

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MIND OF GOD

CHOOSING, AND REFUSING

CHILDREN AT HOME

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MIND OF GOD

Genesis 24: 1-27, 56-58, 61-67; 2 Corinthians 11: 1,2

D.B.R. What is before us in these meetings relates to the true product of God's work in the saints as bringing us into correspondence with and an understanding of the mind of God. In the previous reading we considered Sarah and her history, especially as, typically speaking, she came into correspondence with God's mind as to the one Man that has place before God, the one Man Jesus Christ. I thought we could carry forward that truth of the one Man.

In Genesis 24, we have a very fine type of the mission of the Holy Spirit seeking, and securing, in the present day features precious to the heart of that one Man - assembly features. While Rebecca can be looked on as a type of the assembly, we can also look at her as a fine product of the work of God in the saints as linking on with the servant, typical of the Holy Spirit, in his mission. It affects me in this chapter that the Spirit typically is undeterred in His service, and Rebecca herself takes on that feature. There is nothing in her to deter the Holy Spirit: she says, "I will go". It is a fine thing, as we have the one Man in our affections and as we are formed in the graces that belong to Him, that there is the exercise with us in no way to hinder or deter the Spirit in His service.

I believe Rebecca is the product of family formation. Eve is rather the product of creational formation, coming into existence as God took the rib from the man. But the servant finds Rebecca as already existent, suggesting how we are formed particularly in our links with the saints in the family of God. It is there that we learn to take on the graces that are suitable for the company of Christ. We do not learn them in the world; it does not produce such features.

The family of God does, and I think Rebecca is a fine type of a believer developed in family formation. She is brought to the man at the end and, while we often think of that in relation to the coming of the Lord Jesus for His bride, it is in fact the heavenly Man in

testimony - it is more the testimonial setting. And there is that secured by the Spirit, in His search for what answers to Rebecca, that brings comfort at the present time to the heart of Christ. Isaac led Rebecca into his mother Sarah's tent, and what Israel in type had failed to provide for Christ is superseded in Rebecca. That would be seen in the early chapters of Acts; Sarah's tent is there, a certain Jewish connection, but Christ is comforted in the face of Israel's rejection. Later on, as Paul comes on to the scene, the assembly, we might say, comes into her own place.

W.McK. Does Rebecca's clear understanding of her spiritual genealogy enter into what you said about family formation? She is definite in verse 24 about who she is and what her family genealogy is.

D.B.R. Do you think that might link with the passage in brackets in verse 23 of Genesis 22: "(And Bethuel begot Rebecca.)"?

W.McK. I thought there was a link; that kindredship would come into this. She is in that line, is she not?

D.B.R. I think that is the secret of this chapter, that the Spirit is searching for features which are kindred to Christ in manhood; and that is really how the assembly is built up.

J.A.P. Peter's remarks to his local brethren on his return from Cornelius seem to confirm what you are saying; he insisted that the Spirit had acted in His service and among the brethren in Cornelius' company, and he finishes with, "If then God has given them the same gift as also to us when we had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who indeed was I to be able to forbid God?", Acts 11: 17. You spoke of not deterring the Holy Spirit; really it is God with whom we have to do. Would that help us to understand that great matter.

D.B.R. I think it would. This chapter brings in in a very full way some precious types of the Holy Spirit. There is the servant who is also called a man - "Wilt thou go with this man?" - which would perhaps help us in thinking of the personality of the Spirit. Then there are the two wells, and the camels. So the chapter brings out the Person and the service of the Holy Spirit, especially related to

the securing of the assembly for the heart of Christ, bearing in mind that Isaac represents the heavenly Man, and, as we have been well taught, that it is only what is of Christ that can be brought to Christ, that can be united to Him.

J.A.P. Perhaps we should say something about the wonderful conversation that took place between the servant and others here, in that we have come to the liberty of speaking and singing to the Spirit. Would that enter into our inquiry?

D.B.R. I think that the vitality of that truth was brought out as the saints were equal for it. Every great truth that has been brought out in the period of the recovery, I think, has been related to the state of the saints. Following the teaching on the sonship of Christ, from 1929 on you will find that Mr Taylor began to minister sonship characteristically. So that the truth is not just something that engages the mind but it is to form us. Similarly as to the Spirit, and that remarkable touch that was brought in at that time ('The ability to take on change' (see JT vol 64 p378)). So that it was not merely the opening up of addressing the Holy Spirit, and the rightness of it, but it involved the saints having ability to take on change, showing that the truth is to have a characteristic effect with us.

H.G.H. Do these truths that you speak of link on with "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies"? That is, it is an ongoing thing, is it not?

D.B.R. He says to the assemblies.

H.G.H. Yes, so that we should have an ear to hear what the Spirit has to say today.

D.B.R. Just so; it is the living voice of the Spirit and, to speak simply as to addressing the Spirit, we may infer from Acts 10 & 11 that Peter did so there.

J.A.P. What would you say in your experience helped you as to speaking to the Spirit?

D.B.R. I well remember the exercise that that truth cost the saints and the dependence that marked them. I could see that it had

aroused the spiritual sensitivities of the saints, that it was not merely academic but a matter that had touched their inwards.

H.G.H. What is your experience today? When do you speak to the Spirit?

D.B.R. I have liberty to speak to Him at any time, but I like to begin the day by speaking to the Spirit.

H.G.H. Because of dependence.

D.B.R. Yes.

C.F.D. And because of communion.

D.B.R. Yes.

C.F.D. It is open to us, is it not? Genesis 24 is a chapter of communion; it was what was proceeding between the Spirit and the assembly typically. Do you not think that it is a great thing in our own time to get through to "the communion of the Holy Spirit", 2 Cor 13: 14?

D.B.R. I think that the more we become sensitive as to Christ's longing for features of the assembly in the saints, the more we value our link with the Holy Spirit, because it is only He that can produce them in the first place and discover them, and sustain them.

