

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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DISCIPLESHIP (2)

Matthew 14: 22-36; Jude 14-25

J.A.G. In the previous reading we were considering the thought of discipleship in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this gospel; the exercised disciple is concerned to reach the rock. He digs and goes deep and builds his whole establishment upon the rock. We did not touch much upon it.

I thought that in this chapter we might see in the midst of weakness how Peter had built upon the rock, and despite weakness and perhaps lack of faith he was sustained. Marvellous thing that he actually walked upon the waters! We might write one another down but it is God's intention that we should give credit to the brethren when it is due. It is a wonderful thing to see them superior to their circumstances, evidence that Christ is the object of their hearts. He has gone "up into the mountain apart to pray", bearing upon the Lord's intercession at the present time on high. We may not be too conscious of it and yet it goes on all the time; He knows our needs, He knows exactly what to intercede for. He commanded them to go before Him, which is quite a remarkable thing. We speak about how wrong it is to go before the Lord but maybe He was teaching them something in that. In any case He commanded them "to go on before him to the other side, until he should have dismissed the crowds". "The ship was ... in the middle of the sea tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary". Their circumstances are very difficult and contrary and they are not able in themselves to cope with them, and the Lord means that to happen to us. It is part of our education in discipleship. He puts us into circumstances which are beyond us. He intercedes on high; then as we move in faith He comes into the circumstances. At the end of the chapter there is this beautiful reference to "the hem of his garment"; healing comes about through it. I think that is another proof that we have reached the gain of the experience. We are just beginning to touch the assembly in this gospel.

I read in Jude because Enoch, you might say, is in type the ultimate in discipleship - "the seventh from Adam". He walks with God and "before his translation he has the testimony that he had pleased God" (Heb 11: 5), which is a wonderful thing. I thought Jude's doxology bore especially upon him, but it might as well have been Enoch's "to him that is able to keep you without stumbling".

Think of the power that is with God to keep us without stumbling, and to present us "with exultation blameless before his glory". How beautiful that is! We are to learn to keep ourselves in the love of God and pray in the Holy Spirit, "awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life". Perhaps the Lord might help us as we consider these things.

D.N.M. Peter here asked the Lord to command him; he did not just sit back.

J.A.G. I think though that Peter is really what the Lord was looking for as a result of the teaching of these earlier chapters. Peter shows that he has dug deep and is on the rock: John 6 confirms that. But what a thing it was for Peter! Think of the physical condition - to go over the rail of that boat and go on the waters and walk. How many people here would be equal to that? Jesus came down the mountain - I suppose He walked down that beach and out on the sea - physically that happened.

M.P. The Lord manifests here the feature of Jehovah according to Job 9: 8: "Who ... treadeth upon the high waves of the sea". You referred to Enoch who has the testimony that he had pleased God, and the Lord had seen these features in Peter. He attracts him to Himself, as Enoch was received to God; he had a testimony that he had pleased Him.

J.A.G. Exactly; before his translation Enoch has that testimony and that is what we should have before our translation which, as we say, is imminent. I do not know how the brethren feel but maybe there have been indications in the service of God that the rapture is much nearer than we think. We all say the Lord is coming, and that it will not be long, but how many persons have been divinely instructed in

relation to it? Mr Stoney said he knew the Lord was not coming in his day or He would have told him. These are matters that we need to consider and soberly think about. I think we will get indications in the service of God as to when the Lord is going to come.

E.C.B. You might say more about that.

J.A.G. Well, I am very hesitant to say much about it, but of recent date there has been more than one reference to John 14: 3 - "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself" - and that has come to us with a quickening touch.

W.A.M. Do you think the "thou" is important- "if it be thou"? I was thinking of Hebrews where the writer is seeking to get them out of the Jewish boat. It is to come to Him, walking on the waters.

J.A.G. That is right, that is the interpretation of it; He has dismissed the Jewish crowd and has taken up a new position, the remnant are in the ship and they are in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves. Then by way of application it bears upon us all, that we are in this situation, in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves. We are going to the other side, we are hoping to get there, we know the course, but the wind is contrary, there are adverse elements that we have to cope with, and it is not easy.

S.E.H. Is there any relationship between the period that the Lord told them to go on before in this scripture and the ten days in the early Acts after the Lord had ascended and before the Spirit had come at Pentecost?

J.A.G. I had not thought of that, you can help us.

S.E.H. The Lord was absent from this scene at that time and the Spirit had not yet come, and yet Peter had something of the Lord's direct workmanship in him which enabled him to set on the truth in view of a disciple being added to the eleven, and there was something of the Lord's personal handiwork in the disciples that saw them through that period. Is that right?

J.A.G. There was perfection of the handiwork of Christ in that period. I do not think they have arrived at that here.

C.F.D. I wanted to go back to your reference to the service of God and the coming of the Lord. Is it at the service of God that you expect to get some indication as to the Lord's return?

J.A.G. That was my impression. As I say, I would not speculate, but I only say what I have noticed, that that impression, that suggestion, has come into the service of God in the past two or three months. I do not know what the brethren think about that.

E.C.B. We have just been reading John in London and noticed the verse in chapter 16, that "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one takes from you" (v 22). (I am comparing that with your reference to chapter 14). The reference has possibly two bearings: one is that the Lord would manifest Himself to them in resurrection, but then given that in the scriptures no interval before the Lord's coming is anticipated anywhere, that reference in chapter 16 would bear on the rapture as well.

J.A.G. I think so, yes.

E.C.B. Therefore in the service of God, if you discern a special touch of joy in the brethren - making your boast in God for instance - that would bear on what you say.

J.A.G. I think it would. I do not want to say too much about it but I think we should be watchful for that sort of suggestion.

M.P. The morning star arising in our hearts (see 2 Pet 1: 19).

J.A.G. Exactly. Then Jesus says "I am ... the bright and morning star", Rev 22: 16.

G.R. Is one of the issues here faith: "O thou of little faith"? In the waiting time faith needs to be exercised. The timing is in the Father's hands; meantime, in saying "O thou of little faith ", He had to chide them about it, did He not?

J.A.G. You are in a position under command in this book; it is like the local meeting in a way. You are in it and you are safe in it; there is buoyancy in it, the winds are contrary but you have something under your feet.

J.A.P. Referring to John again: "In my Father's house there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you: for I go to prepare you a place; and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be", chap 14: 2,3. Would you say something about that passage and that the Lord said "ye know the way" (v 4).

