

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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"IN THE SAME SPIRIT"

PREACHING

Willie Dickson

Mark 10: 17-23; Genesis 25: 29-34; Acts 16: 14,15

In thinking about this meeting tonight, the Spirit brought back to my mind something that was said by a servant of the Lord, namely, to remember that man is not all conscience - quite a remarkable statement! In other words, man has a heart as well as a conscience. I want to speak to your heart tonight. Maybe in speaking to your heart your conscience may be reached also. I want to ask you if you have a heart for Christ. If you have a heart for Christ, nothing but the full and complete acceptance of His work will satisfy that heart.

So we read of two young men, one in Mark's gospel and one in Genesis. What came out in the Lord's dealings with the one in Mark was that he had no heart for Christ. The large possessions he had, the works he did, were more to him than Christ. That is the lesson to be learned from the passage as we go into the detail of it. But what we find in Jacob is a young man who had a heart for the birthright; the birthright would involve Christ. Dear young people here, the birthright is yours. What is said of Esau is that he "despised the birthright". In the Epistle to the Hebrews the Spirit of God comments on this matter: He says that Esau "for one meal sold his birthright", chap 12: 16.

This young man in Mark 10 is referred to as a person. I thought it might have said a young man, but it says "a person". We are all persons here, so the word is applicable to every one of us.

Persons have to do with God and with Christ. The personal character of Christianity involves the gospel, your own transaction with the Lord Jesus Christ, some thing taking place in your heart.

Now the scripture tells us he had large possessions and these were the things that mattered with him, but apparently they could not fill his heart. Dear friend, it matters little what you have in this world, but if you do not have Christ in your heart, that heart is empty, and the gospel is to fill your heart with Christ. This young man here says,

"What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? " Is there a longing like that in your soul that, when you have tried everything, perhaps you have reached the top of the tree as people say, you still feel a longing or something that this world cannot give? "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" - something beyond the grave, and its character known now while still here. Wonderful thing that! This young man by some means knew about it, but he also knew that something was lacking in his life. Is there anybody here like that? It is the first work of the Spirit in a human soul that there is a sense of need, when it feels the need of a Saviour. If you have never felt the need in your heart for Christ, may God give you it tonight in this meeting. If you get nothing else but you go to your room tonight and say, I have an unsatisfied need in my heart, Christ will fill it.

So the Lord 'Said to him, "Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery". The Lord went over the whole law in substance to that young man and he says, "All these things have I kept from my youth". His behaviour was irreproachable. You could not raise a question with him, but he was just religious. Religious people are the hardest people to get through to with the gospel of the grace of God. He says, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth". You might have said, What a fine man, he does not need anything else, he is as fit for heaven as anybody. Was he? Oh, dear hearer, why did Jesus die? If you could have fitted yourself for heaven, why did Jesus die? Was it necessary that the blessed Son of God should endure the agonies of the cross, suffering the judgment of God that was due to you and me, if you or I could have earned our place in the divine favour by works? Is it just to think that? No, it is not. The Lord Jesus looking at him loved him. I think that is fine. It can be said of everyone here tonight that the Lord loves them. You are better at a gospel preaching than at many places you could be. It is better to be under the sound of the word of God than listening to the defiling music of this world - far better! The Lord Jesus loves to see you coming to the gospel meeting and desires to satisfy that longing which is in your heart. You have tried to satisfy it. You have tried every enjoyment and pursuit. You have

tried work; you have tried pleasure; you have tried everything. "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Is that you? That is the question that heaven is raising in this room tonight. The Lord says, "One thing lackest thou" - one thing! What did he lack? He lacked a heart for Christ. Oh, dear hearers, may the Spirit of God stir up in your heart tonight a place for Jesus! You will miss the most blessed thing that a human being can know if you do not have Christ in your heart. Do not think that Christianity is a system of things that is ebbing away. There is not a country on this earth tonight where the name of Jesus is not being spoken of. There is not a country in which someone has not spoken of the name of Jesus! I was once, in the course of my employment, at the National Bible Society of Scotland and the buyer took me into the warehouse and he said, We have the Scriptures in every known dialect. So poor, wretched people, without Christ in their hearts, can hear about Jesus. Is that not wonderful? Why should you lack Christ when you have a testimony from myriads of His lovers that there is no one like Him?