G.D.R. Is the spiritual intelligence indicated here, too, in verse 19: "And when she had given him enough to drink"? It does not say how much she gave him, but enough.

D.B.R. There is something very comely in the features that come to light in Rebecca. He says, "Let me, I pray thee, sip a little water" and she says, "Drink, my lord!". I think we need to have full communion with the Holy Spirit, as delightful to Him. But think of the Spirit's delight; "Drink, my lord!". What that must have been in holy delight, to speak simply from the type, for the Holy Spirit.

J.N.C. So that when in Acts 11 Peter goes over that matter he says, "And I said" and so on. That is to say, between chapters 10 and 11 his own relations with the Holy Spirit would have developed to some degree, would they not? Do you think that helps us to go over our

histories and see how the Spirit of God has helped us Himself and to relate certain things in our histories to Himself?

D.B.R. It is related, do you mean, to spiritual experience?

J.N.C. Yes, exactly. I thought of how - may I use the word? - 'revolutionary' it would be in Peter's experience, because the whole thing was more than he could take in at the moment. He says, "In no wise, Lord". But then the Spirit wrought with him, and he was willing: he came round. So he is free to reveal exactly what his exercises were. There is a certain openness and honesty with Peter in that.

D.B.R. That is very fine; it was heaven's adjustment of a great servant. The sheet was let down and taken back up, as if God was showing particular interest in making this experience good in Peter's soul.

J.N.C. Would it have some bearing on the selection of servants in Acts 13?

D.B.R. Separate unto Me (see v 2), do you mean?

J.N.C. Yes; the brethren were sensitive to the Spirit's speaking.

D.B.R. Yes, to His sovereignty. So that as we speak of the Spirit and of the place that He has taken in the economy, His service under the hand of the Father and the Son, we in no way demean the glory of His person. He is sovereign and has the right to act of Himself at any time.

A.P.D. Do you think that the scripture often referred to in Numbers 21 suggests that our emotions, our feelings, are in the matter?

D.B.R. "Rise up, well! sing unto it " (v 17).

A.P.D. Not just speak, but sing, as if spiritual emotions are affected.

D.B.R. It is the bringing out of the whole being in holy feeling, is it not? It is more than some thing merely received into the mind but it is the inwards called into action in response to this Person.

A.P.D. We have been taught that up to Numbers 20 it is a matter of light, but in chapter 21 we get life, as if there is an inward spring in

our souls as affected in our emotions toward that divine Person.

D.B.R. Just so. Another passage, I think, that was helpful at that time was "Prophecy unto the wind", Ezek 37: 9. Think of all these types of the Holy Spirit and His effectiveness of service - the glory, too, of His Person.

W.F. It says in Ephesians that we have access to the Father through Christ and by one Spirit (see chap 2: 18). Would that mean that there is active communion with the Spirit?

D.B.R. I believe that. Can you say a little more, please?

W.F. I thought it would not just be a doctrine to us but a reality, that we are in contact with the Spirit if we have this access.

D.B.R. Yes, I think what you suggest is very fine. We ought to ponder it because I have often thought that that passage is not really a statement of doctrine but a summary of experience. It is true, of course, doctrinally and a very concise statement of the functioning of the economy (as we speak of it), but I think that we reach the Father through Christ, which would mean a living contact with that glorious Man, and by the Spirit, which would mean living contact with the Holy Spirit, and communion, too, as you say. So that our access to God is a fresh matter; it is in living power.

S.E.H. Would you say a little more as to the personality of the Spirit? We read, "now all the treasure of his master was under his hand", and in 1 Corinthians 12: "But all these things operates the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each in particular according as he pleases" (v 11), the pleasure of the Spirit operating in that way.

D.B.R. It is the pleasure of a divine Person, the pleasure of One who is God. There should be no doubt in any of our minds about that. The Christian profession generally has fallen to a very low level and many believers regard the Spirit just as an influence. The Spirit is a Person, He is God; think of the wonder of that, such a Person indwells the believer and indwells the assembly!

K.A.O. Would what you bring up as to communion with the Spirit help us in our reading the Scriptures and in our private individual

reading of ministry, that we would read it as in communion?

D.B.R. Just so - seek the Spirit's help in doing so, read it in communion. What a difference that makes! It brings out, too, the value of the Scriptures. Mr Taylor said that we do not take our own thoughts to the Scriptures, but we put ourselves in the presence of them and let them speak to us. That involves, I think, the communion of the Holy Spirit. So the word is made effective in the soul by the living power of the Holy Spirit. It is not the intellect searching for points, but the living power of the Holy Spirit known, making the word of God effective; in fact that is how the Scriptures become the word of God in the believer's soul.

K.A.O. He would help us also to read the Scriptures intelligently so that we do not take them out of context, nor do we take ministry out of context. We would read in communion and in the context of how it was being brought out at that juncture.

D.B.R. Just so; and, as our brother has said, the living voice of the Spirit is heard in it - "as says the Holy Spirit" (Heb 3: 7), not has said, but He is saying it.

W.McK. It would seem that the man here was looking for conversation - "the maiden to whom I shall say", "and she shall say to me..." (vv 43, 44). That precedes any activity on her part. I was thinking of how the Spirit is looking for conversation between Himself and us, individually and collectively. This passage seems to indicate that it is a foremost thought in His mind.

D.B.R. Do you not think that that conversation, largely, would be related to what is suitable to the Man? Would not that kind of conversation delight the heart of the Holy Spirit, as the features, the graces, of that Man come to light in the saints, and we speak over them together as we are doing now?

W.McK. I thought so, and so she is marked by unselfish energy in ministering, in type, to the Spirit, is she not?

D.B.R. You mean in giving him to drink and then drawing for the camels?

H.G.H. If I speak to the Lord Jesus, am I right in the middle of the prayer to address the Spirit? Or if I am praying at home can I address the Holy Spirit and finish up addressing the Lord Jesus?