J.A.G. Those who have opened up the truth to us have taught us that. "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself" shows how pressing, you might say, the rapture is in the Lord's own heart. How anxious He is that it should be so. Hence, "I come quickly", Rev 22: 2. Does that help?

J.A.P. Yes. I was enquiring also about the Lord saying, ye *know* where I go and ye know the way. Is that a little of the experience of the Supper?

J.A.G. For us I think it would be. We should be on the outlook for divine communications. "It was divinely communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he should see the Lord's Christ", Luke 2: 26. It is a question whether we are far enough ahead in discipleship. Bondmanship runs along with it, I think; a disciple is learning, he is being educated, but the bondman does things. "I say ... to my bondman, Do this, and he does it", Luke 7: 8. It is a fine thing to be a bondman of Christ. Simon says, let "thy bondman go, according to thy word, in peace", Luke 2: 29.

R.G.J. "Behold, the bridegroom" (Matt 25: 6) is an ever present thing, is it not? That is what we are momentarily expecting?

J.A.G. Yes; I think all that, in a way, was the motivating power of the recovery. "Behold, the bridegroom", Christ in His greatness appeared. It is like the Lord awaking as a mighty man out of sleep that shouted and smote his enemies in the hinder part (see Ps 78: 65). He cleared the way for Himself in the revival so that the church might be united to Him. The great point in the recovery is union with Christ, and I think as we touch that substantially there will be more in the way of receiving divine communications; we will have the Lord's mind about things, which is a wonderful thing. Hence, "they have

kept thy word", John 17: 6. The word is beyond the commandment: it is commandment here, and mostly with us I suppose in our circumstances it is commandment; we are in the boat and then, "if it be thou, command me to come to thee". It is a very sobering consideration that it is possible. Look around the brethren here today and you can see persons who are walking on the waters, there is moral authority, there is power, the power is of Christ and He is our objective: they are walking on the waters to go to Jesus.

E.C.B. It has been said that Peter could not have walked on the water even if the winds had stopped.

J.A.G. That is right, exactly.

E.C.B. It bears on the service of Christ to sustain us in any circumstances, does it not?

J.A.G. I think that is why we have the mountain here - "He went up into the mountain apart to pray" - it is the Lord's service on high, and He prays in a most intelligent way, He knows exactly what is needed. Then He comes into the circumstances. There are beloved brethren in circumstances that are very trying and adverse.

E.C.B. Do you think Peter is on his way to the doxology in Jude - "keep you without stumbling" (v 24)? In his first epistle it is "ye exult unspeakable and filled with the glory", chap 1: 8.

J.A.G. Yes, and I think you can sum all that up in the word that says, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come", Rev 22: 17. Would you agree?

E.C.B. Yes, there is a kind of triumph about that. It has been pointed out, in an academic study, that the principal characteristic of Mr Darby's ministry was not so much the Head in heaven and the body here but that the Lord might come at any moment, and that was revolutionary in Christendom. Hence, immediately following that, you have the whole prophetic side of things dealt with in ministry in order to leave the brethren free to wait for the Lord to come.

J.A.G. That is really helpful and shows how the Lord gave a clearance, so that the assembly was brought out in its own distinctiveness, apart from Israel; there was clarification as to the

prophetic side, clarification as to the Psalms, what to apply, what not to apply, and the assembly in its distinctiveness was then brought out. I had not realised until recently how concerned Mr Taylor was about the state of the brethren.

E.C.B. Yet he dealt with it by what we speak of as positive ministry, rather than a purely corrective line of things, and we perhaps need help in that.

J.A.G. A corrective line of things effects little. John 13 suggests that to keep on correcting people shows that you yourself are in need of correction.

R.G.J. Is that the idea of the top of the mountain? You minister from the top, do you not, in view of correction?

J.A.G. Jesus washed the disciples' feet. He went on with a positive ministry in the face of Judas, and in the face of Peter's self-importance - maybe a little bit of his pomposity - Jesus went on with a positive ministry all the way through.

D.T.H. "Grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ", John 1: 17.

J.A.G. Exactly.

J.A.P. The leading corrective epistle (1 Corinthians) gives us the Lord's supper. Which of us would have spoken of the Lord's supper to such a company? And there are other wonderful things in that epistle to rally the brethren to what was right.

J.A.G. He tells them how great they are, they are saints by divine calling, they have been enriched in Him, they have come short in no gift, all beautiful things he says about them. Then he says there are divisions among you and I believe it is true, and you have this and that and the next to sort out amongst yourselves. But he never leaves them despondent. For somebody to come along and minister and before they are finished your heart is depressed is not of God. Jesus never left anybody feeling flat.

E.C.B. So he says, "thanks to God, who gives us the victory", 1 Cor 15: 57.

J.A.G. That is right. So "be firm, immovable" (v 58) is the dry ground of resurrection. You have your feet on something. Now Peter here is going to Jesus. I think that is fine.

J.A.P. One of the hard things to get through is a personal storm in your life. Maybe that is not your subject, but could you encourage brethren about that?

J.A.G. I think it is my subject, and I have been through plenty of it, and sunk plenty of times too, and have had to be pulled up, not by my hand but almost by the hairs of my head. How faithful the Lord Jesus is! He prays for us, He intercedes for us. We mean well, we want to go, we see the wind contrary, look at the circumstances and down we go. If you keep your eye on Christ you are safe.

L.McF. What is to be learned from verse 25, "But in the fourth watch of the night he went off to them"?

J.A.G. It is a question whether you can sustain the other watches - the fourth watch: you are weary by that time. Endurance is a great thing. I think you find out if there is any acacia wood about you. These are practical matters, beloved brethren. Things get contrary in your life and they come up, and then something else comes up, and then you think you are getting clear and another load comes on top of that.

W.A.M. The Lord presents Himself personally here: "it is I", and "if it be thou", as though it is not official.

J.A.G. That is right. That is why I thought this shows that Peter is in the gain of the teaching of chapter 5, 6 and 7. He has arrived at the rock, his establishment is going to stand. It takes a battling in the storm; you may have a little storm damage, but essentially you are through, and that is Peter here. His heart was true and pure and he walked on the waters to go to Jesus. The Lord appreciated that. Immediately his eye was off Christ he began to sink: "Lord, save me", and he is caught hold of. If we have not proved the Lord sustaining us like this, we have not gone very far.

M.P. Mark, in the parallel passage, emphasised the fact that the Lord was seeing them, how they were labouring in rowing (see chap 6: 48). That is a very touching detail, is it not?

