

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MIND OF GOD (IV)

WHAT IS FOR CHRIST IN THE NIGHT SEASON

DUTIFUL CHILDREN

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MIND OF GOD (IV)

Exodus 1: 15-22; 35: 25,26; 38: 8

D.R. One is continuing to think, beloved brethren, of the way God works in us to produce correspondence with His own mind and I wondered if we could consider together what would be represented in these midwives, firstly the feature of preserving life. This coming in the book of Exodus, I think, would mean that the life was preserved for the pleasure of God. We would bear in mind the first verse of the chapter: "these are the names of the sons of Israel" - not the 'children' of Israel but the 'sons' of Israel - showing that what is in God's mind is sonship, what is for His own pleasure. In principle therefore these women were acting to preserve potentially what would be secured in sonship for God. I believe they represent a very precious feature of the work of God. They themselves are not the mothers. The other three women we have spoken of, and indeed also Elizabeth and Mary, were mothers, but these persons are not the mothers. They are called Hebrew midwives; they occupy a position of reproach just as the children were to occupy a position of reproach.

When we come to chapter 35 we find that women are involved in the work of spinning, not exactly construction line - that is left to the men - but they spun with their hands and brought what they had spun. These are beautiful features which would represent the glories of Christ being formed secretly in our affections. Spinning would involve the binding together of things, the preparing of the material that could be used in the making of the curtains and other furnishings. It says, "And all the women whose heart moved them in wisdom spun goat's hair"; that is another feature. Then we might have a touch later as to the women who crowded before the entrance of the tent of meeting. The midwives seem to be a very precious suggestion as to the character of the persons, and the substantial correspondence to God's mind, that would consider for the preservation of life.

C.F.D. In a sense they would have in their hearts the germ of what God would say later: "Let my son go, that he may serve me", Exod 4: 23. Maybe you would say a little more as to how this is to show itself in our localities, in sisters and brothers.

D.R. I felt that they represent a very fine feature of God's work in the saints that of unselfishness. As I said, they are not themselves the mother but they are not fearing the king, they have no regard for their own lives; it seems to me that unselfishness is a very fine product of the work of God.

C.F.D. Does that come out beautifully in Paul? He could say as to himself "as a nurse would cherish her own children", 1 Thess 2: 7.

As he laboured, for instance, at Ephesus night and day with tears and in every house (see Acts 20) this element would preserve the young people: he descended, enfolding Eutychus in his arms. Then would there be a general working out of things locally in the position that Paul would get on?

D.R. Then in the next chapter it speaks of the men and the women and the children all attracted to the man in his unselfish love for them (see v 5). We need to be set for the preservation of life, not for the destruction of life. These would be pure women, motivated by unselfishness.

S.E.H. It says, "for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth", 2 Kings 19: 3. Would these women in some way be recognising that lack and seeking under God's hand to make up for it?

D.R. We spoke much this morning of suffering and we want to get the gain of the suffering. Childbirth involves suffering. But in one part of Scripture it says they brought forth wind, just an empty thing, not a formed substance (see Isa 26: 18). One of the things mentioned among the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 is helps; perhaps we overlook that and would prefer to be something more obvious. But think of the principle of help, just drawing alongside a brother or sister and saying something that might help them, or drawing aside a young person and saying something that might help them, being set

for the help of one another - just to be a helper. Paul says of one woman, "she ... has been a helper of many and of myself", Rom 16: 2. I think she was in principle a midwife, an unselfish person.

G.R. Do you think there is something important in both of these sections - the feature of wisdom, as well as fear of God: "the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom", Ps 111: 10. That seems to be vital and should be seen in each of us. We are in delicate and critical times, as you have been saying, and wise handling is necessary.

D.R. Just so. I think one of the things that we learn in the temple' is carefulness. The great feature of the family is warmth, affection for one another, but in the temple we learn carefulness. It takes us a long time because we are so prone to impose our own thoughts, even in a reading meeting, but we learn carefulness in the temple.

In Exodus it says, "Be careful in his presence", chap 23: 21. Where the Spirit of God is operating requires carefulness, deliberateness and setting ourselves for the help of one another in an unselfish way. I believe God would help us on these lines.

J.A.P. The king was a murderer and "no murderer has eternal life abiding in him", 1 John 3: 15. These midwives are a little like Mr Raven's ministry helping us as to eternal life. Is not a great feature in our local companies the maintenance of eternal life?

D.R. Involving a condition of soul amongst the saints that prospers the service of God, because eternal life leads us to the service of God. I think that is what is in mind here, the preservation of the conditions of life that are necessary for God's dwelling, because that is what is in mind in the book of Exodus - God's dwelling.

J.A.P. Mr Taylor said that eternal life underlies the service of God. I need help on that.

D.R. Eternal life brings you to the point of satisfaction, to the end of moral need. Eternal life is to meet a need in man. It is really as our own souls are satisfied and satiated with the love of God that we can have part in the service of God. So you see the importance of the

present enjoyment of eternal life involving a condition of life and satisfaction which provides ground for the service of God to proceed.

