

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

SHUT DOORS

TRUE HEBREWS

THE CHILDREN'S SHEPHERD

SHUT DOORS

Matthew 6: 6; 2 Kings 4: 1-7; John 20: 19; 1 John 2: 13

M.P. What I am thinking about, dear brethren, is the idea of shut doors, and what is going on behind them. The idea of shut doors seems to have a twofold meaning. First of all, it is to stress the inwardness of our relationships with divine Persons - the hidden man of the heart . That seems to be specially underlined in this part of the teaching on the mount, where the Lord contrasts it with the Pharisees and other prominent persons among the Jews, who were accustomed to making a show of their prayers and of all that they thought made them prominent among men. The Lord stresses the inwardness of our relationship; it is hidden from before men, but it is what is precious to God. The second meaning would be the protective idea. Shut doors mean that what is precious is protected and guarded, and that seems to come into prominence in the scripture in the gospel of John. The doors were shut because of fear of the Jews. There was danger abroad, and it is always so. The world around us is full of what is corrupting and is liable to come in when the doors are not properly shut, when what is inside is not carefully guarded. Besides all that, I think we have a certain progress in the order in which the scriptures are suggested. In the first we have our relationship with the Father; in the second it would be our relation with the Holy Spirit, and in the third with the Lord Jesus, the Son; and that would correspond with what we have in the passage in 1 John where we have three stages of spiritual growth. The first is the little children and it says "ye have known the Father": I would connect it with the first scripture. The second would correspond with the young men: that is a question of power and deliverance, and the power is in the Holy Spirit. The whole happening as described there points to this stage of our spiritual growth. The two sons of the widow were in danger of being sold. The point of deliverance is stressed, and under the figure of the oil we see the power and the richness of the resources in the Holy Spirit. Then in the last we have the experience of the disciples as to

the Lord Jesus coming in, and I would connect that with what we have as to the fathers knowing Him who is from the beginning. It is a very high level of knowledge, for the Lord Jesus says "no one knows the Son" (Matt 11: 27); but still, we are brought to a certain degree of knowledge as to this wonderful Person. While perhaps the first two scriptures bear more on what is individual, we have a transition to assembly experience which would in the full sense be more connected with what we see in the fathers. I recall that Mr Raven said eternal life and the experience of it is of course for all believers, but not all believers have the same experience. It would be very beautiful if the little children would have this experience, but I do not think they do. It is the fathers who attain to the full degree of what is contained for us in the idea of eternal life. Those are my thoughts, dear brethren. Would it be suitable to consider them?

J.S. I think it would. It is very precious to the Father to see someone going in and shutting the door and speaking to Him. The youngest believer can do that.

M.P. Yes, that is my thought. I do not think that we have here, exactly, the idea of sons; it is more the idea of children with the Father, children coming in a humble spirit, presenting their wishes and desires to the Father in an inward hidden way, while not underestimating the idea of what is testimonial. Here we have what is inward and so very precious to the Father.

J.S. It says thy Father sees it: the Father sees someone doing this, even though we may not say very much.

M.P. Yes, it is the Father's eye penetrating what is hidden.

J.R. This is intensely individual - thy chamber, thy door, thy Father - is it not?

M.P. And that is the foundation of all. What is collective can be attained only on the basis of what is individual.

J.R. This would be basic, fundamental, for the individual, would it not?

M.P. Yes, it is quite a basic idea.

J.N.M. It is not only the believer who is in secret, but the Father also is in secret. Would you say something about that, please.

M.P. Well, the Father is God. Nobody has seen God: we can know of God what He is pleased to reveal to us. It is so precious that He is so ready to reveal Himself to the humble heart that is seeking Him.

R.S.R. It is normal for the believer to pray. The Lord Jesus does not say 'if thou prayest' but "when thou prayest". Is that not necessary for us?

M.P. I am sure it is. Prayer has been called the breathing of the soul. The breathing of the soul is a necessary condition of life and the indispensable character of it, to have from conversation with the Father. How wonderful it is that we have been made able to do it to come near to the Father - "freely addressing him", (1 Tim 4: 5), free access to the Father's ear.

J.A.G. It is a very blessed thing to learn to trust God.