J.A.G. Yes, a fine scripture for servants. Are they pulling together in the boat, levites working together? Mark is the servant's gospel.

They were all rowing in the same direction, not one rowing one way and somebody else rowing another way; but we do not have that here. We have the boat: "the ship was already in the middle of the sea tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary". And the Lord goes off Himself: "But in the fourth watch of the night he went off to them, walking on the sea". It reminds me of some of our experiences when things seemed quite hopeless. An old brother said to me, We are looking for better days; I do not know how they are coming, but I know they are coming. And so they did.

E.C.B. It may be the fourth watch of the night, and the circumstances may be very difficult, and there are brethren here with quite intense personal exercises, but the Lord has not forgotten you.

J.A.G. Exactly, He is praying on high, He is interceding, and He knows how to pray, He knows exactly what is needed. We should have faith in that. We pray, and at times you feel you are being helped in your prayers, and at other times you pray (I do not know about others, I am speaking about myself) and you think there is nothing in this prayer, I do not know if the Lord hears me. At other times you feel, yes, I think I am carrying this exercise fairly responsibly; you are undulating and then something happens and the Lord comes in.

M.P. Does not the fourth watch imply that the morning is at hand?

J.A.G. Exactly; that was your thought about the morning star. He comes in and there is light. There is just a break in the sky; you see one in your prayers.

K.A.O. In our prophetic meetings should we be exercised that something may come in in this relation to help us meet local matters and to go on in relation to the truth?

J.A.G. Yes, and what should underlie our prophetic meetings is this great matter of prayer, which is very important. What Dr Pavlik says is something we should think about. Light begins to dawn on you, you know the sky is absolutely black and then you see there is a crack. He commands the morning, causes the dawn to know its place, takes hold of the ends of the earth and the wicked are shaken out of it (see Job 38: 12,13). You can see it is a bit lighter, and then you get a little more light "and all things stand forth as in a garment" (v 14).

M.P. 'Midst darkness faith clearly sees beaming, The light of Thy coming afar'. (Hymn 131)

J.A.G. Yes, it is what we are saying, and you know better than I do what we are speaking about. It is a very practical matter. Brethren are in difficulties, in adverse circumstances, they want to do what is right, they want to be for the Lord, and He leaves them in that circumstance. Then He comes and He proves that they have dug deep and are on the rock.

D.T.H. What bearing would the presence of the Lord at the Supper, in which He may make Himself known, have on what is prophetic amongst us?

J.A.G. I think it is for individuals to work that out for themselves. But I can say humbly that I have never known it to fail. It may seem next to nothing, but if you are with God about it, it works.

D.T.H. I notice that Mr Taylor, in his very early ministry, said that he sought to work out throughout the week impressions that he had at the Lord's supper.

J.A.G. Though you cannot limit the Spirit, you cannot limit the Lord or the Father. Let us say it would be normal to work out your impression from the Supper. It is Christianity; initially the touch comes from God, then you go to the Scriptures, and to the ministry, and you find somebody else has been through this. Things are opening up in your soul. I think that is how a prophetic touch comes in that is going to help the brethren.

K.A.O. The prayer meeting follows closely on the Supper and we get an impression from it, the exercises of the saints coming out in the prayer meeting which follows on the Supper, and then the ministry meeting.

J.A.G. The ministry meeting is always a test to us. I do not know about the brethren, but mostly you feel you have nothing. Then it is the same ones that have to carry on although there are many brethren there. Somebody said to Mr Lyon how nice a horse this was, a racehorse, look at the fine lines, and he said, That is fine but it is the old grey mare that does all the ploughing every day. That is discipleship. Things have to be carried out practically, and there is nobody more practical than God Himself. That is another thing I have learned.

E.C.B. I suppose it is true, though, that the manifestation of the Lord at the Supper is in relation to eternal things, not temporal things.

J.A.G. Well, it is not in relation to your bread and butter, of course.

E.C.B. It is not even in relation to your circumstances; it is in relation to eternal things. Is it not that you get a greater impression of things that are beyond failure that helps you to go through the scene with the Lord where failure is?

J.A.G. Yes. I will not limit it too much. Mostly, of course, it is in relation to the assembly and God, but if you are with the Lord it is wonderful what you can get.

E.C.B. I am sure that is true, that if you are with the Lord there is no limit to what you might get, but I think the great thing in the service of God is that the tops off the mountain should be seen, and we should get there.

J.A.G. Yes, that is true.

E.C.B. We are not looking for something from the Lord at the Supper that is going to help us in difficult problems through the week, save that we have freshly experienced a world where there are no such problems.

J.A.G. Well, it might take you down to a sea; it says there is a fish, take a stater out of its mouth and pay the taxes (see Matt 17: 27). I do not think you can limit the Lord.

G.R. Is it not the truth that He comes to us both from the testimonial sphere and from the sphere of glory? He is not beyond what the saints feel. There may be a lot of pressure but He would take us to where there is no pressure at all. He is very feeling in relation to that, is He not?

J.A.G. Yes, I am sure, but then you have to work this thing out during the week, in the prayer meeting and the ministry meeting and the reading meeting, and if you are large-hearted enough you will visit the brethren and see how they are in their circumstances, and bring this in if you can. I do not know if that is acceptable or not. That is how the truth works, I think.

E.C.B. I think so. But my impression is that, at the present time, the brethren will get most help in every relationship by approaching things from the top. If we are looking for things that will help us circumstantially we may miss the highest things that the Lord would engage us with. "He made as if He would go farther", Luke 24: 28.

J.A.P. The accounts of the Lord's manifestation at the Supper in the gospels vary, John giving us more perhaps what Mr Burr is speaking about. But the other gospels help us to reckon with our state. I have heard Mr Taylor at the Supper refer to current conditions because it was needed, not because it was normal. But still the Lord would be gracious with us. Sometimes our state is not always up to what it should be.

J.A.G. I think so, because brethren are under pressure and they are not always up to the top of the mountain, and Luke is like that, He comes into their midst. In John 20 it is the midst. We need help to be like that, we need to have sympathetic affinities with one another in adverse circumstances, and the Lord would sustain us, and that is all related to the priesthood.

R.G.J. Would an impression from the Lord immediately get us over to the other side, as the scripture says (see John 6: 21)?

J.A.G. That is the point. If you get a touch from the Lord you are out of the pressure of the circumstances. You have to know it is from the Lord. When it is from the Lord you surely will know it and so will the brethren, because there is quickening power and He is a life-giving Spirit.