J.E.S. Is there anything to be noticed in the fact that they are individually named: "the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other was Puah". They are godly names, ending in 'ah', and the fact that they are named would suggest that the Spirit of God distinguishes them, do you think?

D.R. That is a very fine suggestion. I had not noticed that here, but I have noticed it in most of the prophets like Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel and others, as if the knowledge of God is interwoven into their moral being. You see that in these women. I suppose it was that that gave them power not to fear the wrath of the king, to disregard him.

G.R. Although it was children, the potential that they were valuing had manhood in mind, the full development, which links with your thought of the formation of Christ in us.

D.R. Yes. The sons of Israel are the object; "these are the names of the sons of Israel" (v 1). These women, we may say, had the pattern of what was in God's heart - sonship. They were in the secret of God's mind. The substantiality of the knowledge of God and the work of God in their souls had brought them into correspondence with God's mind. That is one's exercise. I trust the brethren are carried with it because I see the need of it in myself and in others, that we are brought into correspondence with God's mind.

L.MacF. The injunction of the king says, "if it be a son, then ye shall kill him". Is the enemy set against sonship appearing in the saints?

D.R. Yes. Right at the end of Malachi the question is raised, "Will a man rob God?", chap 3: 8. That is the enemy's work, to rob God of His pleasure in a man. But then it says, "I will spare them as a man spareth his own son" (v 17). That is what marks the day of recovery, the present day. God is recalling us to these primary thoughts.

Sonship is a primary thought of God, and if we can speak reverently of God, sonship meets the need of His heart. We ought to value one another in the light of that. We might say we want to see a seat filled. Well, there are a few empty chairs in local assemblies, but is

that a right outlook? Should we not rather long that God's need might be met, that there may be persons secured according to the value of God's work in them and the potential of that work, its ability, we may say, to satisfy the heart of God Himself?

A.P.D. Mr Stoney said that an evangelist is one who sees empty places in the heart of Christ and seeks to fill them.

D.R. That is very touching. Hannah prayed for a man, but Mr Taylor said that Hannah's need was God's need, she was really thinking for God. She lent him to Jehovah all the days of his life. So I trust our need is God's need. It is not merely the advantage of having more brethren but that we are thinking for God in this unselfish way, the preservation of life.

J.N.C. One of the features of these beloved women which has always appealed to me is that they stood in the breach. The king spoke directly to them, he attacked them in that sense. He did not know Joseph and he was ready to attack and he did. It reminds us of how the Lord stood in the breach for every one of us, and He met God's need, did He not?

D.R. Very good, in the unselfish devotion of holy love. We need to be affected by that. Speaking for myself, I would like to be a little more unselfish. I think it is a feature of the divine nature in a man to learn to be like God. It has been said that the new covenant makes the Christian God-like and reconciliation makes the Christian Christ-like. We need to become God-like, unselfish in our attitude and especially in our care for the preservation of life.

H.G.H. Is that a feature of mature love?

D.R. That is exactly what it is.

W.F. Do you see something in the fact that there were two of them? We had before us individuals but now there are two. It says, "two of you", Matt 18: 19.

D.R. Very good; you mean two assemblyminded persons. It is a formed character of things here, formed in the knowledge and in

relation to the divine operation in them. I think that brings about character that would act in this kind of way together unselfishly.

S.E.MacC. A feature set forward in Joseph is that God had sent him to preserve life (see Gen 45: 5). As they would go back over the history of the children of Israel in Egypt they would remember this and seek to continue it.

D.R. Yes. What would you rather do, give an impressive address or preserve a person's life?

S.E.MacC. There is no comparison!

D.R. There is only one answer to that, is there not? The preservation of life ought to be very precious to us and I think there is a great need for it at the moment, that we act in such a way in unselfish devotion and love for one another and seek to preserve life.

K.A.O. Is it not only just life, as you suggested, but that there is a quality of life to be maintained? Sonship is in mind, is it not? With the prodigal son the quality of life improved as repentance was found in him and the father clothed him in the best robe. In other words the quality of life is essential to the preservation of the believer.

D.R. Yes. I think life in the saints is the answer to the revelation of God. It is wonderful that God has revealed Himself. The great response to that is seen in life in the saints. So it is the kind of life, the life of God as spoken of in Ephesians (see chap 4: 18), the kind of life that God enjoys in men. It is as if God would appropriate that kind of life, and here are persons who are set to preserve it, we may say - to use your word - set to preserve the life in a kind of quality that God values. The enemy attacks all the time; it may not be total destruction, but he seeks to undermine the quality of life in the saints.

G.R. It is interesting that the Spirit of God uses this suggestion of the midwives. They would be there when the very first breath of life was breathed. How important that is in relation to the preservation of the little ones. You were speaking about the yearnings regarding the

glad tidings, but then just to watch the breath as they continue and the flower begins to open is a delicate matter, is it not?

D.R. What is the first breath spiritually that the Christian takes?

G.R. It would be confession of the Name.

