

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THE NORMAL ACTIVITIES OF THE SPIRIT
AT A BURIAL

THE NORMAL ACTIVITIES OF THE SPIRIT

Romans 8: 12-17; Galatians 6: 7-10; 2 Corinthians 3: 17,18

J.R. Our hymn helped us to understand what God had in mind in purpose, given to the Son, and, in a sense, given to the Spirit too, that He may bring to pass the formation that was in mind in divine purpose. I thought we would inquire together as to the normal activities of the Spirit and that we should put ourselves in the way of these activities. It is normal to be led by the Spirit of God as in Romans 8 - "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God". But then we have to learn to operate by the Spirit - "if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live": that is our part of the matter. We are to put to death the deeds of the body; we cannot do that of ourselves, and the Spirit will not do it for us, but we have to learn to operate by the Spirit to put to death the deeds of the body that we may live. Then certain normal activities follow - led by the Spirit, we cry, Abba, Father, and the Spirit Itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. These are the Spirit's normal operations which we put ourselves in the way of by certain actions of our own. In Galatians is the great matter of sowing to the Spirit. I would like to inquire about how we do that. When we sow anything we have a certain crop in view, because what we sow we reap. Therefore it is good to be intelligent in sowing, to sow to the Spirit so that of the Spirit we reap eternal life. Then in 2 Corinthians 3 there is what the Spirit will do, but there is our part in the matter - "we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image". Again, that is the Spirit's normal activity, to transform us, but then that depends, on our side, on looking on the glory of the Lord. That is what is in mind to inquire about.

C.F.D. Do you think that being led by the Spirit of God is in the wilderness setting of things? As we learn to be led by the Spirit of God in the wilderness, will that have its reflex in the service, because we are learning intimacy and nearness which will carry through?

J.R. Exactly. I suppose "led by the Spirit of God" refers to the last phase of the wilderness journey. In chapter 20 of Numbers Moses failed and Aaron died and Miriam died. There is no mention of the ark, there is no mention of the cloud; they sang to the Spirit and from that point they made progress in journeying. I think this refers to the last phase of the wilderness journey.

C.F.D. That helps us to understand how the Spirit relates Himself to the final movements of the testimony here. Do you think that, in the sphere of testimony, we are led by the Spirit, but when it comes to the collective side of things we are led by the Lord?

J.R. Surely, we are gathered for the service. The Lord takes over, I understand; His headship operates. But in that last phase of the wilderness journey as I said, Moses failed, Aaron died and Miriam died; there is no mention of the cloud, there is no mention of the ark which had been mentioned in chapter 10, but they are in principle led by the Spirit of God. It is like our own time; we do not have outstanding leaders like Moses and Aaron and that kind of thing, but the Lord calls our attention to the Spirit of God. Shall I say, it is more difficult? It causes more exercise to be led by the Spirit than it did to follow a lead in ministry for instance. It works in localities too, certainly at occasions like this, but the leading of the Spirit operates in a local gathering it seems to me.

C.F.D. Leadership of the Spirit operates in our local gatherings: now just open that up a bit.

J.R. Well, we know that everything administrative and everything in the service of God operates in our localities. In the end everything comes down to our local settings, to individuals, of course, but to our local settings. We do have the privilege of other gatherings together, like this occasion, but things work out locally, do they not?

C.F.D. I am just trying to get help on this thought that the Spirit of God is regulating things locally. The Spirit of God is establishing things in a locality and His work is coming to light, but you are expecting the Lord to lead us as we are together collectively,

whether it is in a reading like this, in the service of God, or in the ministry meeting. Is that right?

J.R. I think so. We have no universal leaders nor one with the gift of government; I do not think so. Government depends on localities, and the quality of the government depends on the quality of the persons in the locality. This is a testing matter actually. Previously we had men who could call attention to principles applying and so on, but local difficulties now are worked out locally. So much depends on conditions in our localities.

L.McF. We speak of the Spirit coming in and helping us, but room has to be made for Him. Conditions have to be such that He is free to serve, do you think?

J.R. Yes, I think so. Did not the princes dig the well? - "Well which princes digged", Num 21: 18. That was the exercise of persons who have gone before us to make room for the Spirit. I like to think of room for the Spirit but also putting ourselves in the way of the Spirit's activities to give Him the advantage. We either give advantage to Him or to the flesh, do we not? The flesh and the Spirit are opposed to each other. Anything of the flesh or the first man hinders the Spirit's activities.