G.D.P. So in our chapter you have to go up into the ship with the Lord before the wind is calm.

J.A.G. It is fine to call attention to that because there is no moderation in the weather conditions until the Lord is in the ship. There was Peter walking on the waters to go to Jesus and the wind is still contrary; he sees the wind contrary and begins to sink, and he cries out "Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught hold of him". I think that is a great comfort to everybody.

R.N.H. Does the apostle in 2 Corinthians 4: 17 bring out the practical side as to the momentary and light affliction working for us an eternal weight of glory? Then he speaks of looking at the things which are unseen (v 18); so he approaches it from both sides, from the more down-to-earth side that we speak of what we pass through and then the top of the mountain side as to the things which are eternal.

J.A.G. Yes, and I suppose if we are very spiritual and have gone on to full growth, both these sides will coalesce. But you have a family, young children, and they are going to the meeting and various pressures and circumstances are upon them; the Lord takes account of that.

H.J.G. The One who is on high praying for us is the One who supplies the grace. Peter writes to those in dispersion, the Jews, and they were under much pressure in every way, and he says to them "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ", 2 Pet 3: 18.

J.A.G. Yes, indeed. It must have been very trying for them.

G.R. It may be necessary that He would say to us "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!", Song of Sol 2: 13.

J.A.G. Yes. When you want to go to the Lord you are above the circumstances. The teaching of Romans 5 is that you are reigning in life by the one Man, Jesus Christ (see v 17). That is what Peter is doing here; he is saved in the power of His life until he gets his eye off Christ. When he does that he begins to sink.

E.C.B. One thing in which the manifestation of Christ at the Supper always affects you is that it is worthwhile to go on.

J.A.G. Yes, the Supper itself is strengthening food. There is the Lord's touch, and then I have heard you say before that there is a spin-off, which is quite a good expression in a way. It goes into other things. The brethren are sustained as they go through the week in the strength of that food. So we have the prayer meeting and the ministry meeting and the reading.

K.A.O. Would you help us in a practical way as to getting a touch from the Lord. The Lord is not here, He is absent. I was wondering whether the touch that we receive is dependent upon the saints themselves. Would that be right?

J.A.G. Well, I do not know because I do not get many touches. But we get some, and I suppose basically it is a question of devotion and love for Christ, if you are looking for them. In my case I would have to say mostly it was the Lord's sovereign grace that gave me a touch. What do you do to prepare yourself for the Supper? You are looking for a touch from the Lord, you are looking to meet the Lord.

You need faith and the Spirit. We know what we can say about it, you go there like a blank sheet and the Lord writes something on you and so forth - all very true - but what happens if you come away and nothing has been written? It is very practical; you are cast upon the Lord. If you are engaged with Him to the exclusion of everything else all these things happen.

M.P. And the desire to be with the Lord: "Lord ... command me to come to thee".

J.A.G. "If it be thou" he says, "command me to come to thee": - that is from his own heart.

M.P. Not only upon the waters but to Thee.

J.A.G. "Take courage; it is I: be not afraid", He says. What confirmation that is! "Peter answering him said, Lord, if it be thou, command me to come to thee upon the waters. And he said, Come". Peter went, and walked upon the waters. That is fine!

W.S.C. You have been emphasising the person of Jesus throughout, and I think that cannot be emphasised enough. My own experience is that sometimes I have been so busy trying to get a profound impression, that it has suddenly dawned on me that I had even missed the Lord, maybe through something a brother said, and then I realise that that is the Lord. "It is the Lord", John 21: 7.

J.A.G. Well, I had an impression for these meetings from a brother who was giving thanks on the Lord's day, and he would not know. He gave thanks for the loaf and in the course of his thanksgiving he said, We are glad to be numbered amongst Thy disciples. Just one word, that is all it was, and that struck me. I thought, could it be? Then I said, no that cannot be, I have nothing about that. Yet that is what the Lord gave me for these meetings, and I think that is how it is. As was said earlier, the Lord, speaking about 'the bright and morning star', says "I Jesus". Somebody knows who He is

K.A.O. What is being said is very helpful: you do get a touch sometimes, through a thanksgiving or maybe a hymn.

J.A.G. That is right. You do not have to give a miniaddress at the Supper or anything like that.

W.A.M. So you recognise that that brother has seen the Lord. In John 21 John recognized the Lord. Peter did not. But Peter moved immediately in relation to John's impression.

J.A.G. I do not suppose the brother knows that I had an impression from him. Towards the end of that meeting, two weeks ago, another brother, who very rarely takes part, spoke about the riches of God's inheritance in the saints (see Eph 1: 18). That is something else that

struck me, and I said, can I tie these impressions up together? Then my mind began to work in it and it was lost.

E.C.B. What about the hem of His garment?

J.A.G. I think that is a fine touch. It is the first time it is mentioned in this gospel. Why should that be? There is the hem of His garment, there are golden bells and pomegranates, and the sound is heard, (see Exod 28: 34, 35). There is power to heal. You are in the presence of the anointing in that regard.

E.C.B. That is a very interesting connection. You are likening it to the high priest's garment. That connects with His interceding on high.

J.A.G. Exactly, that is the whole section here.

E.C.B. The synoptic gospels record that people sought that they might touch Him or touch the hem of His garment, and also bring forward a specific woman who did (see Matt. 9: 20, 14: 36; Mark 6: 56; Luke 6: 19, 8: 44).

J.A.G. So there is power and virtue in the body of Christ; amongst the brethren here there is virtue. You can touch Him in this company, touch the hem of His garment. It is not on the earth as we well know, but it is in close proximity to the earth. It is like the precious oil.

E.C.B. The bells and pomegranates on the hem of the high priest's garment would indicate that while he was out of sight he was still active. That is the epistle to the Hebrews.

J.A.G. That is right. The sound is heard and there is healing. He is inside and He is interceding. That is a fine touch of the Spirit: "that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched were made thoroughly well".

J.A.P. Do you think "Peter standing up with the eleven" (Acts 2: 14), is the hem, or the finished work of Christ in His people? Others touched that. What was manifest at Pentecost was the hem.

J.A.G. That is right. He was on high and the hem was there. Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (see Acts 1: 15), and then he stood up with the eleven.

M.P. It was a tassel of blue.

J.A.G. Yes, on their garments.

W.A.M. I suppose the man at the beautiful gate, when Peter said "Look on us" (Acts 3: 5), touched the hem of His garment and he stood in perfect soundness before them.

J.A.G. Yes, so he is walking and leaping and praising God, made thoroughly well. That is beautiful. The hem of His garment is here.