D.R. That is the expression of it. I think the first thing spiritually we breathe is the love of God, an expression of the divine nature; that is a wonderful thing. I think that the love of God is conveyed here in the preservation of life. We may think of a wayward young person, like Eutychus, and of the kind of power to preserve life with the conveyance of an impression of the love of God. There is nothing more powerful than that. I am only quoting what Mr Raven said, that the first breath of spiritual life that the Christian takes is that he breathes in the love of God; it is most precious.

J.A.O. I was wondering if the idea of the quality of life would be linked with what it says: "the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian; for they are strong". I was impressed with that, that these sons were already born before the midwives came.

D.R. That is very fine. Would that point to the constitution that was built up of God? That is what we are at, the quality of the operation of God in the soul, bringing us into correspondence not only with the mind of God but with His operation.

D.H. I was enjoying what you were saying as to the love of God. God so loved the world that He gave; it is the unselfishness of His character. Surely every believer breathes into that.

D.R. How affecting that is, not that we loved God but that God loved us! Think of breathing that into your inner being.

G.H. It says in the Acts that "fear was upon every soul", chap 2: 43. Is that the deep inward being?

D.R. Yes. It goes far beyond mere outward conformity. Man's religion demands outward conformity; we have had our part in it, let us abandon it. But to confirm your thought, elsewhere Paul says, "joined in soul" (Phil 2: 2); it is a living matter. I think that is all involved in the preservation of life.

G.H. That 'soul' is mentioned in the very beginning of the Acts, when there was such a vitality and life, shows that the thing was real.

J.A.O. John speaks about the love of the Father: "If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him", 1 John 2: 15. The Egyptians would represent the love of the world; these midwives would have seen the love of the Father in the sons that were born to these Hebrew women.

D.R. Jesus says to the Jews in John's gospel that the love of God is not in them (see chap 5: 42). We are in the presence of persons today in whom the love of God is. Peter speaks about having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, and of having become partakers of the divine nature (see 2 Pet 1: 4). I think that is a reference to what is in the souls of the saints. We are in an area today where we can partake of the divine nature because the love of God is in the saints. It is not merely abstract but is a reference to the substantive quality of life in the soul. We can partake of it today and, being partakers of it, we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.

E.F.C. Abigail recognised in David that his soul would be bound up in the bundle of the living (see 1 Sam 25: 29). She discerned something in David that far exceeded anything she had seen in a man before, did she not. She could sense that David was on the line that she wanted to be on.

D.R. That is very fine. "In the bundle of the living" is a beautiful expression of the quality of life that is to be found amongst the saints.

H.G.H. Is there a sign for the angels to see, the quality of life coming out physically?

D.R. Yes, I think there is more than one sign. If we go to Ephesians first of all, the angels see the all-various wisdom of God operating in the assembly (see chap 3: 10); that is, that those who are dependent on God and are formed spiritually are able to act for God in a wise way. Then in 1 Corinthians there is an outward sign - the token (see chap 11: 10). We have been taught that it is an indication of some

quality of life in subjection that is precious to the heart of God and the angels see it. Let us read the verse please.

C.F.D. "Therefore ought the woman to have authority on her head, on account of the angels".

D.R. I think that is an outward expression of the quality of life in subjection so much appreciated by God, and it is to be taken into account by the angels. It represents some evidence on the sisters' head, some token that the angels can see.

H.G.H. It takes in a man too, the woman is subject to the man. But the man is subject to the Lord, subject to his Head. So the idea of subjection comes out in the woman; therefore the head would urge this upon their women-folk because they are subject. But this will not happen unless the person is subject.

D.R. That is so. It is a testimony to subjection. It is there in Scripture; we do not need to force the matter. The preservation of life will bring a quality of life that is in subjection to God. What you have is the creational order: God is Head, God is Christ's head, Christ is man's head and man is the head of the woman.

C.F.D. The footnote says, 'a token of the authority under which she stands'. If it is to be taken note of by the angels, if the element of teaching is to be seen in what the woman wears upon her head, it is presented attractively, do you not think? So there would be the desire that it might be in evidence.

D.R. Just so. It may be that many of the younger sisters have never heard much about it because of our failure to state these truths, and perhaps we ourselves are not subject enough. It raises the whole question of a beautiful quality of life under the eye of God.

J.A.O. There is a difference between that and the covering, is there not?

D.R. I think there is. The covering of the head is important but a token is something quite specific, and it seems to me it becomes almost like an ordinance in Christianity. We used to be taught that there are only two ordinances - baptism and the Lord's supper - but I

think we are on safe ground in saying that this is like another ordinance: "Therefore ought the woman to have authority on her head". So it is a physical matter.

C.F.D. Which would be expressive of what is in their hearts.

D.R. The quality of life and the quality of God's work in the soul. It means nothing if that is not there.

W.McK. Are you not struck with the responsiveness of the women in chapter 38? It is not just two but crowds of women - a great result in the sisterhood.

D.R. It says, "crowds of women who crowded before the entrance of the tent of meeting" it seems to me to be presented positively to show that it might be an answer to the rebellion that was seen in chapter 32.

W.McK. Do you think that it is an answer to the attractiveness of the man Moses? It is striking that it is in connection with the laver of copper, what expresses purification and self-judgment. There is a great feminine response to that line of things.