M.P. Yes; it is very pleasing to the Father to see a heart that is trusting in Him. It is not the idea of worship or praise here; it is not the highest degree of our spiritual life. As has been underlined, it is the elementary experience that is basic to all that can follow.

D.J.H. It does not say what the character of the prayer is - what they are praying for - but simply praying. Does that confirm what you say as to the breathing of the soul? And in itself that expression of dependence gives delight to the Father.

M.P. That is the point. It is little children who have known the Father. I love very much this lovely expression of the apostle's. This knowledge of the Father is for the youngest, for the little children. In John there are two expressions for children: maybe it would be some help to call attention to them. In verse 12 it says "I write to you children"; but then in verse 13 it is "little children" and they are different expressions. The children in verse 12 are children in relation to their parents but the little children in verse 13 are little children as contrasted with adults. So that we have before us here

the very elementary, the very initial, stage of spiritual growth, yet so very precious to the eye of the Father.

D.R. I wonder if you could say something about "thy door". It is not 'the' door but 'thy' door.

M.P. It is intensely individual, is it not? It means everybody's own exercise. Everybody has his own relations with the Father, he has his own experiences with the Father.

D.R. I wondered if each one of us should be encouraged to develop a quiet confidence in God. "Having shut thy door": would it mean that we are able to come alone into the presence of the Father and be quietly there in confidence in prayer?

M.P. Yes, it means our own individual preparation for our free intercourse with the Father.

J.N.M. This would be literal, first of all. The young people, if there is a room in the house where they can go, can be alone and shut the door. That is not always possible, and so it would also be moral, would it not? So that even in the midst of a company, at school, on a bus, you can shut the door, can you not?

M.P. Yes, the door of the heart which is accessible just to the Father. In the scripture in John 20 the Lord has come in through the shut door. There is no hindrance for what is of God to enter in, but it is the exercise on our side that there would be the elimination of all that would disturb. I think what is being specially emphasised here is what is hidden and not making a show of it. The Pharisees made a show. The Lord Jesus said they love to pray standing in the synagogues and the corners of the streets so that they should appear to men. That word 'appear' is connected with the word 'theatre'; that is, making a show of it, being praised of men. Dear brethren, I do not think we are quite free of it. Every one of us has some inclination in his own being to appear as something, perhaps to appear what we are not; but what is being specially stressed here is that we cannot do it before the Father. We can appear among men what we are not, but before God it is impossible.

J.R. That is hypocrisy, whereas this is reality.

M.P. Yes, the reality. That is what I specially find to be important in this part of what is usually called the sermon on the mount, this part being specially underlined, that reality that can stand before the holy eyes of the Father - of God as presented here as the Father.

J.S. Is there a reward from the Father in this? "Thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee". Do you think the Father would reward us with something of His things?

M.P. I am sure He would. Such a prayer has been compared with the frankincense ascending to Him. We find it in the Psalms: "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense", Ps 141: 2. It is infinitely agreeable and pleasurable to God to see His children in confidence and nearness, freely approaching, and making their wishes and desires known to Him, and trusting Him.

R.S.R. Is it good to kneel down when you pray? Is that not an evidence of complete dependence?

M.P. Yes it is, if it is that, but even in this perhaps we tend to be formal. The kneeling down may be just a form, but it is right if it is an expression of what is real. No mere form is of any value before God, but if it is an expression of inward humility and inward lowliness before God, then, of course, it is very precious.

R.S.R. Paul says "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father", Eph 3: 14.

M.P. Yes, with him I am sure it was an expression of what was real.

J.R. This is secret: "thy Father who is in secret", and "thy Father who sees in secret". It is a secret link the believer has with his Father.

M.P. That is the shut door.

J.A.G. The proof of the reality is that the Father renders it to you.

M.P. Before God no hypocrisy can stand. He sees what is real and His eyes are penetrating all that the eyes of men cannot see.

A.McK. This suggests a certain deliberateness.

M.P. Yes, that is what is perhaps referred to in "thy door". It is our own: it is everybody's own exercise to come near to the Father. Nobody can do it for me.

A.McK . The Lord says "*thou*".