This is a fine section, the Lord is on high and the saints are here in adverse conditions and He is sustaining them; they go to the other side, there is the hem of His garment, and people who touch it are made thoroughly well. That is available to Toronto or any other place.

D.T.H. Does standing up with the eleven link with brethren dwelling together in unity (see Ps 133: 1)?

J.A.G. I think standing up in the midst of the brethren is with the eleven, that is the preachers. Of course they are dwelling together in unity. Peter stood up with the eleven, and the background to that is the brethren, that is, the brethren sustain the public testimony, the preaching.

E.C.B. It is of interest, too, in regard to the high priest's garment, that in Exodus 28: 32 it says, "it shall not rend". Is that the brethren together in unity?

J.A.G. It surely is.

E.C.B. Now, what about Enoch?

J.A.G. Well, the doxology interested me - keep you without stumbling, set you blameless before His glory. But Enoch is the seventh from Adam, and he has the Lord's mind about the whole position. He says, "the Lord has come amidst his holy myriads, to execute judgment against all", and so forth. So that he is thoroughly

with God in the whole of his judgment. He builds himself up in his most holy faith, he prays in the Holy Spirit, and keeps himself in the love of God. Enoch therefore is a pattern for us.

G.R. Enoch as a disciple, as you said, is superior in that; he goes out of sight. Is that not linked with your thought as to discipleship, nothing of self, everything of that Man?

J.A.G. Yes, Enoch is the same as everybody else, he has a family and he walks with God in family life. He has all the exercises that persons have who bring up children, they have families and grandchildren, he has all that kind of exercise. It says that he begot sons and daughters and he walked with God (see Gen 5: 22), and he has the testimony before his translation that he had pleased God. That is a fine thing, and I think this doxology bears very much upon it. Peter would take up the words of it, I am sure.

S.E.H. Is Enoch in accord thus with God's judgment that was about to come in in Noah's day, and would that bear on how we should be in accord with God's thoughts as to this present world that will be judged by His public appearing?

J.A.G. I thought so. We did not have time to touch it in the previous reading but the severity with which we move in self-judgment reflects, or should reflect, our judgment upon the whole scene. It is a severe thing to cut off your right hand if it offend, or if your eye you pluck it out. Things are dealt with severely. I thought that was the force of the Spirit of Christ, like Joshua, in the believer; He is an exterminator. This doxology is a fine thing: "to him that is able to keep you without stumbling".

H.J.G. Do you relate that to the way Peter was able to appeal to the Lord to help him on the water?

J.A.G. Yes: it is something that he had arrived at in his soul, and that we are to arrive at. It is true that He is able to keep us without stumbling. If we stumble it is because we get our eye off the Lord and we fail, and then we look to Him and He saves us.

H.J.B. It is not just an underlying factor of faith, but it is a very real matter each day.

J.A.G. Yes, but He maintains you walking in the power and dignity of the anointing, and that is a tremendous thing. Anointing is dignity.

J.A.P. Why is it "unto eternal life" here?

J.A.G. I think it is the full idea of it.

J.A.P. Do we not enjoy it now?

J.A.G. Yes, but I think eternal life in its fulness will come in in the day to come. It is enjoyed now, of course. How much we enjoy it is a question of measure.

E.C.B. It could be regarded as the object of the exercise of the believer, could it not? It says, "building yourselves up ... praying ... keep yourselves ... awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ". Now, why "unto eternal life"? - that you really want to get into the truth of Romans this way. Is that right?

J.A.G. Yes, that is fine, because eternal life is the end in the gospel, and if you are walking on the waters you are enjoying eternal life. If you are not walking on the waters you are not enjoying eternal life.

W.A.M. God is able to keep us, but we are to keep ourselves in the love of God. That would be by the Spirit, would it not?

J.A.G. Yes, we are to know how to do it; the love of God is a defined area. "Keep yourselves in the love of God", do not get out of it; that is why we need to have what I call the judiciary department, set Joshua over it, maintain the borders.

R.N.H. Would that provide a basis for a doxology?

J.A.G. I think the doxology comes out of a full heart, because you are enjoying "to him that is able to keep you without stumbling", consciously saved in the power of life. That is what Peter was while walking on the waters.

E.C.B. Do you think that Enoch experiences Him that is able to keep you without stumbling? This chapter does not touch Enoch as Hebrews touches him, but was not Enoch in the power of that, that

he pleased God and he walked with God? How? He was kept without stumbling. Is not the emphasis therefore, to Him that is able to keep you without stumbling?

J.A.G. That is exactly what I thought. This doxology might have come from Enoch's own mouth, or Peter's. Peter proves the supporting power of Christ to keep us without stumbling, "and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority". What a heart that is, going out to God with deepest thanksgiving and praise and worship because of what that heart has proved in the support and sustenance of the grace of Christ!

E.C.B. Do you regard the reference to God our Saviour as His power to sustain us day by day, rather than the side of forgiveness of sins?

J.A.G. Yes, I think it is the present salvation of God. It is a fine thing to speak about; Simeon spoke about his eyes having seen God's salvation (see Luke 2: 30).

E.C.B. Paul says "this salvation of God has been sent to the nations", Acts 28: 28.

J.A.G. Yes, exactly. What wealth there is in the truth! We can get waters to swim in in these scriptures.

TORONTO

11 October 1991

LIFE

Jim Brown (Edinburgh)

Genesis 41: 45-49, 53-55; Judges 15: 18,19; 1 Samuel 25: 29

Life is unmistakably connected with God. We hope in a living God. The Lord Jesus refers to His Father as the "living Father", John 6: 57. The Lord Jesus Himself is the "originator of life " (Acts 3: 15) and the Spirit is "life -on account of righteousness", Rom 8: 10. "God is a spirit" (John 4: 24) suggests what is essential, the essence of life . Life is inherently and intrinsically there. In the creation what God had primarily in mind was an environment in which life could thrive, and, especially, life in men. He "created the great sea monsters, and every living soul that moves ..." Gen 1: 21. Life was there by command. But in relation to man the action was more delicate, more sensitive: "And Jehovah Elohim formed Man, dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and Man became a living soul", Gen 2: 7. Man became a living soul by the breath of God. Man has a spirit in a way which the lower creatures do not have. Ecclesiastes says, "Who knoweth the spirit of the children of men? Doth it go upwards? and the spirit of the beasts, doth it go downwards to the earth? " chap 3: 21. So man was there as the vehicle through which the choicest of God's thoughts could come to full realisation in a way of which no other creature was capable.