D.R. That is very fine. The very things that enabled these women to beautify themselves and to behold their own beauty are used now for cleansing in view of suitability for the service of God.

J.A.P. We have often said that God's work began in Europe with women, the women by the river (see Acts 16: 13). How attractive that is! I think they are wonderful. Of Lydia it says "whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul".

D.R. I am very glad of our brother's reference to the token, but let us not fall into the danger of legal imposition. That would take the value away from the truth. Let us see the moral value of the thing. Mr Stoney said something like this: As soon as I attach my opinion to the truth I detract from its moral value, taking away its moral power.

So we do not need to be forceful about the thing. Here is a thing in its attractiveness and these crowds of women show that the thing has become attractive to them, they take it on as attracted by it.

A.P.D. What you say about not forcing things is most important. If we speak about sisters having long hair we might make it a rule, but it makes it very attractive if we speak about the woman in Luke 7.

D.R. Yes, and I think it relates to this quality of life that is the result of the divine operation in the soul. It is a very precious thing.

C.S.E. Matthew's gospel speaks about the birth of the Lord Jesus and it gives us some idea of the strength of the enemy's attack against the male child coming in; I am thinking of the attack of Herod. Do you think it continues right up to the present time? The angel came in and directed as to what should be done to save His life. So this would help us in the intensity of our desires to preserve the male element alive for the Lord, do you think?

D.R. I am sure that is very fine because we need to be fully aware that the enemy is unabated in his attempt to destroy what is for God.

G.H. The principle of attraction is very precious. Jesus said "and I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me", John 12: 32. It also says "they came to Him from every side", Mark 1: 45. Is attraction the thing that helps us?

D.R. Very good; the principle too of a man or a woman's desire of soul. It is a fine thing to find desire in a person. If I may speak negatively, if there is no desire in persons you can hardly help them. But where there is desire you can help. May we be encouraged to be helps, helpers of one another.

K.A.O. Aquila and Priscilla unfolded the truth to Apollos more exactly (see Acts 18: 26). I wondered if it is not a delicate matter and yet a very powerful matter to be able to unfold things, not to insist on things merely as doctrine but, as you say, feelings would enter into it.

D.R. That is a good reference because we want to see the value of a brother and the value of a sister. As exercised souls come along we want to see their value according to God. It says they took Apollos to themselves. He was instructed in the way of the Lord

and, in one sense, you could hardly say there was a deficiency in him. Let us read the passage.

K.A.O. "But a certain Jew, Apollos by name, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man, who was mighty in the scriptures, arrived at Ephesus. He was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in his spirit, he spoke and taught exactly the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And Aquila and Priscilla, having heard him, took him to them and unfolded to him the way of God more exactly".

D.R. You see it changes from the way of the Lord to the way of God. When you see persons - and we rejoice in our brethren's company - we see a certain value there. We ought to expect that in these days, persons outgrowing the position they may have been in in Christendom and separating from it. Then they unfolded to him the way of God more exactly; you see a man's potential or a woman's potential and do all you can to help that on.

K.A.O. He is set forward in ministry and that would be the normal result. The Lord said to Peter, "when once thou hast been restored, confirm thy brethren", Luke 22: 32. That would be the normal working out of the Spirit's operation in a soul and we would want to seek to further that in a priestly way and use wisdom in relation to it so that nothing is hindered.

D R. So that the potential is released. That is what these women had in mind; it was not merely the delivery of a child, a baby; what they had in mind was the potential. I trust the brethren are grasping that there is potential here today, potential in all of us. There is potential in the sense that God would recover persons. What a value is in that! Let us foster it.

G.H. They "took him to them and unfolded to him" - a very gentle service. We have a hymn that says, 'Still the Spirit is unfolding heights of glory Thou hast giv'n' (No. 211).

D.R. Very good.

K.A.O. What we are naturally in this situation is a tendency to be critical, but the unfolding, I suppose, would have a reference to how the Lord did it - they "wondered at the words of grace which were coming out of his mouth" (Luke 4: 22), and that brought about results, did it not?

D.R. I do not think the operation of principle ever disregards the care of persons; I think they go together. So if we are faithful to the principles you can be sure that God will bring the persons and help them.

J.N.C. What a wonderful potential there was at the beginning of chapter 2 of Exodus! "And a man of the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bore a son. And she saw him that he was fair". It brings to light features of Christ. I was thinking also of this other beloved woman: "and his sister stood afar off to see what would happen". Then she called the mother with whom derivation is intimately linked.

D.R. That is very fine. "Fair" is a very precious word, fair to God. And in that chapter we see three women. I would like to have read that but we did not have time, but think of three women occupied in the preservation of one child. There are the helps again. It says with regard to the midwives that God built them houses. What do you think about that?

J.N.C. I suppose He would give them an impression of His own care; as they seek to care for His things He comes in for them. Things work reciprocally in that way, do you not think, when God is in control? It is wonderful to be able to see things and ascribe them to God.