Now Jacob is a very interesting young man. In the part I did not read it says, "And the boys grew, and Esau became a man skilled in hunting, a man of the field; and Jacob was a homely man, dwelling in tents" (v 27). Esau, "a man skilled in hunting, a man of the field": he was a good sport. But one day he became hungry. You say, Esau, hungry, a man like this, a man of the world, and you are hungry? Yes, I am hungry. He says to Jacob, I want a meal of that red thing there. That a human heart, as God formed it, can seek to satisfy itself with the things that the world offers is scarcely credible. That was Esau: "that red thing", the bright lights in the streets, in the theatres, in the dance halls, at the race course, football ground, that red thing. Terrible! Young man, young woman, tonight do not feed on that "red thing". Esau was given it. God will give you what your heart wants if you will not have Christ. But Jacob said, I have a heart for the birthright, I know what it means. What is the birthright? It is Christ and all that comes with Christ - eternal life, peace, joy, the Spirit, the gift of Christian fellowship. Think of the word that the scripture uses, that he "despised" the birthright. He

said in effect that all that I have learned in my father's house and amongst the people of God is nothing to me. Is that so? I can hardly believe it, nurtured in a Christian home, and the wealth of divine giving known to you, to despise it! Far better to be like Jacob! He says, "Sell me now thy birthright", I am prepared to buy it, I am prepared to give up something to get Christ. Jacob had a long history after this. He had his ups and downs in his work and his family life, he had a very chequered life but he always had the birthright. There are some believers here (I can tell you this, young people) who can say that what has kept them in the ups and downs of life is that they have had the birthright. Everything else has gone but they have the birthright: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come", Heb 13: 8. That is the birthright.

Jacob says, I must have it, but Esau despised it. I do trust that nobody here is going to be an Esau. May everyone say tonight, I am going to be a Jacob.

We turn to Acts 16 because it has certain similarities to what we have been speaking about. What is peculiarly noticeable is that it says Lydia had a heart, a heart that was opened "to attend to the things spoken by Paul". Another remarkable thing about her is that she was "a seller of purple". I understand that selling purple in Thyatira was quite a lucrative business. Somebody might have said to her, Lydia, are you not satisfied? You have a good business, you worship God, you go to the synagogue, what more do you want? She would have answered, I want Christ. May God create in some heart here tonight a desire for Christ. Why do you want Him? Because He died for you, shed His blood and worked out atonement for you. He did all that for you when He did not need to do it, but He did it for you. In order to touch your conscience? - I trust your conscience is touched - but to get your heart! Here was Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul". Have you attended to them? What would Paul speak about to Lydia? Can I give a resume of what Paul would speak about to Lydia as she opened her heart? How her heart would expand as he spoke! He would start at the foundation: "Christ Jesus ... a mercy-seat,

through faith in his blood", Rom 3: 24, 25. How Lydia's heart would open as Paul spoke about that! "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death" (Rom 8: 2): Lydia's heart would expand at that. Then he would say, We will go on, Lydia, to speak of the Lord's supper: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of the Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of the Christ", 1 Cor 10: 16. Lydia would say, Oh, Paul, I want to break bread; my heart will not be satisfied until I do. Has your heart grown cold regarding the Supper? Then Paul would say, "Seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God", Col 3: 1. Her heart would expand at the wealth of it. And he would say, Let us go on, Lydia: "blessed ... with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ", Eph 1: 3. Oh, she would say, if that is all in the gospel, I want to be baptised right now. Is that not wonderful? It says, "And when she had been baptised and her house, she besought us saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there". You young people who have a home, whether now or in the future, I do trust that you will have Paul in the house, a man who loved Christ and the assembly. That is my message for tonight: have you a heart for Christ? Have you a heart for Jesus? Because He will fill it, fill it full. There is a hymn:

'It passeth knowledge that dear love of Thine'

It is a very sweet hymn. I can tell you that is true. Every word of it is true and it is true for you tonight if you accept it by faith. For His Name's sake. Amen.

KIRKCALDY

17 November 1991

MINISTRY IN LONDON (1)

Joseph Evershed

Luke 5: 1-11

We have just sung "Jesus of Thee we ne'er would tire" (Hymn 447).