That sin intervened to despoil the choiceness of human life in that original condition is an incontrovertible fact. Sin invaded the rights of God and despoiled these conditions which God had created. Adam's life was forfeited judicially and morally when he partook of the forbidden fruit. "For this cause, even as by one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and thus death passed upon all men", Rom 5: 12. Then it says, "but death reigned from Adam until Moses", Rom 5: 14. Death reigned. That merciless, arrogant tyrant actually reigned over a system of things that God had created. It is an extended thought, its long hold upon men seeming to give it a power that could not be broken by the resurrection of

Christ. Yet still it exists: "The last enemy that is annulled is death", 1 Cor 15: 26. Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years and still death overtook him; Methuselah nine hundred and sixty-nine years, yet death ultimately claimed him. Today men die; everyone; nothing more solemn, more poignant than when a man or woman dies, particularly when there is no evidence of reliance upon the work of God. What a prospect! If you die in your sins, you will be raised in your sins and judged in your sins.

But God in Christ has triumphed, overthrown the power of death and "brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings" (2 Tim 1: 10) and we live today in the light of a risen Christ. Paul speaks about the "life which is in Christ Jesus", 2 Tim 1: 1. Every man and woman and boy and girl can enjoy that wonderful life by putting their faith in the finished work of the One who has been into death and annulled "him who has the might of death", Heb 2: 14.

The believers in Jesus can walk "in newness of life" (Rom 6: 4) in a scene that is morally dead and defective. But no consideration of life would be complete without reference to the Lord Jesus. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" John 1: 4. It was not a vapour. Man's life is "even a vapour" (Jas 4: 14) after the flesh, but there was a substantial expression of a perfect humanity before God in the Lord Jesus in His life down here. He grew up "as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground", Isa 53: 2. How the sap coursed Godward! He derived nothing from the circumstances in which He was found, yet the grace of that life was diffused on a scene beset by sin and death. I wonder if all here know Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who has been into death and vanquished its power and opened up the way into a realm of life. Do you know Him? Let Him become more precious to your heart! Let Him "reign without a rival there!" (Hymn 368).

In Joseph's history the chief of the cup-bearers had a dream and in it a vine was before him. It says "and it was as though it budded; its blossoms shot forth, its clusters ripened into grapes", Gen 40: 10. How redolent that is of the humanity of Jesus! It budded! Every sprout of life was there! Luke tells us that he

"advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men", chap 2: 52. It was the normality of a perfect life before God, every relationship filled out in perfection in every detail. In the carpenter's shop, not a wrong action observed! In his dealings with men, every grace displayed. Then "its blossoms shot forth". There was something distinctive to be noticed in Him. See Him in the temple hearing and answering questions, astonishing with His answers.

'A child in growth and stature,
Yet full of wisdom rare:
Sonship, in conscious nature,
His words and ways declare'.

But then the clusters ripened into grapes. There was something mature, exquisitely fruitful for God; the grapes were pressed into Pharaoh's cup. The cup was in His hand and that precious life was pressed. If Adam's life was forfeited, then the life of the Lord Jesus was surrendered. It was laid down in death. "On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again", John 10: 17. He laid down that life that the will of God might be accomplished and the way of life be opened up for you and me. 'For Him death was death', Mr Darby said. 'Man's utter weakness, Satan's extreme power, and God's just vengeance, and alone, without one sympathy, forsaken of those whom He had cherished, the rest His enemies, Messiah delivered to Gentiles and cast down, the judge washing his hands of condemning innocence, the priests interceding against the guiltless instead of for the guilty - all dark, without one ray of light even from God'.

He Himself said "I am the first and the last, and the living one: and I became dead", Rev 1: 17,18. Stupendous thought - the originator of life becoming dead - as the note says, 'became what He was not before'. It says, "he should taste death for everything", Heb 2: 9. How solemn to contemplate the originator of life, the Lord of life and glory, actually tasting the horrors of death. Leviticus 8 is a wonderful chapter! There we have Aaron the high priest - typical of Christ - clad in the high priestly garments. Then Moses poured the anointing oil on Aaron's head. He was anointed with oil without

blood. It was there typically a Man in the vigour of life, untainted by sin and personally immune from death. We come in on the basis of the blood; like Aaron's sons we need the blood and the oil; but He, initially, could be anointed with oil alone, reflecting His immaculate humanity, that He was sin apart, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners", Heb 7: 26. He went into the grave that the great area of life should be opened up for men. Let it affect our deepest emotions! - that the Lord Jesus actually died, tasted death for every thing (see Heb 2: 9), for guilty sinners, for you and for me, that we might live in a life which is according to God.

But then He was raised - "raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father", Rom 6: 4. What a moment that was when the glory of the Father breached the confines of the grave and brought Christ out in a condition which answered to the eternal purpose of God. That life was such that it must go on, yet in a different condition. The condition to which our guilt was attached was laid down, never to be revived, and He was raised in a condition which answered to the eternal counsels and purpose of God. What a Man! He could say, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up", John 2: 19. It is the inherent life that was in Christ, which could not be suppressed. Typically He said "take me not away in the midst of my days!", "He weakened my strength in the way, he shortened my days"; but then the divine answer rings out: "Thy years are from generation to generation", Ps 102: 23, 24. How great heaven's delight in uttering such a response, in declaring that the moral worth of that life was such that it must go on through all the generations! He lives! He lives to intercede for us that we might be maintained in life and vitality before God!

Well, here He is in our first scripture as typified in Joseph, the Sustainer of life, the Saviour of the world and the Revealer of secrets. There is actually a Man today in heaven who is sustaining life! Colossians tells us that "he is before all, and all things subsist together by him", chap 1: 17. That is to say He is holding everything together by Himself in life. In his dream Joseph said, "my sheaf rose up, and remained standing", Gen 37: 7. It describes the inherent life