M.P. Yes, "*thou*, when thou prayest".

Maybe we can now go over the scripture in Kings. What I would specially underline here is the tremendous resources which are in the Holy Spirit. It is a scripture which always very much impresses me, that what this woman had in her house was of such wonderful value. "Not anything but a pot of oil": the word 'pot' here means quite a small quantity, just for one anointing. It was seemingly so little, but what tremendous resources were here. What is underlined is the idea of deliverance. Two sons were in danger of being sold in bondage. So a further stage in our spiritual life would be. This passage has been compared with Romans and especially with the second part of the epistle where the point of deliverance is being underlined. What is especially precious to me here is that the Holy Spirit is connected with motherly care, and increasingly I am seeing that special motherly feelings are connected with the Holy Spirit. The first mention of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, as we know, is in Genesis chapter one where the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters, and this word 'hovering' is just once elsewhere used elsewhere in Scripture - the eagle hovering over its young (see Deut 32: 11). So it would suggest the motherly feelings in the Holy Spirit, and of course, in the assembly, the motherly care for the young people. The thought of inward formation is connected with the motherly side. I think of that passage in Judges in connection with Gideon. He asked his enemies: "What sort of men were they that ye slew at Tabor? And they answered, As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the sons of a king. And he said, They were my brethren, the sons of my mother (Judg 8: 18,19) - not 'of my father' but "of my mother". The formation is connected with the motherly side and I think it comes in in this scripture as well. The tender and affectionate motherly side which is in the assembly is very precious, and indispensable for formation in the young men who

then prove their strength. We have it in 1 John and it is connected with the tremendous resources we have in the Holy Spirit. Would that be right?

J.S. Yes. So is this how we come to enjoy sonship practically? We are sons by faith but do we come to enjoy sonship practically when we learn that the Holy Spirit is the power for life?

M.P. It is what distinguishes the first part of Romans from the second. In the first part we have redemption, what has been done for us once for ever - the work of Christ, the blood shed, and justification secured. But then the exercise is how to get into the practical enjoyment of it, and that is developed in the second part of chapter five until the end of chapter eight, and that is what we have here. The responsibility of living like Christians is involved in this, and the power of it is in the Holy Spirit. So the young men can be overcomers in the strength of the Spirit.

J.S. We have to learn to shut the door in the sense that we do not rely on any other power but the power of the Spirit.

M.P. That is what I mean. I have mentioned the two sides of what the shut door might mean. Here we have both sides of it. In Matthew it is more the side of inwardness and being hidden, the inward man is being stressed; in John 20 more the protective side. I think that here we have both sides; it is hidden but it is infinitely precious and so it has to be guarded.

J.R. What do you say about the vessels - the Holy Spirit needs vessels?

M.P. He needs vessels undoubtedly. He has not been pleased to take a condition of manhood. He has not appeared in flesh and He needs vessels - empty vessels. It is necessary that the vessels be empty. How important it is, for the young brethren especially, that our vessels should be empty and not taking in anything but what is of God, what is holy and what is pure. When the vessel is full of things that are contrary to God, which are of this earth and of the world, then of course there is no room for what is of God.

J.R. Would repentance and self judgment empty the vessels, do you think?

M.P. Yes, and I am thinking about the vessels in John. They are stone vessels according to the purification of the Jews. The idea of purification is prominent there. Then water could be poured in and filled to the brim, and joy results. The best was at the end. That is the full enjoyment of what God is giving - the power of the Spirit and all the happiness and blessedness of our relationship with God. That is for young men to attain to - a very important stage to be reached. We are to grow. The idea of growing is very important. It is very lovely to see little children in their uprightness and in their simplicity, but in another sense we are to grow to the full-grown Man. The stage of young men is very important and it is an exercise for us, especially for the young brethren, to reach the stage of overcomers, to prove their strength; and their strength is in none other than the Holy Spirit.

D.S. I need therefore to know the Spirit and to value the Spirit. This woman says she has not anything. She had to value the Spirit and this would help us to make our vessels available.

M.P. Yes, there is ever the tendency to undervalue what is in the Spirit. It has been helpfully said some time ago that for many years the Spirit was undervalued. He was not at rest when it was not thought appropriate to address the Holy Spirit. It is wonderful that now we are free to address Him, to value Him and to give Him His place as a divine Person - the Lord the Spirit.