L.McF. I was noticing that. It says in verse 6: "For the mind of the flesh is death"; and then in the next verse: "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God". It is negative in a way but still we need to see that such a line of things does not get us anywhere.

J.A.P. What you say is confirmed in Acts 15, is it not? In the discussion the apostles referred to the Holy Spirit, and then when the meeting is over they said, "it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit" (v 28). Would that be what you have in mind?

J.R. I think so. "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" was the conclusion, was it not? I think it is more difficult, more testing, to be led by the Spirit than in former years when we followed universal ministry. Of course we have it all in print now, but currently, as far as I can see, things depend on what is local. Hence the need for the building up of personnel in our local assemblies. I

say again, the quality of government in the locality depends on the quality of the persons in the locality. We have had abundance of instruction; we have the advantage of the teaching of all those who have gone before, but we do not have their personal influence. The object in reading ministry is not just to get our heads filled but to take on the features that were displayed in those who ministered. It is a deeper exercise than just to quote.

C.S.E. I was looking at Acts 13: 2: "And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said". That speaking would come through someone in the locality, but the background is that they were ministering to the Lord. Do you think that is basic?

J.R. That is good. Now that you have called attention to that scripture, who was ministering to the Lord and fasting? Were they these five persons mentioned? It says, "Now there were in Antioch, in the assembly which was there, prophets and teachers" -there are five names mentioned "and as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting". Does that refer to these five persons? They were in the assembly in Antioch but it seems to refer to the five persons mentioned. In other words, they made themselves available to be sent by the Spirit by the attitude of ministering to the Lord and fasting. What do you say about it?

C.S.E. I thought there might have been more persons there at the time but these were prominent. I suppose the ones mentioned were the ones who were used to bring in the mind of the Spirit, but I am not too sure.

J.R. It seems like that. It says, "Now there were in Antioch, in the assembly which was there", certain persons; and then, "as they were ministering to the Lord" - they were in the assembly, and they were persons who were exercised so that the Spirit could call them in view of service. So He comes to persons in localities. What do you say?

C.S.E. It sounds good. They were in a state, as you have been saying, to be used by the Spirit; the Spirit had ready access, if I might use that word, to these men to use them to bring in the mind of the Lord.

J.R. Exactly. Two were sent and three were left, because to care for the local setting is very important, is it not? There were two to go to the work but three were left there; in fact the first mentioned and the last mentioned were sent, the others were left there to care for and keep the locality right.

J.A.P. Officially the Lord gives the lead in the assembly, He leads the praise, but in a way the Spirit, if made room for, might help us to arrive at something. Maybe you could distinguish that a little more for us.

J.R. It seems to me the Spirit is immediately with us; He dwells in the bodies of the saints. The Lord is not immediately with us, He is with us mediately. The Spirit, shall we say, is nearer to us than any other One of the Godhead. Is that true?

J.A.P. That is very helpful to me. The Lord Jesus comes and goes but the Spirit is here all the time as we gather.

J.R. Yes. He dwells in the believer and dwells in the company.

C.F.D. When the objective response to the Holy Spirit was being opened up amongst us, reference was made to the Spirit's 'augmentary service'. Does that fit in in relation to what our brother said?

J.R. I would think so.

G.D.P. In the wilderness setting it says, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee to the place that I have prepared. Be careful in his presence, and hearken unto his voice: do not provoke him, for he will not forgive your transgressions; for my name is in him", Exod 23: 20,21. Is that the thought of the Spirit's presence?

J.R. That is very good and very important; it has often been referred to as the Spirit; "Behold, I send an Angel before thee" - a capital A, is it not? In verse 23 it says, "for mine Angel shall go before thee"; it is not any angel, it is "mine Angel". That is what the Lord says in Revelation: "I Jesus have sent mine angel", chap 22: 16. Perhaps it is a special intimacy.

J.A.P. That is very good.

J.R. That is our side of the matter, is it not? The Spirit will lead us and it is proper to sonship to be led by the Spirit, but our side is to put to death the propensities of the body, anything that would obstruct, anything that would hinder the normal operation of the Spirit of God. It goes on to say: "ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father". That is again the Spirit's normal activity. "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God". Room is made for all that by our putting to death the deeds of the body, that is our side of the matter; and then it is what the Spirit is active in, His normal activities.

C.F.D. How do you employ the power of the Spirit in putting to death the deeds of the body?