which was in Jesus. Nothing could extinguish that life, it must go through death and rise up triumphant to sustain everything in life for God's pleasure. So here He is called Zaphnath-paaneah, Sustainer of life: and, wonderful fact, he went out over the land of Egypt. Nothing misses His gracious eye! Today - I apply it - He is going out over the land of Egypt, having to do with mankind in all its frailty, bringing hope to those who have no hope, carrying peace to those who are distressed. The cares of believers, the sorrows of local assemblies, He sees them all as He goes out over the land. It implies His interest as well as His authority. But then He is also passing through the whole land of Egypt. One's mind goes to John 4: And He must needs pass through Samaria (v 4). Why? There was some soul there needing the touch of the Sustainer of life. I wonder if there is some weary heart here, beset perhaps by the burdens of the testimony, family sorrows or personal grief. The message of the day is that He is passing through the whole land of Egypt and He is concerned about your welfare in order that there might be this answer in life to Him, a fruitful, productive response to all that He has done. What does He find as He goes through our localities? What did He find in Egypt? - a little stony ground here maybe, a corner overgrown with weeds there perhaps, but under His benign influence in the seven years of plenty the whole land becomes productive of food to sustain every soul in life. So the land brought forth by handfuls. We touched on that in the reading. It is a remarkable expression: "by handfuls". There was the whole land of Egypt, fertile, productive, fruitful, producing corn "without number", and yet the Spirit of God describes it in that particular way. It is as if God is looking ahead to the years of famine to say, I have produced the precise answer to this or that specific emergency, to every difficulty you may face! What confidence we can have in such a God! What confidence we can have in the One who is the Sustainer of life. The exigencies and sorrows of the testimony to day are many, but there are available the "handfuls" produced to meet them, under the direction of the true Joseph. Later we read, "And the arms of his hands are supple. By the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob", Gen 49: 24. How fine to think of these hands in operation, delicately cut

and flexible, bringing out the handfults to provide the exact solution to that particular difficulty which had seemed insurmountable. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35. These hands today are dispensing grace, dispensing mercy, and are able to provide the answer to every current problem.

Then it goes on to speak of "the food of the fields of the city, which were round about it". The city, it seems, is actually encompassed by the fields. The suggestion is that the city is dependent on the fields for its sustenance. A prerequisite for every local assembly that the food supply should be adequate. Proverbs says, "Prepare thy work without, and put thy field in order, and afterwards build thy house" (chap 24: 27), as if to say you must secure the food supply first of all. Do not get immersed in city affairs until the food supply is right. Proverbs again speaks about the much food "in the tillage of the poor". We would take no greater position than the "tillage of the poor", but from the tillage, gone through with God, food will be produced. We remember these faithful men in our localities, down through the years, who tilled and watered to create the fertile conditions which would produce food for the days of famine. How much has come down to us in the recovery as we speak of it, and in the great ministries. Then we have, too, the rich pastures of the Scriptures as read in the power of the Holy Spirit. It says in Ecclesiastes, "the king himself is dependent upon the field", chap 5: 9. Think of the Lord Jesus, speaking reverently, being able to use that which is produced through the field for the upbuilding and benefit of His people! How challenging in one sense it is that the fields must be there for the city to function properly! How necessary it is to ensure that the climate and environment among us are conducive to the production of food which will sustain the saints in the days of famine. "And Joseph laid up corn as sand of the sea exceeding much, until they left off numbering; for it was without number". It is grace abounding. Whatever the contingency, there is food to meet it. It says in verse 56, he "opened every place in which there was provision", as if to say in every city, in every locality, there is provision to meet the needs of the moment. "And the seven years

of plenty that were in the land of Egypt were ended; and the seven years of the dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said.

And there was dearth in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread". How fine that is! It is a mature thought. It starts off with food and then it is corn, but now it is bread. It is all found in Christ.

He says, "I am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believes on me shall never thirst at any time", John 6: 35. "For the bread of God is he who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world", John 6: 33. Dearth and famine around; but in Christ there is bread to be found. Every need can be met incoming to Him and in all that His providence has made available to those who have their faith and trust in Him.

So the people went to Pharaoh for bread and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians: "Go to Joseph: what He says to you, that do".

That is good current advice! Our salvation and welfare lie in going to Him! He has the wherewithal to meet every need. He is "selling" corn today. That is an interesting suggestion. He actually sold it.

We speak so much - and rightly - about what is free in Christianity, but here Joseph is actually selling the corn to the Egyptians. It seems to suggest that there should be exercise with us to go through things with God. Proverbs urges us to buy the truth: "Buy the truth" (chap 23: 23), as if to suggest that, in going through matters with God, something will be assimilated into our beings which will build us up constitutionally and enable us to survive famine conditions. In Judges we see Samson after his great exploits against the Philistines, in which he had slain a thousand men. But he thirsted.

He came to it that conflict in itself is not sufficient. Conflict will not sustain us. The elation and the exhilaration of victory pass and a certain weariness sets in. It says, "And he was very thirsty, and called on Jehovah, and said, Thou hast given by the hand of thy servant this great deliverance, and now shall I die for thirst ...? The heavy burden of things weighs in upon us often, assembly exercises, individual sorrows afflict us, and we say, Is it all worthwhile? We thought satisfaction would be ours now for ever after all this conflict, and yet now we are thirsty and drained. What is the answer? -

calling upon Jehovah. The answer here is immediate. It says, "And God clave the hollow rock which was in Lehi". How affecting that is! Samson is not asked, as Moses was, to strike the rock. Here it is what God Himself does. How interesting to follow up what God Himself does in Scripture! At the end of Revelation it is God Himself who "shall wipe away every tear from their eyes", chap 21: 4. There is going to be a day when God Himself, in that gentle, sensitive, sympathetic way of His will wipe away every tear, and joy will pervade the whole eternal day. So it was God Himself here who clave the hollow rock. Swift answer to him that calls upon Him: "And it shall be that whosoever shall call upon the name of Jehovah shall be saved", Joel 2: 32. "And God clave the hollow rock": the hollow rock seems to suggest what is irrevocable and inexhaustible: he clave it, and it will never be shut up. It is 'the caller's spring' and it is there to this day. So the waters are flowing out, these refreshing waters are flowing out in abundance. Our brother referred in the reading to the passage in Jeremiah where Jehovah says, "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, to hew them out cisterns, broken cisterns that hold no water" chap 2: 13. In Christ, in God, we find the fountain of living waters, able to satisfy every thirst. It says in the Psalms in another setting: "He clave rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the depths, abundantly", Psalm 78: 15. Water for every exigency, for every testimonial need can be obtained from this rock: and it is there to this day! It says, "and his spirit came again". The prophet speaks about "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones, Isa 57: 15. Samson, as recognising his need, took his place in humility before God, and God responded forthwith. His spirit was revived. His affections, his spirit, the whole man was now animated and invigorated to face the next exigency. Well, we can call upon that spring at any time. It is the caller's spring. Samson, it seems, did not name it. The inference is that God named it. It is God's testimony to the continuing availability and volume of the supply; and it is thereto this day. I suppose the matter that lay now