D.R. Very good. And these houses would show that God was imparting the thought of His own dwelling to them. I read a remarkable thing in Mr Taylor's ministry about these women - the substance of it was that these women do not belong to this world, they belong to a world where women save men. Is that not beautiful? That does not belong to this world. Think of having part in a world - and I think we can say it would refer to the fellowship -

where women are active to be the saviours of men. Womanhood is a beautiful thought. I am not speaking only about the sisters but also of the work of God subjectively in our souls, active to save each other.

A.S.H. God will be no man's debtor; I was thinking of verse 20: "And God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong". God's hand is seen in all this.

D.R. Just so. I think that these houses would never become relics. Egypt is a great place for excavation, it is a very old country and people go there to excavate and discover ruins, but I am quite sure they did not find the ruins of these houses, because they did not belong to this world. These are houses that God built; they were not part of Egyptian architecture, they were God's architecture; there would be no houses like them. That is what should mark our houses; they do not belong to this world. Let us get round the piano and sing, sing to God. Let us talk about God and talk about Christ in our houses. Our houses do not belong to this world; they have divine architecture in them.

A.S.H. "That world, and the resurrection", Luke 20: 35.

D.R. That is it.

G.R. A very affecting example of this occurred in the nearby city of New York; Mr Taylor was under tremendous pressure and went to the back of the room at the end of the meeting, heavy it was evident, and a sister came and put her hand on his shoulder and said, Go on, go on.

D.R. Very fine! a woman acting to save a man. Is that not a beautiful thought? We do not belong to this world. You do not find it in the world but I have found it where a woman has acted to save you, maybe your own wife, in a certain situation, a woman acting to save a man, a saviour of a man. I think it is a wonderful thought, the preservation of life. Let us be saviours of each other.

T.E.D. Peter speaks about "the hidden man of the heart", and then "holy women who have hoped in God", 1 Pet 3: 4,5.

D.R. That is just what one had in mind in this series of readings, holy women who have hoped in God, and the substantiality of God's work and the quality that is produced by it. It is a wonderful matter.

K.A.O. A sister just before this meeting said to me that what has proceeded is what we need - building. That would link on with what we are saying.

D.R. I would say very simply - and I believe others have felt it - that I have been very conscious of the prayers of the sisters in these meetings. I appeal to the sisterhood because there are certain critical things and women can save men; it is a very fine thing. They do not belong to this world.

A.S.H. In Malachi it says they spoke often one to another; and then God says they shall be unto Him a peculiar treasure (see chap 3: 16, 17).

D.R. And it says that God hearkened to them. I sometimes wonder in the conversations in the home if God can hearken to them; sometimes they degenerate. I am not saying that we should be hyper-spiritual; we have to be marked by common sense, and it is fine to speak about one another and inquire about one another and speak about our daily lives, and so on. That is all interest for one another, but it says that God observed and heard, and a book of remembrance was written.

M.N. There is tremendous dignity in these women, is there not? The woman in Proverbs 31 is clothed with dignity and strength and she laugheth at the coming day (see v 25). There is energy and dignity there. Also Deborah in Judges; although it was a time of decline and weakness yet she, a mother in Israel, arose and ensured that there was spiritual growth and spiritual energy.

D.R. That is fine! Deborah is a fine example. The thought of womanhood in Scripture opens up a vast field. We have only been able to speak of a few, but then we can do our homework and look into it. Another great feature that comes to light in the woman in Proverbs 31 is that she clothes her house in scarlet. I think that is the distinctiveness of the manhood of Christ. It stands out. We need

help to clothe one another in scarlet and foster what is of Christ in one another.

A.P.D. You spoke about what is critical; is there something in the sisters coming in spinning the goats' hair?

D.R. I wondered that. "And all the women whose heart moved them in wisdom spun goats' hair". There is the goats' hair that comes in at the end which no doubt would be the vital principle of separation.

Then there are these other things - the blue, and the purple, and the scarlet, and the byssus. The spinning would involve putting the threads into fibres, binding them together. Think of the beautiful qualities of Christ being inter woven substantially by this feminine element.

A.P.D. Formation in character has been linked with motherhood, has it not? And then also would the spinning of the goats' hair have some bearing on little things like what a child might be able or not be able to do at school, do you think?

D.R. Just so, a sensitive matter, spinning.

S.O. Something that men often lack is feeling, and women have it I think more than men. Having a child involves travail and pain, and I wondered if that would help in relation to this matter of women and their feeling!

D.R. That helps very much because, as I have said earlier, one is greatly concerned for oneself that I may not only have the knowledge of the truth but the feelings and sensitivities proper to it. If we merely have the knowledge of truth and its terms we might just use it to impress someone else, but if we have the feelings of the truth we will be set to preserve one another. And that is the feeling you speak about, the feeling of womanhood.

K.A.K. The Lord as the good Samaritan had those feelings and considered for what would come out of that poor wretched person; the priest and the Levite passed on on the opposite side, there were no feelings there. But these midwives anticipated what would come out of these male children that would be of value. I thought we get

an answer to that perhaps in the way that the Lord later on breathed into them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit", John 20: 22.