I bring these verses forward after they have come into my reading. I was impressed with the blessing that is available. Where the Lord is there must be blessing. The thing is, are we able to take in and understand His teaching - the gracious way in which He was teaching the crowds, for instance? The early part of what I read has to do with the crowds He taught; the latter part, from verse 4, shows that the Lord Jesus was dealing with individuals as well. That is so today; there is the general aura of blessing available, but there is also the way in which the Lord Jesus would search the heart so as to bring out what was God's work in a person. It is so in the believer, it may capitalise on what is already there. The Lord was available to the crowd who were standing by the lake; they had made way for Him and we would make way for Him too.

The Lord, recognising that He would need to obtain His audience more closely, got into one of the ships. As has often been remarked, He borrowed Simon's ship and then He paid Simon handsomely for having lent it to Him in the wonderful blessing that became Simon's. "Getting into one of the ships, which was Simon's, he asked him to draw out a little from the land". It facilitated the ways of the Lord. It is a good point in Simon that he raised no objection, although they had been labouring and had caught nothing. But the blessing of Simon comes in - it says, "when he ceased speaking, he said to Simon, Draw out into the deep water". They were words of blessing: "let down your nets for a haul". I wonder whether we realise that this kind of thing is possible. Perhaps we are content with the borders of matters, but the Lord promised that he should let down his nets for a haul. Simon was not hesitant to do that although he "answering said to him, Master, having laboured through the whole night we have taken nothing". What came in when Jesus was speaking was not only the mention of blessing but that man without help has to admit that nothing can be taken, that he is entirely devoid of ability to reach hold of the word of blessing. But the Lord came in, and Peter said he would do what the Lord said.

That was a great advance in the spiritual history of Peter when he learnt to obey, although his mind had different ideas in it at first. It was so with Peter that, having done so, he enclosed a great multitude of fishes. His obedience had loosed the gates of divine beneficence and it says that he enclosed a great multitude of fishes.

What is the next sensible thing to do? The next sensible thing to do is to call on someone to join you in things: the matter of fellowship came into it. He thought, I cannot have this just to myself, I must share it with others. I wonder whether we do perhaps enough of that; we can call upon others to join us in the blessings that we receive so that we are together in them. It says "And they beckoned to their partners ... and they came and filled both the ships so that they were sinking ". That was not a matter of danger, that could be seen to in the Lord's presence. But the next stage in Simon Peter was that he "fell at Jesus' knees". He saw in this something that was beyond him in ordinary nautical practice, but God was here, in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and Simon Peter falls at Jesus' knees saying "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord". We have to admit the condition in which we found ourselves before the Lord took us up, and we have to recognise it. Perhaps recognition goes on a long time. Young people may be concerned about it, as even older ones, that apart from God's grace "I am a sinful man, Lord". These links with Jesus would mean that He was prayerfully directing things, but this is an instance of the present attitude and service of the Lord Jesus in connection with the one who calls himself "a sinful man, Lord". But in the course of this he had seen the Lord as Lord and called Him so. He saw that Jesus was over him and over him for good, and that is another thing that we have to learn.

There is more than that proposed; at the end of verse 10 Jesus said to Simon "Fear not; henceforth thou shalt be catching men".

There is a proposal there that Peter will not keep to himself his experiences or his knowledge and understanding of divine ways but he will be "catching men". He would be on the outlook for the work of God and will foster it.

Then it says "And having run the ships on shore, leaving all they followed him". That in the believer's history is a time when this happy desire is set to follow the Lord Jesus. May He help us more to have these simple things in our minds. For the Lord's Name's sake.

MINISTRY IN LONDON (2)

Henry Hutson

Romans 15: 13; 2 Corinthians 1: 3,4

I felt confirmed by the hymn and our brother's word in closing as to what is simple, just to bring these few verses before the brethren.

They have the suggestion as to the place that hope has and is to have with us. On the Lord's Day the two matters which come into

these scriptures were in our minds a little, and suggested in what we proved yesterday locally, the matter of hope, and the matter of comfort and encouragement. I just bring it forward to show that they have their source in God Himself.