before Samson was far more testing than the exploits against the Philistines. It was the judging of Israel. It says, "and he judged Israel in the days of the Philistines twenty years" as if a condition of soul had now been reached through access to these waters which fitted him to judge Israel. If there is a need at the moment it is for right judgment; and judgment in this context seems to spring from access to the waters. Earlier on in this book, in Deborah's song, it says "Ye that ride on white she-asses, ye that sit on carpets, and ye that walk by the way, consider. Because of the voice of those who divide the spoil in the midst of the places of drawing water; There they rehearse the righteous acts of Jehovah, His righteous acts toward his villages in Israel. Then the people of Jehovah went down to the gates", chap 5: 10,11. They go down to the gates as having divided the spoil at the places of drawing water. There is an atmosphere of richness and magnanimity created, flowing from the enjoyment of eternal life conditions and the current activities of the Spirit of God. From that propitious start point they go down to the gates. Administration and judgment are entered upon from that great exalted background. May we be affected by the caller's spring which is in Lehi to this day, easy of access, always available, and boundless in resource. The Spirit searches "all things, even the depths of God", 1 Cor 2: 10. The waters from that hollow rock stretch right down to the very depths of God!

In the last scripture it is "the bundle of the living". That is a very fine expression: "the bundle of the living"! It implies a collection of living souls, living in an environment of life. In one sense it is a great extensive thought: one loves to think of the glad tidings going out to those who are dead in offences and sins, to men and women who are morally dead, bringing them into life and placing them in the "bundle of the living". He has "quickened us with the Christ ... and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2: 6); He has brought us into the "bundle of the living". In another sense it is a great sphere of practical salvation, the Christian circle as we speak of it. Maybe even it is our own locality! Here Abigail is concerned to prevent David from shedding blood. It says,

"And if a man is risen up to pursue thee and to seek thy life, the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in Jehovah thy God". How fine that is! How many murderous elements there are in the world, seeking to seduce us and draw us away from what is really life. And yet there is the power of secret prayer uttered on our behalf to prevent us from being allured away. When we are young, I do not think we really comprehend the prayers that go up on our behalf by fatherly men, by older brethren, pleading that we might be maintained in the pathway of life, in the way of more surpassing excellence, and in the way everlasting, so that we might be preserved in the "bundle of the living", retained in testimony for Christ, and kept in the great area of life. Some of us have proved that. We have been brought back to take our place vitally in the "bundle of the living". There they were at Troas in the upper room and Eutychus, sitting at the window-opening, fell out and dropped from the third storey to the bottom. The many lights were there, yet despite all the brilliance something was not quite right. The window was open. A discerning soul, a priestly person, ought to have detected that. The need is to try and forestall these disastrous things happening. A priest should be able to do that. He fell from the third storey to the bottom. What was to be done? It says, "But Paul descending fell upon him, and enfolding him in his arms, said, Be not troubled, for his life is in him", Acts 20: 10. He could detect that life was there. Others standing around might have said, It is hopeless; nothing can be done. But that great servant of the Lord descending went down and enfolding him said his life is in him.

There is that affecting scripture in Job which says, "For there is hope for a tree: if it be cut down ... through the scent of water it will bud, and put forth boughs like a young plant", chap 14: 7,9. O, that we had that ability to bring the scent of water- just the scent of it - to these roots apparently lifeless, and cause the tree to bud and spring into verdant life again. So it says, "And they brought away the boy alive", - alive - "and were no little comforted", Acts 20: 12.

He was really brought back in that sense to the "bundle of the living", restored to a system of life. Maybe as we look around we

observe some of the ties in the bundle becoming a bit loose. Things begin to fall out a little and get a bit shaky; young people disheartened and discouraged perhaps. How fine to operate in a way which seeks to ensure that they are securely tied into the "bundle of the living"! Our affections turn to the Lord Jesus Himself.

There was the man on the road to Jericho. The priest and the Levite passed him by. The man was half-dead. Maybe they thought he was dead but the scripture says he was half-dead. Half-dead means that he was half-alive. There was a spark of life there which could be nurtured and the good Samaritan journeying came up alongside him, poured in the oil and wine and brought him to the inn. I suppose, in principle, he was bringing him back to the bundle of the living, that happy environment animated by the Spirit, that great area of life where we find practical salvation at the present time. May we find our links and our abode there! - a temporary place, but we look forward to the day when we go on high, when we will live in conditions of life into which nothing of death and sin can intrude.

But it says, "bound in the bundle of the living with Jehovah thy God". The "bundle of the living" is connected with Christ on high, with the Man in the glory: "I drew them with bands of a man, with cords of love", Hos 11: 4. He Himself has brought us into the "bundle of the living". What Christ has done to place us there, what sacrifice was His! He went down to the depths. O how far he descended! - "The weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains", Jon 2: 5 - in order to open up the way for us to take our place in the "bundle of the living", to be bound up with Him there, in a sphere energised by the Spirit and where He is supreme.

May our hearts be freshly attracted to these things: the Lord Jesus, the great Sustainer of life; the caller's spring beckoning us to an area where life can be enjoyed; where we can find our place vitally and in reality in the "bundle of the living", as bound up with Christ, the Man in the glory, the One on whom everything depends, the One who has carried through everything for God in life. For His Name's sake!

WOODSTOCK

17 October 1992

FORGIVEN CHILDREN

I remember hearing of a Jewish boy named Simeon who, when quite young, read in a book that his ancestors of long ago had known what they did when they placed their hands on the head of the scape-goat and thus transferred their guilt to it. The thought rushed into his mind that he too could transfer his sins to another. Soon, when he heard that God had provided a Saviour for mankind, he said, 'Then, God willing, I will not bear my sins on my soul one moment longer, for I see that God laid them all upon Jesus'.

The three hours of sin-bearing at Golgotha seem in one sense a very long time because of the intense suffering. At the end came the loud cry - central one of the seven speakings from the cross - "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?". In another sense we are made to wonder that the time, concentrated as it must have been, was enough to account in detail for every sin of every forgiven person.

It is very touching to our affections that, whereas Adam was driven out of an earthly paradise on account of sin, the Lord Jesus came freely out of a heavenly paradise to take the same matter and to do so to the glory of God. Jesus made it by "Himself the purification of sins". Another goat, the former of the two at the day of atonement, was slain as a sacrifice for sin and its blood, type of the precious blood of Jesus, was shed. Have you the peace of knowing this?

J.C.Evershed