R.S.R. Is it important to say that the limitation is with the vessel, not with the oil?

M.P. Yes, the limitation is on our side. It is a matter of what fills us, anticipating a future time when all the limitations will be gone, when we will enjoy in the fullest sense all that we have in God, in the Lord and in the Spirit.

R.S.R. Do you think this passage brings out how wealthy we are as being preserved by the Holy Spirit - "sell the oil, pay thy debt, and live thou and thy sons on the rest"?

M.P. Yes, we are very wealthy but not always conscious of it. That is the point. Sometimes we act as if we were very poor, but we have wonderful wealth.

J.N.M. The more usual state for many of us is holding "two or three measures each". Would you say something about that, please.

M.P. The fulness of the Holy Spirit, do you mean?

J.N.M. It is possible for persons to be full of the Holy Spirit, although you would not say that every believer was full of the Holy Spirit.

M.P. Yes, it is a commandment as it were: "be filled with the Spirit", Eph 5: 18. I do not know if I can say much about it. Being full of the Holy Spirit is more a matter of experience. I think that we in general are lacking in this matter. There is much room yet, empty, which could be filled. To refer again to the vessels in John 2, they had to be filled to the brim so that there was no room left for anything else. So it should be a real exercise with each one of us to reach this wonderful stage of spiritual growth, to be filled with the Spirit.

A.McK. There is a link with love, is there not?

M.P. Yes, love is the fulness of the law. God is love, so it brings us to the highest point, but say more about it, please.

A.McK. In 1 Corinthians 13 it says "love never fails"; is that a link with the idea of the oil never running out?

M.P. Yes, wonderful! And that underlies all. The Corinthians, as we know, were lacking in this. They were very much like the Pharisees in Matthew 6, making a show of their gifts. As has been said, they were handling their gifts just like a toy, playing with them and making it a matter of being admired because of it; but the apostle showed that the essential thing was that love should be active in using the gifts. The gifts are not for our own glory but for service to the saints that they may have the benefit of it.

J.A.G. Would the fact that the word of God abides in the young men bear very much on their links with the Holy Spirit?

M.P. Yes, the word of God abiding in them. And not to love the world and not to love what is in the world. That connects again with the Father, but the power here is in the Spirit, and He is often working through the word.

J.A.G. So the Spirit would give us very substantial links with the prophet and with the ministry, would you say?

M.P. Yes, that is a link with it.

J.R. In Romans 8 the Spirit is linked with life and peace. That is what we have in contrast here with being in doubt and in debt.

M.P. Yes, liberty is what underlies it, and it leads on to life and peace and to fulfilling responsibility. There was a debt that had to be settled and that makes way for fulfilling the responsibility which we have as Christians to live on that level, the spiritual level of the spiritual wealth. A rich person - I mean in the literal sense - can afford to live at the level of his riches. So it is in a spiritual sense, we need to live on the level of what we are as so very much enriched by God's love and by the bounty of divine provision.

J.S. Does that help us then to fulfil our responsibility individually in sonship? Would that lead on to fulfilling responsibility in assembly relations in the joy of sonship?

M.P. I think it is a transition into it, for the woman points to it in her motherly affections and in her motherly exercises; so that it would point to the assembly being reached by such who are delivered. The exercises of Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8 lead on to chapter 12; the assembly position is not yet fully developed there but we can see that it leads on to it.

P.B. What do you think about "the rest"? "Live thou and thy sons on the rest".

M.P. I would say that is the enjoyment. Selling the oil and paying the debt fulfils that responsibility, but then it is somewhat beyond that, not just that our debts are paid but we have somewhat more - the happiness and the enjoyment of our relations with the Father, the

Son, and the Holy Spirit. The joy which penetrates our whole life is the inward living on this wonderful spiritual level.