D.B.R. You would have liberty. We are brought not only to the knowledge of divine things but to the knowledge of divine Persons.

God is revealed in Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and our link is with the Persons of the Godhead. But I think if you were worshipping the Spirit or worshipping the Lord Jesus you would keep that separate, because you have the glory of that Person in mind.

H.G.H. I am free for it myself but do we get a scripture for it?

D.B.R. Well, it may relate more to spiritual experience. There are things to which we have instincts but for which we could not quote specific Scripture. I think our liberty to speak to divine Persons is a matter of experience.

R.N.H. In John 14: 23 it says, "If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him". Does that show how divine love will relate itself to the believer, so we can freely address divine Persons severally?

D.B.R. Do you mean that that scripture would involve two divine Persons?

R.N.H. Yes, I would say so.

D.B.R. 2 Corinthians 3 does too: "the Lord is the Spirit" (v 17), two divine Persons there, and we have been taught that it is the interchangeability of divine Persons. It is difficult to know at one point which divine Person is being spoken of. "The Lord is the Spirit, but where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" is clearly a reference to both the Spirit and the Lord Jesus.

C.F.D. Just help us a bit as to the setting of this chapter (Gen 24). I am thinking of what proceeds between the Spirit and Rebecca, typically, and then about what comes in at the end of the chapter: "Isaac led her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebecca, and she became his wife, and he loved her. And Isaac was

comforted after the death of his mother". You get the idea of union, I suppose, there, but in the main do you view it as a wilderness setting?

D.B.R. I think it is a testimonial chapter, the Spirit's activity in the testimonial area, bringing to light and securing features that are delightful to the heart of Christ. I do not think it involves heaven as a place but what is heavenly in testimony, and the bride, the bride of Christ being secured by the Spirit in those features.

C.F.D. Should we not then know something more in the antitype of the experience of the liberty of the servant and Rebecca as they commune and speak to each other in a testimonial setting. We might try to bring this into the service of God, but it seems to me that it brings out the relationship more from a testimonial setting as to what things can proceed between the Spirit and ourselves individually. What do you say about it?

D.B.R. I think it opens up the truth of the companionship of the Spirit in the testimonial area. It is a wonderful matter to have the companionship of the Spirit, leading us on characteristically to Christ all the time.

G.H. Would you say that spiritual instinct is something very real? I was wondering about the women who were gathered together for prayer at the riverside in Acts (see chap 16: 13). Do you think that they had spiritual instinct that something wonderful was going to come about?

D.B.R. That is very fine; and God answered that too; He came in for them.

H.G.H. Speaking of what is testimonial it is not what is public, it is the work of the Spirit in secret in the wilderness or in the testimonial scene in that sense. It is not what comes out in testimony to the world or anybody else but it is what is taking place in a secret way is it not?

D.B.R. The testimony vitally is what is under the eye of God. We speak of the testimony as if it is only what is in man's eye; that is

only secondary. The testimony vitally is what is under the eye of God; it is that that gives character to the testimony. So here are the secret operations of the Spirit and the discovering of these precious features that have been formed through family formation. I believe our interchanges and our links with one another have a holy and substantial effect in our souls, and we should not in any way lower that. We should be concerned that our links together are maintained like the saints together in the upper room, in the choiceness of that setting, so that we are formed in the features of the family. As an illustration, a girl grows up in a good home, she watches her mother setting the table, she learns to set the table, she sees how her mother cares for guests that come into the house, she takes on family formation. That illustrates, I think, how the believer learns what family formation means, and is built up in features that are comely to the eye of Christ. It is what takes place in the Christian circle. What do you say?

A.P.D. I was just going to inquire about the testimonial setting. You referred to Paul in 2 Corinthians, if I may go ahead to that. In Acts the Lord said to him, "I have much people in this city", chap 18: 10. In a sense is the Spirit seen in Paul's service? Is that how you regard this chapter 24 of Genesis?

D.B.R. Just so; that is why I read these two verses. I think what we have there in expression is the Spirit's feelings coming to light in Paul: "I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ".

A.P.D. It is good to see that. It even speaks in this chapter of the servant's men (see v 54), as if there would be persons - and we would seek to be among them - who would be characteristically the Spirit's men, do you think?

D.B.R. Yes; and corresponding to that you have Rebecca's maids and her nurse, showing that the feminine side that we are seeking to follow - the holy women, Rebecca being amongst them - begins to show a correspondence to the mind of God. It must be very delightful to the Holy Spirit.

G.D.P. Did not Rebecca know what was suitable when she veiled herself? That was for the testimonial area, and then she is as it were ready for the Lord's day

D.B.R. That is very fine, that the result of the Spirit's service is that she is exclusively for Christ, the one Man. Let us keep that in mind! She is ready for the one Man and exclusively for Him. How precious!

S.E.H. Is Rebecca here with her vessel on her shoulder like Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul Acts 16: 14? There seems to be an expression of what is potential and ready for the Spirit's work.

D.B.R. I thought that we might be impressed by that, that in type the Spirit Himself is moving in undeterred power here, nothing holding Him back, and Rebecca is not holding Him back. The family thought to bring in a delay, but they say, We will ask the maiden and she says, I will go. She is in correspondence to the mind of the Spirit.

C.S.E. Is there anything for us to learn in the sequence here? The Father, in type, speaks to the Spirit about the Son, and the Spirit speaks to Rebecca about His Master, and then in the end it is Isaac and Rebecca.

D.B.R. I think you have some impression of the Trinity. The Father is concerned that there should be a suitable bride for Christ. It has been well said that the assembly, viewed as Rebecca, is the Father's love gift to the Son. Think of the choiceness of that and all that He committed into the hands of His servant, all the treasures of His Master! Think of the wealth that the Spirit has brought into the dispensation as sent forth from with the Father (see John 15: 26), carrying all these wonderful treasures, in order to bring about suitability in the saints for the heart of Christ! I think these treasures might be like the gifts in the assembly - the proof that Christ is alive.