D.R. That is very fine, the Lord's own feelings involved in His service. It has been said that as He had to do with persons in their need, He felt in His spirit what He removed in His power. In the healing of the sick, while there was a physical need, underlying that was a moral condition and that had to be borne by the Lord. Think of the feeling way He did that! We need to keep near the death of Christ.

R.N.H. Would you say something about having your heart moved? Sometimes you see situations that make you feel in relation to them, but you feel the inability to be effective.

D.R. So long as you do not do anything about it you will remain feeling unable to do anything. Does that answer your question? I think it is as you seek to do something that God supports you. Let us do it, not just think it. If there is nothing else you can do you can pray about it. Prayer is a great service; it is one of the services that belongs to Christianity. Think of seeing a soul in need and not being able to do very much, but you can get on your knees and pray about it and God will help you and give you further help to do something more about it.

J.A.O. In John 11 it says, "Jesus therefore, when he saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye put him?" (vv 33, 34). I was wondering whether that would help in this enquiry. Sometimes we are affected maybe by someone going away and yet we could be callous in relation to it; we may feel it but we do not say, Where have ye put him?

D.R. And alas we may just put it where we cannot see it; it no longer troubles you. We do not want to do that; we want to face things, face them with God and help one another. I think that is a word for us in this reading, that we might be helps, not avoiding situations but set to help one another. We want to be marked by the preservation of life and the spinning of these cords, because in the preservation of

life we will begin to spin things, and interwoven into our actions comes the beautiful feature of the humanity of Christ. The brethren would know that blue is the heavenly man, but each of the colours speak of some distinct feature of the glory of Christ coming into the operations of the saints.

G.D.P. Would you say that the women in the beginning of Luke were spinning the goats' hair?

D.R. Very good. And then in Luke 8 it says women ministered to Him of their substance; there was the fruit of the spinning in that.

E.C. Rahab who put a scarlet cord in the window was marked by the preservation of life. She had the family in mind and she was marked by faith and works.

D.R. That is good; and she was saved and her household was saved. Jericho fell but Rahab's house did not fall, and yet it was part of the walls.

E.F.C. Rahab was wise-hearted in that sense. It says here "every woman that was wise hearted spun with her hands". There is not only the feeling side but there is the needed element of wisdom.

D.R. Just so. Now what do you say about the blue, and the purple, and the scarlet, and the byssus?

E.F.C. Perfect balance is brought in with a view to bringing out the best result. That is where wisdom enters into it.

D.R. What is the blue?

E.F.C. Heavenly-mindedness.

D.R. The purple?

E.F.C. Royalty.

D.R. The scarlet?

E.F.C. It has been said, distinctiveness.

D.R. The byssus?

E.F.C. Pure white linen. That is what we want, the righteousness of the saints.

D.R. It brings us back to what has been said over and over in these meetings, it is the purity and the glories and the beauties of the humanity of Jesus. Christianity is Christ.

E.F.C. All woven into the believer's soul.

D.R. In a holy substantiality. I believe there is a link between "the holy thing" and "the holy city". Of course we would need to be very guarded in what we say because "the holy thing" belongs to Christ intrinsically. Holiness as far as we are concerned is a production.

Nevertheless I believe that, in the thought of the holy city, there is the idea of the same kind of fabric, as if the holiness of the humanity of Christ is woven through and through like a fabric.

E.F.C. The divine nature shining out. The assembly has been said to be the nearest thing to Deity, but it can be said that we partake of divine nature.

T.S.O. Paul said "if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved", 2 Cor 12: 15. The unselfishness of that bound those brethren together. The midwives were not the mothers of those children. What was there for them in it? It was just the same with Paul outwardly perhaps those persons that he was ministering to were not receptive to what he was doing in his service, there was perhaps no immediate response that would answer to himself, but yet he is working in relation to God's thoughts, is he not?

D.R. Just so. Some left Paul; no doubt they did not cease to be Christians, but they wanted a greater scope. But Paul was content with the circle that God indicated, and I believe we get the preciousness of that in his prison epistles. Perhaps that is an indication for our own day, that we learn to be content with the circumscribed situation that has arisen; it involves our deliverance.

So we learn to be content and work at what God is doing, and in evaluation of the work of God in our souls just be exercised to come into correspondence with God's mind and his operation, because God is doing things.

PLAINFIELD

28 May 1990

Additional initials:

S.E.MacCready, Cape May; Stephen Oberg and Timothy Oberg,
Villa Grove

WHAT IS FOR CHRIST IN THE NIGHT SEASON

David Robertson

Song of Songs 1: 12,13; Proverbs 31: 10-18; Revelation 19: 6-8

One would just desire, beloved brethren, to say something as to what there is for the heart of Christ in the night season. Most of Scripture, I suppose, is written anticipatively of the great day of display when the Lord Jesus Christ will be vindicated publicly and when the glory of His name shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. The heart of every true lover of Christ, surely, would love to think of that. Indeed each Lord's day we shew forth His death at the Supper "until he come". We have in mind the time of His rejection, but we are looking ahead to that day when things will be displayed.