Maybe we can go on to the third scripture. Of course this scripture is very well known and often considered. I refer to it as a sort of top point to be reached and, as I said, I connect it with the fathers. The fathers have known Him who is from the beginning. I am sure this would point to the Lord Jesus. He is a wonderful Person - nobody knows the Son but still, in a sense, we are brought to a degree of knowing Him, and here it is an assembly experience. The doors are shut, and how important it is that nothing of what the Jews represent can come in. So the disciples could be restfully in the enjoyment of the presence of the Lord Jesus. That is something we are entitled to enjoy on the first day of the week, in the morning meeting, to welcome the Lord in our midst and to enjoy His presence.

D.J.H. There is more than one door here. Does each one of us have to shut a door in that sense to keep other elements out?

M.P. Yes, that connects with "thy door" in Matthew. No one can do it for another. The assembly or the meeting is what its members are. We cannot expect much more than what we are in ourselves. Each one of us has to bring something in and we have there what has been brought in, so that the doors are to be shut, every one to shut his own.

R.S.R. Do we rely on the help of the Holy Spirit that every door may be closed? We know what it is, things crowd into our minds at the most blessed time. Could we call on the help of the Spirit to help us?

M.P. Yes. It is cumulative; what we had before is not lost, but the power of the Holy Spirit leads on further to what we have here in John 20. Literally the Holy Spirit was not yet. But in our day we can reckon with Him. We have Him and He is ever present to help us.

J.R. What do you say about the midst: "Jesus came and stood in the midst"?

M.P. It is to be distinguished from "their midst" in Luke, chap 24: 36. I find it very precious and I love to connect it with the passage in Matthew 18 where it says "where two or three are gathered together to my name, there I am in the midst" (v 20); although it says "in the midst of them" it points to His position in the midst as in the universe of bliss.

J.R. Do we get beyond the local view, as in our own locality, beyond the few available?

M.P. Yes, beyond the few available. It points to God's thoughts about Him; He is the centre.

J.R. And they are gathered here in the light of the message from Mary, in the dignity of that light, are they not?

M.P. Exactly so. I love very much the thought that His position as the centre is being realised in our lowly and small conditions here below, even if it be just two or three, but the position in the midst is His which God has given Him, the centre and the sun of the whole universe of God.

J.S. Do you think it would show us how great this Person is that He can be the centre of the whole universe of bliss?

M.P. That is God's high appreciation of Him that rests on Him. He is the Son of His love, and the Man of His delight, who is worthy to be put into the midst of all as the Head and as the Son, bringing the benefits of His own Person and of what He is able to give to the whole universe. How precious it is that in the assembly all these wonderful things can be realised, so great a Person coming now into the assembly.

J.N.M. Would this be the time when our vineyards are in bloom? You remember how the Song of Songs says "Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in bloom", chap 2: 15. It would be a very special time.

M.P. Yes, and therefore the doors are to be shut to keep the little foxes out, they are very dangerous.

J.A.G. He comes in through these shut doors.

M.P. Yes, the doors are not shut for Him, but for anything else; and that is the exercise, as has been said, of each one; and then it says the Lord came in. How wonderful it is, dear brethren, to have this living experience of the Lord coming in, what the fathers can fully experience and fully enjoy. We are to grow up to it, to enjoy it fully, what God has given us on the highest level of His goodness and His love.

J.S. So, really, eternity lay behind these shut doors in John 20?

M.P. Yes, in eternity we will not have shut doors any more, for there will be no danger of any intrusion.

J.S. I thought it is the means by which presently we can touch the eternal order of things.

M.P. Yes, exactly so. In the eternal world the doors will all be open - no more danger, no more gates, no more walls. I love the description of the holy city in the beginning of Revelation 21. What follows is in the millennium, as we know, and there are the walls and the gates, but not in the first verses, just the bride adorned for her husband. No walls and no gates are mentioned. All is open. All dangers and enemies are done with. But now, as you rightly say, we can enjoy it behind shut doors.

A.McK. In Matthew 16 the Lord uses the expression "my assembly" (v 18). This would be "my assembly" he comes to here.

M.P. Yes, exactly so, and it is to be protected against the gates of hades. Here they are so active, but inwardly there is what is so infinitely precious to the Lord.

J.R. It is where the disciples were - these persons who meant so much to the Lord Jesus.

M.P. They were so precious to Him.

