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into the heavens. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof! " Earlier it says, "a chariot of fire and horses of fire; and they parted them both asunder", and that bears on the power, the power that is in Christ risen. What power is manifested in the resurrection of Christ! What a moment it must have been for the Father as He raised Christ from amongst the dead by His glory! I think there is the expression of holy emotions, intimate, holy emotions between the Father and the Son as He claimed Him from the tomb. What power there was in that! and we are to know that power, - "the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe ... which he wrought in the Christ

in raising Him from among the dead", Eph 1: 19,20. Beloved, these are marvellous things. Elisha is experiencing them, he is getting to know something of them; you will see that as you go through the history, you will see the power working in him. Paul speaks about that - "according to the power which works in us" and "according to his working, which works in me in power", Col 1: 29. You see that in Elisha here see the thing working and gaining power, and in that sense he is a replica, you might say, of the prophet Elijah, here in grace and diffusing of divine love on the principle of the new covenant. The power is seen when Elijah goes up into heaven. Now Elisha takes his own garments and rent them in two pieces. If we still retain in our minds certain things that are below the divine level we should just rend them in two pieces; they are below the standard, they are not equal to the market value of heaven. Heaven does not recognise any other standard but Christ. You take your mantle down and rend it in two pieces and you take up Elijah's mantle. Do that today, beloved. I know that is going to be very searching and very testing, but it is going to be very blessed in the working out of it, that we go forward - from this day forward. Let us appropriate the divine standard for ourselves so that we are acting, we are seeking to do things, as Christ would do them. We shall find the Spirit readily available to support that line of things; we come into the things then that are freely given to us of God.

So Elisha goes on and you can see in chapter 6 that there is spiritual discernment. It is a fine thing to be able to discern spiritually. The king of Syria did not know what to make of it; whatever he thinks or whatever he plans, no sooner had he thought it than the king of Israel knows it, and he thinks that someone must be leaking information. You do not need to worry about that sort of thing. Some beloved brethren spend lots of time so concerned about what is going on in every place except their own. You are interested, you are exercised and with God about the testimony, but you do not make it your daily business to find out exactly what is happening in this care meeting or that one or this place or the next place, you discern spiritually, the spiritual discerns all things; that is

Elisha here. The king of Syria does something and Elisha says, I know what he is going to do, I can read him like a book. How would you like to be like that? Every one of us can judge one another's reactions, how they are going to react. We are to be communicating spiritual things by spiritual means, and discerning things spiritually; "the spiritual discerns all things, and he is discerned of no one", 1 Cor 2: 15. What a blessed position to be in! That is Elisha here. The young man with him needs help to see the power, that is to go on in the testimony; what power there is available in the Spirit! There is all the power of men here: "And when the attendant of the man of God rose early and went forth, behold, an army surrounded the city". They were seriously intimidated. We get afraid so easily; "The fear of man bringeth a snare", it says, Prov 29: 25. I suppose he could be quite afraid to get up in the morning and see this great army, the might of Syria, surrounding the city. Elisha says, You do not have to fear that. It says, "And Elisha prayed and said, Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see". See what is for us, beloved, in the Spirit - "greater is he that is you than he that is in the world", 1 John 4: 4. You marvel at the courage that some brethren have, the moral power and courage Paul had, that the apostles had, how they met every situation with holy initiative in the power of the Spirit in the furtherance of the testimony. You may say, That all belongs to the inaugural side of things, which it did, and yet that power and courage was there. Think of what Mr Darby had, what courage! he was able to stand up to things and stand up for things and maintain them and set out what was right and what was wrong without in any sense ever allowing the brotherly link or the brotherly covenant to be broken. How beautiful that is! The spirit of the new covenant has pervaded the ministries of the revival, every one of them has been maintained and the spirit of the new covenant has been with them and has maintained and sustained the testimony down to the present day.

So the young man's eyes are opened, and what does he see? "And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round

about Elisha". Think of the greatness of all that is for us! Think of the innumerable company of angels, all sent out on behalf of those who are to inherit salvation. Beloved, do we ever think of that? All the angels, the whole family of angels, ministering spirits, are sent out on behalf of those who are to inherit salvation. Think of God sending His angels! I often think of Gabriel, he spoke to Daniel hundreds of years before he spoke to Zacharias; angels do not die, they do not marry either nor are they given in marriage. See the glory and the wonder of what surrounds Christianity. They are at the gates of the city; they are the attendants upon the city. You marvel at the greatness of what God has provided for us; God is for us, who against us? All His resources are for us; it is very beautiful, very wonderful. We go about our daily lives and we completely forget about that, but the angels do not forget about us. The angels do not forget about you, do not forget about me, they are in attendance, circumstantially and in various other ways they are in attendance all the time, they never stop. That is what God has on our behalf. Elisha is saying to the young man, Have a look at this, that is the opposition. One angel slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians and that did not take him long (see 2 Kings 19: 35). They are ministering spirits, they are sent out on behalf of those who are to be heirs of salvation. Now Elisha here smites; "and Elisha prayed to Jehovah and said, Smite this nation, I pray thee, with blindness". That is government, government always operates for good, that is another thing we need to see. Think of him doing that, smiting a nation with blindness; what terrible confusion there would have been in the camp with the Syrians. He is not getting his own back, he is not retributive in any sense, No, it is grace, beloved, government and grace go on together. The government here is for their good, and he says to them, You are on the wrong course, this is not the way, this is not the city. Do you know the way, beloved? Paul shows us the way, the more excellent way. You Syrians are on the wrong road, I will show you the way; he says, "and yet shew I unto you a way of more surpassing excellence", 1 Cor 12: 31. Follow after love, bring it to the assembly, bring it to the area of spiritual communications, be emulous of spiritual communications. How beautiful these things are

in the local meeting! See the way. Every Lord's day morning, as you come in, there is the way on the table. The voice of the bondman is heard every first day of the week - "yet shew I unto you a way of more surpassing excellence". So the Syrians are on the wrong road, and if we are on the wrong road let us get in the way and go to the city and we will find the Man.