Christ will have a day; God will see to that, that blessed One who has been so humbled by men, as the word says, "endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself", Heb 12: 3. We need only to read the ends of the gospels to see the contradiction of sinners against Himself and our hearts feel it; and the more we learn to love Him, the more we feel it. But, beloved brethren, God will give that Man a day. Men gave Him a day but it ended in crucifixion - "ye, by the hand of lawless men have crucified and slain" (Acts 2: 23), and "crucified the Lord of glory", 1 Cor 2: 8. But God will give Him a day - "Jesus Christ's day", Phil 1: 6. And what a day it will be! God has operated in believers through His wonderful divine grace and has given us the company of persons who love that day; as the word says: "who love his appearing", 2 Tit 4: 8. When Christ comes to claim the earth as His own, and when His universal glory will be seen, it will be unrivalled. Powers that at the moment are against it will be dealt with at the outset of that reign: He will purge the kingdom of all offences. It is all to make way for the shining out of the glory of the blessed Man who in the present day is rejected and dishonoured. He is still cast out and rejected: He is the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

But what I wanted to speak of is what is for the heart of Christ in the night of His rejection, and may I by the Spirit's help arouse in all our hearts a fresh concern to provide something for Him in the night of His rejection. Paul speaks of the Supper in that way; he says, "For I received from the Lord, that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus". (What an affectionate title that is, the Lord Jesus!) It says, "no one can say, Lord Jesus, unless in the power of the Holy Spirit", 1 Cor 12: 3. It does not mean the actual words, it is the tone of the voice. A brother rises to his feet and says, Lord Jesus, the Spirit giving tone to the words, conveying the deepest appreciation and the deepest affection. Our young brother did it today, quickening our affections towards that blessed One ... in the night in which he was delivered up (1 Cor 11: 13). It was in the night of his rejection that He instituted the Supper.

This first section read says, "He shall pass the night between my breasts". We are in a circle where we can speak about the Scriptures and the truth in a holy way. Thank God for that, and for the Spirit of God in control of our minds and our affections. Think of what is provided in secret in the night season for the heart of the Lord Jesus, the blessed Spirit operating to secure precious assembly features in the saints. It is not known by the world, it is in mystery. That is the setting here; it is in secret. Paul speaks about the mystery; indeed the mystery was committed to him. He says, "This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly", Eph 5: 32. So the apostle, with a sense of the greatness of the commission that he had been given divinely, would show the dignity that belongs to this vessel. The scripture I have just referred to is often misquoted; we just say, I speak of Christ and the assembly. Scripture says "I speak as to Christ"; think of the dignity that Paul would convey in that! "As to Christ": he presents the holy features of the humanity of Jesus. If men sought to rob Him of His dignity, Paul would dignify Him, the Spirit of God would dignify Him, dignify this glorious Man in our affections today, point Him out so that He might gain a greater place in all our hearts. Then he says, "and as to the assembly". See how he would dignify the assembly. He

would speak of it in two ways - as the counterpart of Christ and as the complement of Christ. As His counterpart she is formed by the Spirit to meet every longing and to satisfy every affection of the heart of that glorious Man. As His complement, the assembly in the coming day will be great enough to take her place beside Him in that wondrous, glorious time of display. As we may apply the word: "upon thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir" (Ps 45: 9), taking her place there. Think of the complement of Christ, "the fulness of him who fills all in all", Eph 1: 23.

I wonder if we know anything about the inner circle where the King is at His table. He has taken His place at His table in that inner sphere to be satisfied, seeking something that is suitable for His own affections. And then (it is the feminine that is speaking here) "My spikenard sendeth forth its fragrance". I believe that is the assembly freighted with the graces of the humanity of Christ. It is wonderful, beloved, to have some sense of what the assembly is to Christ, what it is divinely, what it is as formed by the Spirit, formed in the wonderful graces of Christ, those wonderful features of His manhood, seen so beautifully in the gospels. Think of the assembly being formed in these same features. Think of Christ as He is in His present condition of manhood. Think of the graces that have been carried through to shine in Him eternally, and these graces reflected in the one who is able to say, "My spikenard sendeth forth its fragrance". I believe it is the fragrance of His own manhood and its formation in the affections of the saints that fill the heart of Christ.

Then, "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me". Think of that love that has secured the assembly, that suffering love. It says that "the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it", Eph 5: 25. Oh, beloved, that we had a deeper understanding of the suffering love of Jesus! At the moment I am not speaking of the love of Christ in His atoning sufferings, I am speaking of the love of Christ that suffered to secure the assembly for Himself. "Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it", such was His valuation of it, such was His longing for it. And think of this person typified here in this feminine speaker (I use the word 'person' to

convey the idea of an entity formed by every one who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit) being able to say "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved unto me". It is not just one feature of the suffering, but every feature of it - a bundle. Think of the wonder of that suffering love, that holy bundle treasured in the affections of the assembly, drawing out responsive affection to the Lord Jesus Himself. Then it says, "He shall pass the night between my breasts". I believe that is the thought of mature affections, beloved brethren. There is nothing more mature than love. Love in the saints is a developed idea. At the end of this book we have a little sister who has no breasts; she needs to be built up; there is care for her. We might have persons like that in our local assemblies who have no breasts, very little in the way of an expression of love for Christ. But do not let us discredit them, let us see if we can build upon them, secure holy and developed affection for Christ, a place where He can rest in the night season. Think of the world all against Him. You go down the street and hear His name taken in vain, and you shudder. The more you love Him the more you feel it. But then what is there for Christ in the night season? It says "He shall pass the night between my breasts". I believe it suggests rest; if I could use the word reverently, consolation, present consolation, present comfort for the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ as love develops amongst the saints. One would appeal for that more than anything else, that we may be concerned to be developed in our love for Jesus and to provide something in this inner sphere where He can rest and have affection and where His heart can find comfort.