J.R. There would be a moral order then, do you think, in the scriptures read? Praying to thy Father - persons like that - then persons who value the Holy Spirit; and where they are Jesus comes.

M.P. That is what I thought. From the children, through the young men to the fathers.

R.S.R. Emphasis seems to be on 'that day', "When therefore it was evening on that day". That was a wonderful day when the Lord Jesus rose from the dead. Do you think this gives character to the whole dispensation?

M.P. It does. It is the first day or the eighth day; it goes beyond the seventh; it is what is eternal, beyond the millennium.

DUNDEE

21 April 1990

Key to initials

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TRUE HEBREWS

Milos Pavlik

Genesis 14: 13; 1 Samuel 14: 11; Exodus 9: 1; Hebrews 11: 8-16; 13: 13, 14

Hebrew is a name which has, I think, a twofold meaning in Scripture. We read in Acts (see chap 6: 1) about the murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews. In that sense the Hebrews were the Jews in Palestine as distinguished from the Hellenists, the Jews living among the nations. It is likely that friction came about through those who were proud, who boasted about being Palestinian Jews, keeping what the law prescribed, maybe having a little contempt for those who were from among the nations. From this resulted the murmuring in that chapter, and there was a danger that the friction amongst these two parts of the Jews might come into the assembly. But it is not of Hebrews in this sense that I will say something.

There is another sense in which we can understand this name which we find in Genesis 14, where "Abram the Hebrew" is referred to. I think it is the first instance of this word in Scripture and there is a footnote telling us that it might mean one who is from across the river, or a person from another side. This connection is very significant in the situation in which Abram was. We know there was a war between four kings and five kings and Abram is referred to as the Hebrew. He had nothing to do with what was going on in the political world. He was a man who was from another country. We read here, of course, that he came into the conflict, but that is for a special reason; his brother was in danger and it was because of him - he simply decided to help his brother and not to meddle with the matters between the kings of the earth, for he was a man of another country. It is wonderful, dear brethren, to be persons of another country. And we have One who is that, very prominently. Our Lord Jesus is a person of another world. That had been made clear to Peter when the Father revealed to him the mystery of the Person of the Lord as the Son of the living God. That meant he was not of this

world, not a man of this earth, but the One who is from heaven; not a man coming out of the earth and returning to the earth, but a Man who came out from God and was going back to God. It was revealed to Peter that this is a wonderful Person of another country, of another world. But not only He Himself; how blessed it is to have our part with Him! He said of His disciples: "they are not of the world, as I am not of the world", John 17: 14.

The beloved apostle Peter had another revelation from God as he saw the assembly in the form of the sheet in Acts 10 and it was, again, coming from heaven. It was something from another side, from another country, from another world; it was characteristically what was Hebrew. Believers, like the Lord Jews, are ever a foreign element in this world. This world is a world of iniquity, a world of sin, a world of darkness, a world of hatred. But the Lord Jesus came as a man of righteousness, of love, of light and of life. That is foreign to this world. Therefore the Lord says: "If the world hate you, know that it has hated me before you", John 15: 18. If they were of this world, the world would have loved them. The world would love its own, but because they are not of this world, therefore the world has hated them.

That was why I read that portion in Samuel. The expression of the Philistines against the Hebrews was one of sneering and contempt. "Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes". The world has that contempt and hatred for the Lord Jesus. Can we expect anything different? Never! The Lord had said that in this world you will have troubles, conflicts, afflictions, but hope - "I have overcome the world", John 16: 33. So it is a wonderful position, beloved brethren, to be Hebrews in this sense, persons of another side, foreign elements in this world, hated by the world but loved by God.