Peter, we know, became a very definite believer and encouraged others in that, and as we were reminded on Lord's Day, he also set before the saints the blessedness of the hope which is before us. It is an interesting thing, that our hope springs from God Himself and what He has done. It comes into chapter 5, having faith and "peace towards God, through our Lord Jesus Christ", and then it says "hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit".

We have that wonderful combination of which the apostle speaks in 1 Corinthians 13: "And now abide faith, hope, love; these three things; and the greater of these is love" (v 13). The time will be when faith will give place to sight, but in this wonderful time faith is confirmed by the presence here of the Holy Spirit in the believer, and He makes good all that faith teaches. It says "ye should abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit". It is not by natural effort or natural buoyancy or an attempt to be brighter than others, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. As I have said, in chapter 5 that same blessed Comforter sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts. I thought it was interesting that the hope is set before us, God Himself being the source of our hope, established in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul says elsewhere, "Christ Jesus our hope" (1 Tim 1: 1), and then joy and peace. They are present realities; the hope in its fulness we await, and the joy and the peace can be known now, left here by the blessed Lord ere He went away that we might know His peace - "I leave peace with you; I give my peace to you" (John 14: 27), and know His joy. I just bring that forward as encouragement for us.

As thinking of the other scripture, one hardly knew which to read first, but it may be that the sense of comfort and compassion and encouragement would increase our sense of hope. On the other hand, if there is that which discourages it may reduce our sense of

hope. We are not to be hopeless whenever the pressures and discouragement come; as another has said, God is not the source of the discouragement; He may allow the circumstances which, because of what we are, might tend to discourage, but He Himself would assure us of the encouragement which comes from the knowledge of Himself and the comfort of the Holy Spirit and the support of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have been reminded of His advocacy and priesthood even in relation to our sinful state if it should depress us; we have the word "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things", 1 John 3: 20. He has made provision in perfect righteousness for all that which may come under His scrutiny, and through repentance and faith in Christ we have the complete answer to every moral issue and every question that might arise, and then the knowledge of His love, the knowledge of His grace and of His tender care for us. I bring it forward for our encouragement that we might go on, as the last verse of our hymn said, in the pursuit of God's will for His pleasure. Peter was brought to that. When he was young he girded himself and went whither he would. I suppose that is like us all as to what we were. The prophet says "We have turned every one to his own way"; "all we like sheep have gone astray ... and Jehovah has laid upon him the iniquity of us all", Isa 53: 6. What an answer! As I have said, it is what man is, and I suppose the apostle would have it in mind too in relation to the strength of youth when he says "youthful lusts flee, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart", 2 Tim 2: 22.

I had not meant to say so much as to that but no doubt it would enter into it, the energies of youth, the tendency to do what we like and what pleases us. We come to the point, as Peter did, that "when thou shalt be old ... another shall gird thee, and bring thee where thou dost not desire", John 21: 18. Jesus said this in relation to his death by which he would glorify God. We may not have to face that, the Lord's coming is very near, but let it be in any case that the little time that is left is filled out in a way that will be for the glory of God. In the Name of the Lord Jesus.

MINISTRY IN LONDON (3)

James S.Gray

John 17: 6-8, 14-23

The scripture just read refers to encouragement and I had a little experience of being encouraged in the prayer meeting last evening.

If we can trace encouragement to God (see 2 Cor 1: 4), then however simple our impression may be, perhaps it is right to share it with others.

The point of encouragement to me was to think of the prayer and intercession of Jesus. This chapter covers the whole course of the assembly's history here and it is a matter of great

encouragement to think that the Lord Jesus has covered the whole thing, every circumstance, every state; and He has very great and elevated thoughts in view for His own. I may say I do not feel equal to the great thought of *men*, yet I can say that I am among those who believe on Him through the word of the apostles. We can be encouraged thus as being among those who were in the mind of the Lord Jesus in this precious prayer.