The king of Israel is not up to much; he is never up to much in these books. He is going to be retributive: Shall I smite them? He wants to smite them when he should not smite, and when he should have smitten he did not smite enough; so he only smote with the arrows three times: he should have done it five or six, the prophet says (see 2 Kings 13: 19). That is when to smite. You must judge things in yourself all the time, open the window toward the east, and that is Corinth. Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands and gave him a touch; the prophet would give you a touch, he would show you how to do it, how to shoot an arrow eastward. Then he says, "Smite upon the ground". He would test you as to how much you really want deliverance; we are tested because will operates in us, beloved brethren, we might as well admit it. The Lord in His grace helps us to overcome it, and we are marked by weakness, but let us follow the word of the prophet; smite when we should smite and refrain from smiting in retribution. The king says, "shall I smite? shall I smite them?" The prophet rebukes him and says "Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master". He is going to impress them with the goodness of God. We should impress one another, beloved, with the goodness of God; it leads to repentance. So the king is helped and he makes a great repast for them; that is fine, it is touching. I suppose, in principle, it is the greatness of the supper in Luke 14; divine grace in its magnitude now has caught on in the king and he made not a repast, but a great repast, "and they ate and drank; and he sent them away, and they went to their master". That exercise is completed and finished for the bands of the Syrians came no more into the land of Israel. They are not going to be troubled with that thing again; you follow the directions here that the prophet was giving, that the minister is

giving, and you find deliverance. The bands of the Syrians had been coming in, they took a little maid away with them, and Naaman had her in his house, but he was a leper; that was the problem, it was leprosy; he was a good man, honourable, and the Lord helped him in a way, but he was a leper, and that kind of activity, these bands, somewhere in it there is leprosy, somewhere in it there is sin. Now if we move on this line, beloved, we get delivered from it; make a start in our own hearts because we have plenty to do in looking after ourselves, it is a big business. Romans gives us the deliverance in chapter 7, and we are able to take control of ourselves. The Spirit is the power in chapter 8 to maintain that control. God looks down and He sees persons who are under control, and how beautiful that is! There is something in the articles for officers' tickets, in the navigation section, relating to a vessel not under control that may damage other vessels. If that is the case you have to put up certain flags and display certain lights until you get the vessel under control, so that you are able to steer and have steerage way, and to do that you hoist your foresail to the wind, and that is righteousness - "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" 2 Tim 2: 22. There are no more bands, that thing is finished. Nobody is now saying in Corinth, I of Paul, I of Apollos, I of Cephas, I of Christ, No, they are there as brethren, the assembly of God which is in Corinth. The ministry of Elisha is working out to this end that the place is secured and secured for God.

We need help, beloved, on these lines. The divine standard is most attractive; I would like to know more of it. I believe the Lord would help us and make Himself more and more attractive to our hearts; to see the way He does things, how He moves, how He thinks. To control your thinking is a wonderful thing, to be able, immediately thoughts come into your mind that are of the flesh, to be able to dispel them, that is all part of the teaching of the gospel. You are a secured vessel; you are wholly secured in chapter 8 of Romans so that your body can be presented to God in sacrifice (see chap 12: 1). How beautiful that is! May the Lord help us, for there is

so much blessed substance in these chapters to really get into the gain of and see how it operates and is to operate in our meetings to make them wealthy places; there is no impoverishment, there is no beggarliness; we have finished with the weak and beggarly principles of the law and are moving in the current and the river and the plenitude of divine grace in its fulness; it is the greatest power in the universe beloved, the power of divine grace. May the Lord help us in it for His Name's sake.

BARNET

28 November 1987

CHILDREN IN SUFFERING

A very tender scripture relates about a suffering boy named Ishmael that God heard his voice "there, where he is". In fact his name is said to mean 'God hears'. This should encourage young people to carry every trouble to our heavenly Father in prayer, although He already knows and sees everything. By the habit of prayer they would grow up to be reliant upon Him, rather than be self-reliant and unruly, as Ishmael unhappily became when he was a man.

In God's ways some boys and girls learn, when quite young, what suffering and sorrow really mean. At such times comfort is always to be found where love is, and especially for the believer, in the Lord Jesus. When here He felt in His spirit all the diseases, illnesses and troubles that He cured with His power. He knew indeed what it was to be "very sorrowful even unto death". The shortest verse in the Bible tells us quite simply that, at the tomb of Lazarus, "Jesus wept", although His divine power was about to change the circumstances completely. In other connections the three great apostles also wept. In Peter's case the tears were those of sorrow for failure to confess his Master; with Paul it was because of the enemies of the cross of Christ; John wept much until he understood that the Lord, seen by him as "the Lamb", is able to solve every problem to the glory of God.

Sometimes sorrow becomes changed into joy. I expect that the maiden, Rhoda, was as anxious as the older brethren at the meeting for prayer when Peter was in prison. But when she actually heard his voice at the door of the house she forgot to open it to him at once for sheer joyful surprise! In the gracious ways of God a boy who had become a cripple at the young age of five years was given, in later years a happy place at the table of his king. He remained faithful to David when many others were unfaithful to him. Do you long to be faithful to the Lord Jesus in the time now of His rejection and absence?

J.C.Evershed