W.McK. Should it encourage us that all that came down in the Spirit is still here in the Spirit? The resource is the same today as in Acts 2. Despite what has happened publicly in the outward history of the

assembly, the inward side is unimpaired. The Spirit is the truth and that is in the saints and is equal to what Christ was here as the truth.

D.B.R. I think that is most important, and I believe we need to have faith in the fact that the Spirit's work will be perfect. There will be nothing incomplete in it. It will be as perfect as was the work of Christ, and It is the perfect answer to the manhood of Christ. I think what you said earlier has to be borne in mind - the great feature that runs through this chapter is kindredship. The assembly is kindred to Christ. It is not a question of His manhood before His death but His manhood where He is, the heavenly Man, and what is being developed is the truth of what is kindred to Christ as man.

W.McK. So it is as He is: "as he is, we also are in this world", 1 John 4: 17.

D.B.R. Just so. "Such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones", 1 Cor 15: 48. I think it is what is characteristically of Christ Himself that can be united to Him.

E.F.C. Would kindredship, as we would understand it in the service of God in our links with Christ lead on to the truth of union? I just thought of the flow of the service of God under the hand of the Lord as the leader of the praises, and the Spirit the power for it, that that would be the normal flow of the service.

D.B.R. You could never think of anything being united to Christ that was not of Himself, could you? You could never think of the Spirit in His careful, diligent, service seeking to unite anything to Christ that was unsuitable to Him. Everything, I think, is in perfect accord with the manhood of Christ.

E.F.C. It says of the servant in verse 21, And the man was *astonished* at her, remaining silent. You think of the Spirit being astonished at the sovereign work of God, He Himself being involved in it, of course.

D.B.R. Just so.

G.D.R. Would you say that, as a result of these communings on the way, there has been an increase in intelligence that goes through

into eternity? There is formation in intelligence so that she covers herself; and much that we have spoken of really involves spiritual intelligence.

D.B.R. Yes, spiritual understanding. That thought is much in my own soul at the moment, spiritual understanding so that we might understand things. It goes beyond merely grappling with terms of truth, it is to be deeply affected by them, to feel the truth. Mr Darby said - and it is a very solemn thing - that he dreaded the thought of trading in unfelt truth. There is no power in it; we need to feel the truth and feel it deeply, and be characterised by it. If God gives a person light, He means that person to be formed by the light and take on the character that the light would secure in him. That is a very precious thing; it meets the eye of Christ.

T.E.D. Is there a precious touch in verse 30? When Laban came to the man, "he was standing by the camels, by the well". You referred to these three types, but they are together here. Is there expressed in that some sensitivity to the Spirit's activity at the present time as to whether we are discerning how ready He is to move in relation to all that is in the mind of God?

D.B.R. Just so. We have spoken of His service, His holy service and lowly service, but think of the well, the way He would refresh us. Mr McCallum says so beautifully in that hymn: 'Springs of refreshing we have known' (No.261). That is the two wells here. In type, Christ seems to be related to the well at the end of the chapter, too, as if He has full regard for the service of the Holy Spirit; and then the camels, the power for carrying us through the period of testimony.

G.D.R. Do you think the Spirit is anxious - if that is the right word - fully to unite the assembly to Christ? "The Spirit and the bride say, Come", Rev 22: 17. We need to be urged to be joined with the Spirit in relation to that wonderful call.

D.B.R. Whoever else has forgotten that the heart of Christ longs for the assembly, the Spirit certainly has not. I believe it is constantly before the Holy Spirit in His holy service that the assembly is to be secured for Christ.

A.P.D. Does that mean that we should have the same feelings? If the Spirit is concerned as to what is suitable, that should be reflected in us, and if the Spirit is thinking about the heart of Christ, where is that going to be seen?

D.B.R. Just so. Not to be hard in our speakings, but in the main Christendom has at the best settled for believers' meetings where they consider in relation to their own blessing. But I think a person who is in communion with the Holy Spirit considers for the heart of Christ.

A.P.D. That is the meaning of Paul's jealousy, is it not? And that is something that we should feel, what would be suitable to be a companion to and to satisfy the heart of Christ.

D.B.R. Just so; and as you see a feature of it coming to light in a brother or sister you rejoice. It is something precious for the heart of Christ, something that speaks to Him of the assembly, of the bride.

A.T. Is the fact that Rebecca springs from the camel a testimony to the fruit of the Spirit's work in her, an evidence of a quickening touch imparting a spring in her movement?

D.B.R. Just so. It is spiritual energy, imparted by the Spirit. I think it links with what was said earlier, that the great lesson of Numbers 21 is that there is no progress in Christianity apart from the Holy Spirit. The human mind can take you a certain distance and then it fails. The Holy Spirit is the only power in Christianity, and Rebecca, I think, displays that in the springing off the camel.

L.MacF. One moving in the liberty of the Spirit is always ready to serve. Rebecca sets that on; she would take on a most menial service. Serving the brethren is something the very young people can enter into.

D.B.R. That is very good. It is quite remarkable, that in verse 22 it says, "And it came to pass when the camels had drunk enough, that the man took a gold ring, of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands, ten shekels weight of gold" - it is her hands that are called attention to, as if the Spirit would delight to show His valuation

of such service, such committal. "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might", Eccles 9: 10. It may be service to an old sister or an old brother - do it, the Spirit will adorn that hand. Take on the features of Christ in what you do.

E.C. You are emphasising manhood after Christ and kindredship with Him, which we understand, but this scripture touches the collective feminine thought for Christ. I can see that unless there is kindredship with Christ there cannot be the bride for Christ, but I wonder how much we spiritually understood how we enter into the feminine side as to Christ in the Lord's day morning meeting. It is true to say, is it not, that the feminine side is the most precious thing to Him?