J.R. As far as I can see, you must intend to put to death the deeds of the body. You must intend to keep subject the propensities of the body. We must first of all have that desire and have that intention.

Then we find practically that we do not have the power to do it ourselves, we have to learn to do it by the Spirit. The Spirit will help us as we do that but we must first of all desire and intend. Do you agree?

C.F.D. You are helping us because it is a very practical matter. What you are saying seems to me is involved in the fact that the Spirit does not assert Himself; the desire has to come from our side and we employ His power to work through the matter. But He does not assert Himself as to our matters, does He?

J.R. That is right. You see it with Rebecca. "They called Rebecca and said to her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go, Gen 24: 58. But later on it says, "Rebecca arose... And the servant took Rebecca". When she arose the servant took her to her destination, but He waits until she arises.

K.N.P. She was ready with the answer to that question. It is a question whether we are amenable to be taken by the Spirit. She had some experience with the servant earlier at the well.

J.R. She was not the product of the servant, she was the product of the well, I suppose. She lived by drawing from the well. It was not the first time she had come to the well when the servant arrived, but the servant took her on as she was able to answer to his own desires. I think the well is a local idea. I do not want to say too much, but men find water and then they build their cities where the water is. It is a local idea. Rebecca lived by the local well, you might say, and she was formed in a certain character by living that way.

L.McF. Moses sat by the well in early Exodus and that was the commencement of operations in him, do you think?

J.R. Yes. It was a big change for Moses to sit by the well. The seven daughters of Jethro came along; the shepherds hindered, but Moses arose and helped them. He did not slay the shepherds as he did the Egyptian, which he could well have done, I suppose. A different character was formed by sitting by the well.

L.McF. Putting to death the deeds of the body is not a once and for all matter. It has to be maintained as long as we are here.

J.R. Exactly. It flows from being minded to do so; I have a certain purpose in mind and to arrive at it I am minded not to allow the propensities of the body to operate.

J.A.P. Would what we are saying open up John's ministry a little? After chapter 13 the Lord Jesus dwelt much on the Spirit, as if to say, the apostles will have their place but it is the Spirit finally who will help us to the end of this dispensation. Is that it?

J.R. I am sure.

J.A.P. Is what you are saying that, when the well is sung to in Numbers 21, leadership in the ordinary sense receded?

J.R. That is right; and they are able to overcome Sihon and Og later on. They were to overcome these giants in principle in the power of the Spirit, two big men - self-importance and self-indulgence I suppose. It is like putting to death the deeds of the body. If the body had its way it would be self-important and self-indulgent, but by the Spirit we have power to overcome these giants.

A.S.H. To communicate spiritual things by spiritual means (see 1 Cor 2: 13) you would have to be indwelt by the Spirit. I was thinking of what John says, "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day", Rev 1: 10. But as a continual thing is a different point, is it not?

J.R. Yes. We read this morning about Simeon: "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. The Spirit must have had His way with him; there was no hindrance on his side. The Spirit will communicate with us if we are in a suited state, as you say.

C.S.E. So practically at the Supper, if I take part early I need the Spirit's help to be maintained throughout the service; if I take part late, then I need the Spirit's help to maintain me right up to that point.

J.R. I am sure that is so. It is quite remarkable how the service of God is maintained actually. Our difficulty to maintain things is more through the week though, because things work at the Supper pretty well, I would think; it is one of the occasions when the body functions, because no one is prominent, we are all helpers one of another and promote the one thing.

D.McF. I wondered if you could help us as to being taught by the Spirit. Is that something different?

J.R. I would not think so. The scripture quoted from 1 Corinthians 2 refers to being taught by the Spirit and is very important. It says, "which also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, communicating spiritual things by spiritual means. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him". Then he speaks about the fleshly man, which is somewhat different. The natural man is what the note indicates: 'the man animated merely by his created soul, without the teaching and power of the Holy Spirit'. We have the advantage in having the Spirit and to be taught by Him. In fact it goes on there to say, "But we have the mind of Christ". By having the Spirit we think as the Lord does; this is a lot to say but it is possible. "We have the mind of Christ", it says, the thinking faculty. What do you say about that?

C.F.D. It is certainly a great test. It is marvellous to think that the thinking faculty or the mind of the Lord is available to us through the power of the Spirit of God. I think it enhances the whole thought of the Spirit.