To go on to Proverbs, it is not exactly the secret position. It has been well said that what we have here is a type of the assembly in her working clothes. I like to see someone in working clothes. It is fine to see a man getting his overalls on and starting a job. He knows what he is doing; he makes it look easy; he makes it look as if you could do it yourself until you try and find it is not so easy after all. There is skill in it. You see a woman putting her apron on, she gets her baking-bowl out and she starts to work. There is something very fine in a person at work. There is no room for idle persons in

Christianity. I trust there are no idle Christians here; there is plenty of work to do. Get your apron on! Get your dungarees on! Get to work for the Lord. Get to work for the saints. Help that old sister.

She is not always able to get out. Go over and read to her some night and speak with her about Christ. She will give you as much as you give her, or maybe more, if your experience is anything like mine. It is work, and Christ treasures it. It is a feature of the faithful wife coming to light in the saints. We have, too, in Proverbs the unfaithful wife who allures the soul, and the soul does not know where it is until it is in the pit. I trust you young people have not your eyes on the world. There is the unfaithful wife out there, and she will allure you and destroy your soul. But here are the features of the faithful wife. What is principally on my mind is that it says "She rises while it is yet night". The night does not deter affection for Christ. The night only makes affection for Christ long all the more that there might be faithfulness for Him in the night of His rejection.

In Revelation 19 what we have, I think, is the fruit of night seasons in which our faithfulness to Christ has been tested and when sometimes our affection for Christ has not been what it should be. But the Holy Spirit has remained in faithfulness to help us. There is wonderful fruit from being faithful to Christ in the period of the night season. Think of what it says here: "it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints". That is a plural word - "the righteousnesses of the saints". I would like to encourage every brother and sister here to commit themselves to the will of God. It is a daily matter. It seems to me a wonderful thought, that in any one day of our lives we can do something in being faithful to the will of God, a righteous act that adds to the lustre of the wondrous garment of the wife of the Lamb. Think of all the righteous acts of the saints right from Pentecost until the rapture. I suppose the best of them is when nobody has seen us doing them, but God's eye sees it. I believe that God by the Spirit interweaves that act of righteousness into this lustrous dress of the assembly, preparing her as the suitable bride ready for the marriage of the Lamb. Well, we celebrate the

Supper in the night of Christ's rejection. But this supper in Revelation is celebrated just at the outset of the wonderful day of display. May it be in our hearts, beloved brethren. May we commit ourselves to the path of righteousness. May we become like Christ. May it be that we will love righteousness and hate lawlessness. The world is full of lawlessness and idolatry - the two governing features of this present evil world. May we take on the features of Christ and learn to love righteousness and practice righteousness and know for a certainty that we are on the line of these righteous acts to have our part in this wondrous lustrous beauty of the dress of the wife, for the supper of the marriage of the Lamb.

Verse 6 gives us the sense of a wonderful divine triumph: "I heard as a voice of a great crowd, as a voice of many waters, and as a voice of strong thunders, saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord our God the almighty has taken to himself kingly power". How all evil's challenge is met, the false church judged, judged for ever and her smoke going up to the ages of ages. Think of that - Babylon in all her glory in one hour fallen to her eternal ruin, but the church rising from apparent ruin into eternal glory. Beautiful thought! May these things encourage our hearts, beloved brethren, and cause a deeper consideration for Christ in the night of His rejection. For His Name's sake.

PLAINFIELD

26 May 1990

DUTIFUL CHILDREN

Obedience to parents is the first commandment to which God has added a promise. Children at Ephesus listening to Paul's letter being read out in the assembly would learn this and be taught to obey their parents "in the Lord". This makes it more than a commandment since love for father and mother enters into the matter. We must always remember, too, that the Lord Jesus Himself learned obedience - even unto the death of the cross. He is now exalted highly and blessing flows from Him and returns to Him.

The apostle Paul, writing to Titus, expected him to find in the island-country of Crete households where there were "believing children". This is all the more remarkable since most of the people were evil and liars. One of their own prophets admitted this. God was, however, working amongst these very people and many would learn to be "ready for every good work". In the epistle these words follow immediately the rule of obedience, without which, therefore, good cannot result.

If we do not know the will of our Father, who is in heaven we are able to find out by communion with Him just as a child can ask a parent. Even among animals some learn to obey by watching their owners; with others a bridle or a stick is necessary in order to lead them in the right way. God's providence towards us is often like this. But would you not prefer, as is possible and right, to be guided with His eye upon you?

J.C.Evershed