D.B.R. We have to learn to keep the truth in its own compartments. It is quite true that we are sons, and the assembly can be viewed masculinely, as for instance in our service Godward, I mean as to the Father and as to God Himself. The feminine side relates more to spiritual instinct in the saints, spiritual feeling. We were speaking in the home of these emotional books, like the Song of Songs, dealing mainly with the feminine response, typically, to the heart of Christ. It is a question of holy emotion, feelings touched and touched deeply by the service of the Spirit. I believe it is in that way we discover what the assembly is femininely to Christ.

E.C. Do you think it also means that we need a sensitive understanding of the longings of Christ?

D.B.R. Yes, and nearness to Christ. I think the assembly is only understood as we are near to Christ. We need to learn to live near Him, and I think the Spirit would develop that with us, nearness to Christ and understanding His feelings and longings as a Man. I think all that awakens feminine feelings in the saints for the Lord Jesus.

K.A.O. Do you think that we need to be more sensitive as to not hindering the Spirit? It says, "Do not hinder me, seeing Jehovah has prospered my way". At the Supper do we need to be more sensitive to the Spirit bringing us into union?

D.B.R. That is what I felt, that it brings out this beautiful response in Rebecca: "I will go". She had caught, we might say, not only the feelings of Christ but the feelings of the Holy Spirit and His longings not to be hindered. He said "Send me away": there is an urgency.

There is certainly an urgency at the moment, when the dispensation is almost at a close, the assembly almost completed. Do you not feel that the Spirit would convey some sense of urgency not to hinder Him?

K.A.O. I was wondering as to that. Perhaps we feel it is detracting from the Lord Himself to move quickly in relation to union, but that is not so, is it?

D.B.R. No. Union brings us on to the true elevation of the whole service, which is a heavenly one. In principle we worship in heavenly places, and I believe the experience of union brings us on to the true platform of the service of God, and becomes a great spring, moving us in holy energy into the area in which God is served.

A.S.H. Verse 63 says, "And Isaac had gone out to meditate in the fields toward the beginning of the evening". What is to be learned from that? Then he lifts up his eyes and saw Rebecca and Rebecca saw him. Is this the Spirit's work yet, and a working in unison, the two together?

D.B.R. It is remarkable that he saw the camels before it speaks of him seeing Rebecca. Do you not think the Lord might just be having a look at us today to see what power is carrying us? Is it the power of human intelligence, of human thinking, of rationalism, of religion, or is it what the camel speaks of? What power is carrying us? Are we persons who are really being carried by the camels, typical of the power of the Spirit to see us right through to the end. It says, "he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold camels were coming". What a triumphant touch, the Spirit's power to carry the bride, Rebecca, to Isaac! Well, is that the power that is carrying us, or do we sometimes resort to another power? There is no power in argument, in human reasoning, or in philosophy; there is nothing of moral value in this

kind of thing. Oh, the power of the Spirit, the power of the camels, to speak reverently! It says, "he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold camels were coming". What a fine touch that is!

R.N.H. Luke 22 seems to indicate certain feelings that would remain with the disciples as the Spirit came in. As following the man with the pitcher of water and knowing the Lord's desire to eat the passover with them, would the disciples come into the intelligence of the Lord's feelings at that point, just before His death?

D.B.R. Yes, that is very fine. It says "I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (v 15) - before I suffer - and then immediately after He rises He presented Himself to them living after He had suffered (see Acts 1: 3) showing that His longings for His own remained just the same.

A.P.D. Isaac is a man of leisure here. What would you say about that in the testimonial setting?

D.B.R. I suppose in one way it refers to Christ's place on high; His work is over, the labour of the testimony now belongs to the Holy Spirit. What a burden He has borne! What work He has accomplished! What untiring labour and devotion has entered into it! The Lord represents the side of rest before God: nevertheless there is a certain activity with Him. He is watching, He is interested, He is related to the well: "Isaac had just returned from Beer-lahai-roi; for he was dwelling in the south country". I believe the Lord is interested, vitally interested if we could speak reverently, in the service of the Holy Spirit.

A.P.D. And He has time for the assembly. A great many things are under His hand, but for the moment He has time for the assembly.

D.B.R. Yes, that is very fine.

J.A.O. We were speaking earlier about one walking in the power of the Spirit. It seems to me that Rebecca represents such a person, and that she sees Isaac walking to meet her in the field.

D.B.R. That is just the position here. It is representative of a person (of course we can think of the assembly) being carried forward in the

power of the Holy Spirit and that person's soul must be filled with Christ.

E.F.C. It says she sprang off the camel. Would you say something as to this spiritual spring by which we need to be characterised?

D.B.R. I think it is the power of quickening, our affections quickened. As the Lord's return draws near, it is certainly needed. We are in a day of terrible indifference to the person of Christ: the religious system has been established in callousness towards the person of Christ. We need to feel that deeply. That is opened up in the address to Laodicea, where the Lord Jesus says, "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth", Rev 3: 16. I believe that is a testimony to the holiness of His humanity, the whole thing, we may say, repulsive to Him; but in contrast to that there is the preciousness of what is being secured by the Holy Spirit.

E.F.C. What is proper to the assembly is what we need help on. If the public side of the assembly is to be seen anywhere today, it is a question of how it is operating and how we are operating as to what is proper to it, what is in keeping with the dignity of that vessel, would you say?

D.B.R. Just so, and how we would be seen in our local assemblies as persons who are committed to the rights of Christ. That would be a great assembly feature.

R.N.H. Is this like the Spirit being with us and in us? Rebecca was accompanying the servant, she is on a camel and she sprang off; would it indicate the Spirit within us?

D.B.R. You mean the holy spring, the holy energy, imparted by the Holy Spirit. That is good, and I believe that again raises the question of state with us, because we have been taught that the Spirit with us involves the company, but the Spirit in us as individuals is in us state-wise. So that while we can never receive the Spirit twice, we can certainly give Him more room to operate in us.