J.R. It says earlier in that chapter (v 11): "For who of men hath known the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? thus also the things of God knows no one except the Spirit of God". In other words, if I had your spirit I would know exactly how you acted, what motivated you. Well, we have the Spirit which is of God. It is an amazing thing. "We have received", it says, "not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things which have been freely given to us of God; which also we speak". We do not realise the value of having the Spirit which is of God. He has given us not only His Spirit but He has given us of His Spirit.

C.F.D. What is the difference?

J.R. Well, it is a little nearer: "I will pour out of my Spirit", Acts 2: 17. It is because we have the Spirit which is of God that we have the mind of Christ.

G.D.P. I do not know whether this is right, but Caleb had "another spirit in him", Num 14: 24. He could communicate what the divine mind was, whether they should go up and so on.

J.R. Exactly.

J.A.P. I was told that what men call prohibition is really a substitute for the Spirit. If we want to be right we seek grace from the Spirit to help us to be right.

J.R. Exactly. It says in 1 John 4: 13: "Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, that he has given to us of his Spirit". What can we say? "Given to us of his Spirit"; does He share His Spirit with us? Is that going too far?

C.F.D. No. It is raising enquiries in our minds. Does "of his Spirit" relate to the fact that it takes the whole assembly for the Spirit to find its abode? We have "of his Spirit", each has part in that sense. Now

the Lord was great enough to have the Spirit in its entirety, but it requires all the saints at the present time. Is that what is involved in this expression "of his Spirit"?

J.R. I suppose it is in the fulness of it. It says, "if God has so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, that he has given to us of his Spirit", 1 John 4: 11-13.

K.N.P. Would "of" be something of the character, and should that character come out in us?

J.R. I think so.

J.A.P. According to the section that you referred to in 1 John 4, "the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world" (v 14). We could not get into that testimony unless this other side is right, love amongst ourselves. These things are in the power of the Spirit.

J.R. Quite so. Now in Galatians we have sowing to the Spirit. We are sure to get the crop we sow. It is good to be alerted as to what we are sowing because we will surely reap that crop, it is inevitable. Maybe later in our lives we wish we had sown a different seed.

C.F.D. In that section why does he begin the verse that way: "Be not deceived: God is not mocked"?

J.R. It would alert us, would it not? "Be not deceived: God is not mocked" does not mean that He does not like to be mocked; He is not mocked. "Whatever a man shall sow, that also shall he reap". It is true; whatever we sow when we are young we reap according to that crop.

C.F.D. I am sure it is so. But it is something we do not think very much about when we are young. In the world they say that a young man has to sow his wild oats, but that was never intended to be in Christianity. Surely if you put a certain seed in the ground, that is the seed that is going to come up; you cannot change that.

J.R. No, you cannot.

K.N.P. Is it of note that in chapter 5 he refers to the fruit of the Spirit, and then in chapter 6 to the sowing? Is it an encouragement to sow in the right direction? If you know what the fruit of sowing to the Spirit is, it helps and encourages us to go in for it.

J.R. I think that is right and very important.

L.McF. There are those who are habitually at the meetings. I think that is part of sowing to the Spirit.

J.R. I am sure it is. It goes on to say, "he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life: but let us not lose heart in doing good; for in due time, if we do not faint, we shall reap. So then, as we have occasion, let us do good towards all, and specially towards those of the household of faith". It is a very practical matter; it is how we live really. We are sure to get a crop according to what we sow.

L.McF. It is not all negative; the positive side is in view.

J.R. Yes, exactly.

J.A.P. I suppose that one of the concerns we all have in our localities is not just to attend the meetings, right as that is, but to come up with some sense of freshness. Would what you are saying help us?

J.R. I think so. So we read 2 Corinthians 3, these two important verses: "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory". It is how we become like the Lord and become like each other too. But it depends on our looking in that direction: "we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face". That is, His face is unveiled. Transformation takes place by the Spirit effortlessly as our outlook is on the glory of the Lord. When a seed produces fruit, it is effortless, it is life. And so with this transformation, it is what the Spirit does inwardly and, as far as we are concerned, effortlessly. Our side is to look on the glory of the Lord.

C.F.D. Therefore again we have to come to the fact that there has to be the desire for this. Moses said to Jehovah, "Let me... see thy glory", Exod 33: 18. That showed the inward working of the man's

affection, did it not? He had a desire to see the glory of the Lord. Do you think this is important for us? This is a collective idea, is it not? As we come up to the Supper should there not be this desire in our hearts to see the glory of the Lord?