We may sometimes think of the external breakdown - we cannot avoid thinking about it sometimes - but the Lord Jesus has very elevated thoughts for us: "that they may be all one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us". We sing sometimes as to the Father's thoughts of grace leaving us all far, far behind (see hymn 120), yet we are not to be left behind by the divine ideals, because we are to say, in the consciousness that the Holy Spirit is here, that these things are for us. The intercession of the Lord Jesus has covered the whole of the dispensation and things will go through in someone, things will go through collectively, because the Lord Jesus clearly has the assembly in view in this chapter. I was reminded too, and confirmed in the thought by what has come before us tonight as to Peter, that before he failed (later in the gospel) the Lord Jesus says "I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not", Luke 22: 32. That was another thing that encouraged me in thinking about this, that we may sometimes - if not externally - inwardly turn aside, or we may not be as bright as we have been. I think it would be right to use that scripture to consider that the Lord Jesus has had our personal history in mind - the whole of it - and He has it in hand. He does not justify the turning aside, inwardly or in any other way, but how assuring to Peter. I have been wondering, when he went out and wept bitterly, whether he would think about that. I imagine that would be among the things he would think about: "I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not". How precious! You might say, When did the Lord beseech for him? It may have been on some of the nights when Jesus was spending time abroad on the mount of Olives. The Lord had prayed, too, as to the selection of the twelve. So not only Peter's personal history from top to bottom and

beginning to end was the subject of the interest and intercession of the Lord Jesus, but his service too; that was all in view. How comforting and encouraging it is to think that not only our personal histories and anything we may be able to do in the simplest of ways for the Lord Jesus, but also the whole history of the assembly and the public testimony are all the subject of His constant intercession.

May these things be for our encouragement because, in view of this, things are bound to be secure. We may have to do with what is externally small, but as to the divine thoughts everything is secure on the ground of the intercession of that glorious Man who is at the right hand of God. It says in Hebrews, "always living to intercede for them. For such a high priest became us", Heb 7: 25,26. These things can be for our encouragement, to strengthen us to set ourselves still in dependence on divine power to go forward, because there is a system of support in that One who is on high.

LONDON

17 November 1992

"IN THE SAME SPIRIT"

Andrew Burr

2 Corinthians 12: 18; 8: 16-24

It is evident that, if the inheritance is to be possessed, it must be in the power of life. Only to have title to the inheritance is not enough, nor is it sufficient simply to have the form of it. God has called us to the inheritance of a living God, and the great elements of the truth that He has revealed to us relate to living matters. I do not know if I speak for others in saying that it is easier - I will not say easy - to master something of the form and the doctrine than it is to be maintained vitally in the life in which the inheritance is to be enjoyed. We often speak together about how we might be maintained more vitally. I do not think that there can be a text book answer to that question because life does not really manifest itself in that way.

Indeed, Paul says "the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens", 2 Cor 3: 6. And it is apparent also that there is no room in these matters for the flesh. The Lord Jesus says that "It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and life", John 6: 63. If I may speak for others, we long, I believe, to be more invigorated by the power of that life. I do not think that the scripture gives us any assurance that it will be easy.

We have the flesh in us which wars against the Spirit, and Satan is set, perhaps above all things, to hinder and obscure and corrupt the manifestation in life of the truth of the present day. We will remember that a brother once spoke to us about the God of the mountains and of the valleys (see 1 Kings 20: 28). I think he said that Satan may not focus upon the great salient truths because they are established like the mountains, but he will defy us to work them out.

We live in a day which is different from the one in which these letters were written, but that does not mean to say that that day was easy. The state in Corinth was manifestly very difficult. One of the things that concerns us in the present day is the proliferation of sects

and the way that that impedes the communion of believers in the great truths which are the heritage of all. In Corinth the sects were within. How difficult it must have made the working out of assembly life that the local assembly was itself sectarian. Things have become more openly divided now. The people to whom Paul wrote these letters were themselves very difficult people. They were naughty and rebellious children, they were marked by quite hurtful ingratitude. Paul loved them abundantly and he was willing to love them more abundantly, but he reckoned that if he did that he might yet find that they loved him less. He says that "if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved", 2 Cor 12: 15. We might have said to Paul, Is it not time we lowered the standard? is it not time perhaps to make do as best we can? I think it is very fine to see in these passages how Paul is able to maintain the truth as he held it, and that he had those with whom he could work it out. If the truth is to be worked out it must involve the availability of those with whom we can walk. It is one thing to say that these great truths are true of all and how we rejoice in it! There may be many people of whom things are true of which they are not aware confined as they are in systems where the light of those precious truths but dimly shines. But we hold the truth we know for them. It would be right to say that we have to hold the truth abstractly because not all are available. Even if only one was not available it would still be right to hold the truth abstractly for the sake of that brother, otherwise he has to be excluded. Would that our outlook encompassed in a right way all those to whom the precious truths we hold belong. Let us think, for example, of brethren who have left us, who will not walk with us. We hold these precious truths for them. Maybe it would give God a basis to recover them if we held this more positively.