E.F.C. And would you add to that the thought of the Spirit being upon us, in the sense of the anointing?

D.B.R. In the sense of dignity, yes.

M.N. There is much food and much provision with the Spirit. We are well equipped, are we not, with the Spirit to overcome, and as you said, to move into the things of Christ.

D.B.R. We have everything we need in the Spirit. I do not think we should ever feel any lack. As we are in communion with the Holy Spirit we would be assured that we have every thing that we need. The Lord has provided for us in that way in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

K.A.O. The Lord Himself said, "It is profitable for you that I go away", John 16: 7. He was thinking of us. So it is a current matter that the Spirit is for our profit and for the Lord's glory.

D.B.R. Just so, and sufficient. We need to think of the Spirit's sufficiency for the whole journey. He is more than equal to seeing us through.

K.A.O. It is the Spirit and the bride that say, Come (see Rev 22: 17).

H.G.H. The Spirit takes the position of a dove. Is that the way He would be characteristically with us? It is not as a warrior, a horse or a lion, but as a dove.

D.B.R. Yes, involving His sensitivities. It says that Noah took the dove to him (see Gen 8: 9). We can see that as a certain illustration of the sensitive relation between Christ as a Man and the Holy Spirit.

H.G.H. Therefore it is very easy for us to grieve the Spirit because of what the flesh is.

D.B.R. Yes, and also to quench Him, which would be more a collective thought. I think grieving would be individual. It is easy for any one of us to quench the Holy Spirit in a reading meeting.

J.A.O. How would that be done?

D.B.R. By putting too big a lump of coal on the fire; you put the fire out. We are so anxious to get our own thoughts in that we make it burdensome and the Spirit is quenched. The thing said might be good in itself but it quenches the Holy Spirit.

K.A.O. Paul would have known how many sticks to put on the fire, would he not?

D.B.R. That is right.

J.A.P. I think that what you are bringing up is very important. The servant here waited to see certain things. If he did, how much more should I wait, wait on the brethren and see what is in the body of the saints to come out.

D.B.R. Allow the body to function. That is the sensitive side that we have been speaking about. It never fails where there is room made for it.

J.N.C. When the Lord spoke of the Spirit so precious in John 4 He referred to the Spirit's normal service as "springing up into eternal life" (v 14). We would not want to hinder that, would we? It is very precious to see the relationships between Christ and the Spirit of God, how They honourably and lovingly regard One Another.

D.B.R. Just so; the service brings in life-giving touches. That is all the evidence of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. So it does not say of the Spirit that He will guide you unto the truth but that He will guide you into the truth. That would be into the power and joy of the truth.

A.S.H. John said, "I became in the Spirit", Rev 1: 10. What is the difference between becoming in the Spirit and having the Spirit?

D.B.R. I think that becoming in the Spirit involved John's own spiritual state. *Having* the Spirit is that we receive Him as a once for all matter. We may grieve Him but He never leaves us.

K.A.O. In Hebrews we have "the word of God is living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword", chap 4: 12. The Spirit enters into that in a distinct way; even in a conversational meeting we would look for that. As the Spirit is amongst us would what is living and operative be seen? Then it goes on: "there is not a creature unapparent before him"; really it is like God Himself, the word of God becomes like God Himself. Is that right?

D.B.R. The whole thing becomes a living matter effective in the soul as the Spirit's power is proved.

C.S.E. The Lord said, "He shall glorify me", John 16: 14. So any ministry which glorifies Christ the Spirit is in, is He not?

D.B.R. Just so, that is His peculiar pleasure, and as glorifying Christ I believe He secures an answer for Christ's heart; that would be in Rebecca, typically the bride.

W.McK. As we go on in this chapter things become more defined and we reach a well that has a name, 'Well of the Living who ... reveals Himself' (see note to chap 16: 14). The earlier wells are not named but we come now to a spiritually defined position with Isaac, would you say?

D.B.R. That is very fine, some definite point reached in spiritual understanding and experience in the companionship of the Spirit.

W.McK. And 'who reveals Himself', would be a current matter.

G.D.R. It says in Acts 2 that they were all filled with Holy Spirit (see v 4).

D.B.R. It seemed to have been a normal feature in the early days.

G.D.R. Stephen was.

D.B.R. And Paul's injunction to the Ephesians includes it: "Be not drunk with wine, in which is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit", chap 5: 18. Again I think it is a matter of state. It is a vessel so fully possessed that he is filled with the Holy Spirit. It is different from the indwelling of the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit involves a particular experience; we might say taken over by the Spirit. It must involve the expression of power in a man or a woman.

G.H. The expression in Acts 2 is very interesting: "And there came suddenly a sound out of heaven as of a violent impetuous blowing" (v 2). And there are the expressions 'springing up' and 'leaping'. Are these expressions to help us as to the power that lies with the Spirit?

D.B.R. Just so, something quite indisputable. There is power there, not human power but the power of the Holy Spirit; it is in evidence.

G.H. "I leaped over a wall" (Ps 18: 29): that is the power of the Spirit.

D.B.R. That is a very good reference.

G.A. What about Simeon in Luke 2? It says, "And it was divinely communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he should see the Lord's Christ" (v 26). How would that fit in?

D.B.R. There is communication there by the Spirit. And then he came into the temple in the Spirit (see v 27). While he did not belong to the Christian dispensation, he was very close to it. While we know that the indwelling Spirit is a peculiar feature of Christianity, yet there is in that man some sense of the vitality of the Spirit's action. There is the communication and then there is the movement related to the communication. It raises the exercise with us currently: if the Spirit sovereignly gives us some communication as to the truth, we ought to move in relation to that communication, and all the power for movement is in the Holy Spirit.

D.F.H. Would Acts 4 confirm that filling can be distinguished from the Spirit indwelling? It says, "when they had prayed, the place in which they were assembled shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the word of God with boldness" (v 31). It was a fresh experience of the filling of the Spirit.