We have read in Exodus of "Jehovah the God of the Hebrews", and in the epistle to the Hebrews, "God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God". It refers surely to God calling Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but I love to refer it to this passage where it says "God of the Hebrews". He was God of such who were

of another side, who were the followers of the Lord, having come from Him and being one with Him. Abraham was one such; he was a stranger in this world. He was not looking to the beauties and attractiveness of the cities of this world. His nephew Lot did - it was very dangerous for him to look on the attractiveness of the well-watered plain of the Jordan. It was very dangerous for his soul to get his eyes engaged by what was attractive on this earth. But Abraham was told to look up and see the portion that God had given to him. The cities of this world had no attraction for Abraham's eyes, for he was waiting for another city, that city which has foundations, of which the artificer and constructor is God. The artificer means that He had the plan for it, the idea. He has thought out the purpose, the plan of it. Then He is bringing it about, He is the constructor of it: God Himself. That was the city which was before the eyes of Abraham. Beloved young brother, beloved young sister, is this city of God before your eyes or do you look on the attractiveness of the cities of this world? Yes, there is much to attract the heart and soul and the eyes of the natural man in this world, but nothing for the true Hebrew, for the person of another side, of another world.

I have read about those who were characterised by these wonderful features, not looking on what is here, not seeking their country in this world, but seeking the other country to which they belong in a spiritual sense. As to nature each one of us has come from a country on this earth, but in a spiritual sense we are all of the other world, of that world that is the heavenly. Abraham was seeking that heavenly country, so was Isaac, so was Jacob. Let us seek it, not anything that is in this world. Let us be true Hebrews and then we can count on God not being ashamed to be called our God. He is the "God of the Hebrews", of those wonderful persons who are seeking the heavenly country as their own.

So we have this letter to the Hebrews, and I would very much commend to our young brethren very thorough and very careful reading of this wonderful epistle. It is addressed to the Hebrews and, of course, that means the Hebrews in the first sense. It was addressed to the Jewish believers in Palestine. But I think its aim

was to make them true Hebrews, and to make all of us true Hebrews, persons truly conscious of their origin in the heavenly country, to be conscious of our spiritual origin in God as begotten of God. It says in chapter 2 of this wonderful epistle that the Sanctifier and the sanctified "are all of one" (v 11), and therefore He is not ashamed to call such His brethren who are of Him, and God is not ashamed to be called their God, "God of the Hebrews". Beloved brother, beloved sister, let this wonderful point be appreciated in our eyes and let us allow the blessed Spirit to bring about in us, in our hearts and souls, those wonderful features of the true Hebrews. Let us be subject to Him that we might develop as true Hebrews according to God's thoughts. So we are encouraged not to seek anything here on this earth. We have here no abiding city but we are seeking the coming one, this wonderful city which Abraham had before his eyes. It was so glorious, it was so wonderful, that it helped him, helped him powerfully, to be free of all the attractiveness of this world. Let us be such, beloved brethren; let us not seek anything in this world, but let our eyes be fixed on what God has for us. In the same epistle (see chap 12: 2) we are told to look steadfastly on Jesus, on that wonderful Man in the best sense the true Hebrew, a Man of another world, of another country. He is the leader and the completer of faith". Let us follow Him. He despised the shame. He had the wonderful joy before Him and He despised the shame, and now is set down on the right hand of the throne of God. Let our eyes be fixed on Him. Let us be such of whom it can be said, "God is not ashamed of them to be called their God" - the "God of the Hebrews". May it be so, for His Name's sake.

DUNDEE

21 April 1990

THE CHILDREN'S SHEPHERD

At this time of the year we can expect to see in the fields the playful lambs of the flocks along with the watchful mother-ewes. Of course it would be only those who are in the countryside who would see this happy sight. However, with regard especially to mature sheep, it is in my own memory that flocks were brought for grazing purposes on to the grassy 'commons' of inner London. All was well if the sheep kept within bounds, but if they strayed away, the shepherd would soon appear and bring them back. At other times it was difficult to tell where the shepherd was, but he was always watchful. The Lord Jesus said of His sheep, "I give them life eternal; and no one shall seize them out of my hands".

Jesus spoke of Himself as the *Good Shepherd* who laid down his life for the sheep - not exactly as folds or flocks, although He also knew them as one flock having *One Shepherd*. His love singled out for blessing each sheep - and each lamb. Then He is the *Great Shepherd* as raised from among the dead. Those who tasted His tender care during His lifetime on earth were comparatively few but many sheep and lambs have enjoyed and do enjoy it in the time of His being in glory. Then to those who look for Him to appear again, and who in the meantime seek to care for His sheep, He is the *Chief Shepherd*. Are you looking for Him to come again?

J.C.Evershed