I draw attention to these men of whom Paul writes, the three of them. I am very attracted by this reference to Titus - "have we not walked in the same spirit?" He does not say, Have we walked by the same rules? He does not refer to anything outward at all, at first, but "have we not walked in the same spirit?" Titus is commended. It is interesting that he did not have much in common with Paul naturally:

Paul was a Jew and Titus was a Gentile, Paul was circumcised, Timothy was circumcised, Titus was not circumcised. Their unity together was not an outward thing, it was not a ceremonial thing, it was not a ritual thing, it was a spiritual thing. I do not want to imply in any way that this makes it unreal; I believe it is proved by us. We may say that things arise and we do not always agree, but it is possible still to walk in the same spirit. It is not the spirit of the world, it is a spirit that has been given to us of God. It is a spirit in which we can walk and walk together. Beloved, it is a great comfort to know that, however difficult things are, there will be those with whom we can have this kind of communion, and through it to enjoy and experience the truth of what we hold. This truth, I believe, is proved to be true by being able to experience it, and that is done practically by walking in the same spirit. As we walk in the same spirit we shall also walk in the same steps. What a precious thing it is to be able to walk together! Let us value more and more the privilege of walking together. Let this walk not simply be a matter of assent, let it not be uniformity or conformity, but let us pray that it might increasingly be the fruit of walking in the same spirit.

I make reference to chapter 8 because I want to draw out how much there might be in a brother. What commendation these men are able to bear. Of the first one it says "whose praise is in the glad tidings through all the assemblies" and he was "our fellow-traveller with this grace". I suppose that refers to the money that he was taking, but how Paul elevates it. I think they were going to Jerusalem with a gift, but Paul says of this brother that he was able to bear what was "ministered by us to the glory of the Lord himself".

What a commendation that is, to be a brother in the work of the Lord Himself. Then we have this other brother. I hesitate to name any who might qualify in this way, but I could - thinking of a brother who has not long been taken from us - "often proved to be of diligent zeal in many things, and now more diligently zealous through the great confidence he has as to you". What a brother: "diligent zeal in many things"! How could you say of a brother like this that he held anything in the letter? His concern in taking up the precious truths of

fellowship and the assembly would be to hold them in the same spirit as Paul and to do it zealously.

I believe that it is people like this who ride the storms. It is people like this who come through the kind of difficulties that were faced at Corinth. It is people like this who we need in a day of breakdown, people who are steadfast, who are ready to go on. They do not just endure but go on zealously. They are an evident testimony that they are quickened persons. They walk in the power of the truth they hold. Let us make it a subject of our prayers that these things may mark us more and more. Thus we may be drawn closer together and helped to go on in power.

LONDON

15 December 1992

SORROWFUL CHILDREN

We usually think of children as being happy, which is normal.

However, in God's ways some boys and girls learn early what suffering means, be it through illness or disappointment at the loss of a dear one. In such cases comfort is to be found where love is, and especially, for the believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew what it was to be "very sorrowful even unto death". Also, from the shortest verse in the Bible we learn that, very simply, "Jesus wept". Ishmael, a sorrowing boy, was only a youngster when he had to learn what it was to be left alone and 'lost' in the wilderness. God heard the voice of the boy there where he was. In fact, his name was called Ishmael, meaning "God hears". All this must encourage the young folk to carry every trouble to God in prayer, although He sees and knows all things. By the habit of prayer they would grow up to be reliant in Him rather than self-reliant as Ishmael unhappily became.

It is of interest that the three great apostles also wept, great men as they were. In the case of Peter the tears were those of sorrow for failure to confess his Master; with Paul it was because of the enemies of the cross of Christ; John wept much until he understood that the Lord, seen by him as the Lamb, is able to solve every problem to the glory of God.

Do you know the Lord?

J.C.Evershed