D.B.R. Yes.

D.F.H. It was a very real and wonderful experience. Do you think the idea of assembling there would bear on us today?

D.B.R. Yes, we ought to think more of the possibility of being filled with the Holy Spirit. It seems to me that it is not something that belonged exclusively to apostolic days. It is something that is quite possible in our own days; it belongs to the Spirit's day.

T.E.D. So the word here, "Do not hinder me", would be a voice to us. We might hinder the Spirit's liberty to fill us.

D.B.R. That was the essence of one's exercise in this chapter, that we might not hinder the Spirit. If I could use the word in a reverent way, you see in this chapter the Spirit's determination - for He is

determined - to secure features that are precious to the heart of Christ, and I believe He would form in us the same determination: "I will go". No power, not even these precious family connections, was going to hinder her.

K.A.O. In Acts 19 Paul laid hands on the twelve men and then they immediately prophesied (see v 6). Would that show what would be normal in the working out of the Spirit's activity where He has free way?

D.B.R. I believe that the expression of life in the assembly, by the prophetic word, the communication from God, is by the Spirit. So I believe, beloved brethren, that what we have touched in these readings is the two cardinal features of Christianity, that is Christ in heaven and the Holy Spirit here. So let us bear that in mind, that there is only one Man before God, and there is only one power effective in the Christian circle, that is the power of the Holy Spirit.

PLAINFIELD

26 May 1990

Key to initials

G.Ashby, New York; E.F.Cary, Los Angeles; J.N.Castle, San Francisco; E.Croot, Dorking; C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; A.P.Devenish, Edmonton; T.E.Druckenmiller, Plainfield; C.S.Elliott, New York; W.Finger, Koln; G.Hesterman, Plainfield; R.N.Hesterman, Woodstock; S.E.Hesterman, Plainfield; A.S.Hinkson, New York; H.G.Holt, Chicago; D.F.Hugill, Vancouver; L.MacFarlane, New York ; W.McKillop, Ormond Beach; M.Noel, Ormond Beach; J.A.Oberg, Villa Grove; Kenneth.A.Oberg, Villa Grove; J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; G.D.Pfingst, Plainfield; D.Robertson, Cumnock; G.D.Rosenberry, San Francisco; J.E.Surtees, Spaldwick; A.Taylor, Glasgow

[The tape of the previous reading was imperfect]

CHOOSING, AND REFUSING

Joe Stenhouse

Joshua 24: 15; Luke 10: 38-42; Hebrews 11: 23-27; Philippians 1: 21,22; 3: 7-11

You will have noticed that these scriptures speak about choosing, and, with Moses, refusing. God was the first that chose, choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world. What a wonderful thing! Who could comprehend it that we are here today as persons who have been chosen for God's pleasure. All things were created for His pleasure - it says, "for thy will they were, and they have been created", Rev 4: 11 - and you and I come into that. We do not always realise what is proceeding at the present time: there is something here that is for God's pleasure. Though there are the temporary pleasures of this world, God is proceeding with His own world for His pleasure, a world which is eternal. I feel, speaking to believers, that tonight could be a time when you could make a decision.

Joshua is a man who had come a long way, over the Red Sea and through the wilderness, and he was here in the beginning of the inheritance. It says that "these things happened as types of us" (1 Cor 10: 6), so that he would be an example for us. He had come all that way. (I think if you add them up we are told of 42 encampments in the wilderness). He came through the failures when Moses had to pitch the tent far from the camp because of the molten calf, and when the people had said of Moses "we do not know what is become of him!", Exod 32: 1. (We know what has become of our Man). It says that they "sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to sport" (v 6). What we believers can come to if we have not kept in the light! The Lord would use this occasion, I am sure, to help us to come to a good decision. Joshua says "choose you this day whom ye will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah". One man is speaking to perhaps two million people; and that is all he is saying. Everything we come into in Christianity initially we come

to as individuals. These were individuals who chose. They made a good choice. It is the greatest choice you could ever make.

Wherever you have been and wherever you are at this time the Lord is ready to help, He is waiting to bless you and help you. This is an occasion when you could say "but as for me and my house". That is a word for those who have a house. Everyone present is not a head of a house, but there are many ways in which we can serve the Lord. How lovely it is to find in our houses that the Scriptures are read, that prayer is made, that there is what is proper to a believer's house. It is delightful to heaven to look down upon.

In Luke Jesus entered into a certain village. We could say that we are in a certain place here tonight. In this village there were two sisters. I would like to apply the scripture in relation to what they may represent in each one of us. Is what we are fostering or making room for, what marked Martha or what marked Mary? We can all be marked by the features of Martha: she was adjusted and we can be adjusted too. But I was thinking of Mary; it says she "has chosen the good part, the which shall not be taken from her". That is what we need, something that cannot be taken from us. That is what we find as listening at the feet of Christ. If you listen, you learn. We ought to be listeners at the feet of Jesus, to compose ourselves; there is such a thing as self-control. You can control your mind by the Spirit: it is something that should mark every believer. These things are not to be thought of as exceptions, but they are to be normal with us.

Martha says "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?". I am sure that Mary would have done a bit around the house too, but while the Lord was there she was in a position that had priority with her over other things. You can be taken up too much with your house, but the Lord Jesus is to have priority if we are to have the satisfaction and the joy that He wants us to have. He has to have the first place in all things. One day, as we sang earlier, He will have it in the universe, but now He loves to have it in your heart and mine, and in our establishments and whatever we have in our hands. Let us make more room for Him. He says "careful and troubled about many things": at the feet of Jesus these cares and

troubles find their solution in Himself. He says, "Mary has chosen the good part". It is not just the better part; there is no comparison: it is "the good part". Why not choose it today? The Lord wants a company of persons like this, and in our individual lives He wants this. He has gone the way He has gone in His love to secure you and me. "Mary has chosen the good part, the which shall not be taken from her". It is wonderful to have something in Jesus that can never be taken from you, because it is eternal.

Hebrews was written to believers who had had an earthly inheritance and it tells them of a heavenly inheritance, an unending one. Moses had all the opportunities for the things of this world and he chose - "choosing rather to suffer affliction". Life is not going to be all sunshine, as we say: the thing is to choose "rather to suffer affliction along with the people of God". It is not to be compared to the bondage of Egypt. When the children of Israel loathed the manna they forgot about the bondage and the taskmasters and the slavery of Egypt. I wonder if there is anyone here like that who has perhaps forgotten what that bondage was. Let this occasion bring you back to a fresh realisation of the wonderful deliverance that you once enjoyed. Here Moses had come to a crucial time in his life. I would like to say to the younger ones here - there was a time when your parents baptised you to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit. It was called upon you and now the Lord Jesus is saying tonight to you through the word that, having come to the age of responsibility when you choose things for yourself and are responsible for them, are you going to choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, beloved young brother or sister? There are the temporary pleasures of sin; everything is temporary down here except the work of God in persons. One day it is all going to make way for a new heaven and a new earth: those of the assembly will have new bodies in another world.

Meantime it is a great privilege to choose to suffer affliction with the Lord's people, "esteeming the reproach of the Christ greater riches". It is worth more than all the pleasures and treasures of this world. Mr Darby wrote 'Tis the treasure we've found in His love, that

has made us now pilgrims below' (Hymn 139). That is what it does, it makes you see that the glory of this world is just tinsel and hollow.

Get a glimpse of the glory of Jesus. It says "for he had respect to the recompense", that is real treasure; you have recompense now because you are able to enjoy even natural things in a proper way as governed by the Spirit and by Christ but the Christian has his heavenly portion too.

And so it is said, "for he persevered, as seeing him who is invisible". Do not look around for encouragement. You might get encouragement from the brethren, but the secret of endurance is that you are living by faith - a wonderful thing; you are not looking at things around you, you are looking up, you are looking above.

Everything that maintains the believer down here comes from above. Jesus is the source of it. He came down from above. He was not like Adam, made out of dust: He was a divine Person who came down here from above. What we need to maintain ourselves day by day comes from above: we need the living bread and the living water every day. Do you get it? If you do not get physical food you become weak and lose power. You need the spiritual every day. You are strengthened by what enters your constitution and you must have living water and living food every day.

In the first chapter of Philipians Paul says, "for me to live is Christ, and to die gain; but if to live in flesh is my lot, this is for me worth the while". I like that "worth the while", it is the only way to live that is worth the while. Paul did not know which way to choose - "and what I shall choose I cannot tell". Whether it was one way or the other it was still worth the while. If he was left here, he would have his service to do for the Lord; if he was to depart to be with Christ, that was much better. But it was still good to be left here, it was "worth the while". It will be if we live as he did. He says, "for me to live is Christ". He speaks of counting all those things which were gain to him filth. They are not the things he was speaking of; they were good things; he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees and he had a place amongst men, educated at the feet of Gamaliel. Do you know what that did to him? That education did not prevent him being a

persecutor of Christ. When he was brought to the feet of Jesus it made him the greatest lover of Christ.

In chapter 3 it says, "on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus". We had an advertisement in our mail box before we came down here; it had big letters; 'The knowledge that will do you for a life time' - advertising an encyclopaedia. That is not good enough; we need knowledge that will do us for eternity, and we have it in the living and abiding word of God. It speaks in the Scriptures of the high-flown words from men and how they fall to the ground continually. Paul has seven desires here. He says, "that he may gain Christ", and yet he had been converted for quite a while, but he wanted to gain Him. He then says "that I may be found in him ... to know him". You might say as to Paul, he was converted on the Damascus road and he was spoken to and yet here he is saying to the Philippians that he wants to know Him. Speaking simply, if you know a person and have a certain acquaintance with them, you do not necessarily really know them, but Paul said I want to know Him. Then he says he wants to know "the fellowship of his sufferings". You will always have that; Jesus said, "in the world ye have tribulation" (see John 16: 33). That is not all it says: "in me ye ... have peace". The believer in the gain of things is more than a conqueror all the time. "Being conformed to his death" - do not be conformed to the world. Paul says, "if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead". As we said earlier as to life, you are a recovered person and you are down here for Him. You have been something else, and we have all been something else, and yet we are to be recovered for the pleasure of God and for the satisfaction of Christ.

I leave the word with you that you might say "as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah".

ADELAIDE

14 April 1990

CHILDREN AT HOME

It was between the two evenings of the Passover that the children among the people of Israel would all have been expectantly in their own homes in Egypt. Thus between dusk and nightfall the blood of the lamb would have been put on the doorposts and the lintel of each house. The sacrifice itself would be eaten so that all would be ready to leave for ever the place of their bondage. From all this the Christian believer understands that the blood of Jesus is a shield from judgment, and feeding on Him will keep us free in our consciences and in our spirits.

There may well have been boys and girls in the household of the jailer at Philippi. Such would wonder what had awakened them so suddenly in the night; perhaps they would wonder even more when their father began to lay the table for a meal with Paul and Silas - and perhaps some converted prisoners as well. Salvation, the great Christian blessing, would come to all who believed on the Lord Jesus. Paul went a second time to Philippi, on a homeward journey, the next port of call being Troas. Christians there with their children had become so endeared to the apostle that when he had to leave they all prayed together, kneeling down upon the sea-shore.

The epistles of John all refer to children and even little children. These 'love-letters' give an impression of the way in which the Christian path was being trodden by believers, before we come to read the Revelation with its austerities. The second epistle is especially interesting as carrying greetings from one family to another who were their cousins. Expressions like "walking in the truth" are mentioned by the apostle as what was normal for believers. Is this true of you?

J.C.Evershed