J.R. I am sure. It is only one hour a week. I think "we all" is not collective. It is not 'you all', it is not the locality in Corinth, it is "we all", that is all believers individually; that is as I see the context of it.

We apply it, of course, to coming up to the Supper, which is very true, but it says "we all", that is all believers. It includes Paul and those writing with him and the Corinthians - "we all". What do you say about that?

C.F.D. That is the way we have been helped to understand it, that it involves all believers. I think, what you are saying is certainly right.

"We all" is open to all believers, but behind it there has to be a relationship with the Spirit of God.

J.R. If we all answer to verse 18 we will all be together. We will be transformed according to the same image, that is like the Lord Jesus and like each other; that is the work of transformation.

J.A.P. I need a little clarification on this. Paul was writing from Ephesus and is saying to the Corinthian brethren, "we all"; he is including himself and them, but would you allow that we touch this in the service of God on Lord's day morning?

J.R. O yes! it works then, but that is one hour of the week.

K.N.P. Would Romans help us? It says, "be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind", chap 12: 2. That would be all the time, would it not, and involve the Spirit?

J.R. Exactly. But if this was our occupation we would become more like the Lord Himself and more like each other. This is the direction in which we are meant to be looking constantly, looking on the glory of the Lord. That is how near the Lord and the Spirit are if, very closely linked, are They not?

C.F.D. You are making this very practical. You are speaking about the Supper involving one hour of the week. Now we are in our

homes on Monday morning. Do you look for the glory of the Lord at the family reading and prayer? How is this worked out?

J.R. It seems to me it is looking in that direction, occupied in that direction. Of course you have work to do and duties to perform, and so on, but the main line of our thinking is verse 18.

C.F.D. That is very helpful.

C.S.E. In Hebrews 12, with regard to the race, it says, "looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith" (v 2). It is the same idea. The note says, 'looking away from other things and fixing the eye exclusively on one'. Would that help us?

J.R. That is just the idea.

G.D.P. Do we see that in Stephen? "But being full of the Holy Spirit, having fixed his eyes on heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God", Acts 7: 55. He becomes like the Lord later on.

J.R. He certainly was like the Lord. He had the same kind of spirit like the Lord had: "lay not this sin to their charge". Martyrs must have been maintained by this attitude; bound at the stake, enduring excruciating sufferings, they were able not only to suffer but suffer in a right spirit, the Spirit of Christ. Wonderful, really! And they prayed for their persecutors.

G.D.P. The first scripture says if we suffer with Him but it refers also to our being joint heirs with Him.

J.R. Quite so. I think "we all" is individual, that is, we all individually have our attention in this direction. How we answer to it, of course, is another matter, a matter for exercise I suppose, but it is the only way to be transformed according to the same image. Transformed is progressive; it is cumulative and progressive.

C.F.D. The note is 'metamorphosis' which may be a progressive idea.

J.A.P. In Exodus 34, when Moses came down from the mountain, there is the thought of the glory, but it was restrained in the people

because of their state, but here it is not to be restrained. There was distance with the people and Moses, but Paul is at something very close here, our relations with the Lord Jesus.

J.R. If the people had Moses' spirit they could have looked on his face. We have the Spirit of the Lord, we have His Spirit, and therefore we can look on His glory. If the people had had Moses' spirit they could have been formed in that spirit, but they had not that spirit. They were at a distance, as you say. But we are not of letter but of spirit, the Spirit quickens; the Lord is the Spirit.

J.A.P. Which divine Person is that?

J.R. It seems that the Spirit and the Lord are so closely linked that it is difficult sometimes to distinguish, but I think when it says "even as by the Lord the Spirit" there are two Persons there, the Lord Jesus and the Spirit, so closely linked together. Our looking is to be on the Lord Jesus personally; the Spirit operates in us in view of formation. What do you say about it?

J.A.P. I am helped by what you say. Then it says, "but where the Spirit of the Lord is"; that is very close too. Sometimes we are cut and dried a little bit, but there is mystery in this great matter, is there not?

J.R. Surely.

C.F.D. So you could only look on the glory of the Lord by the Spirit; that is the only spiritual vision that we have, is it not?

J.R. Hebrews says, "we see Jesus... crowned with glory and honour", chap 2: 9. That must be by faith and by the Spirit. There is a very close link between the Lord and Spirit in this chapter. He said earlier in the chapter; "Ye are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, being manifested to be Christ's epistle ministered by us, written, not with ink, but the Spirit of the living God". Then it goes on to, "the Lord is the Spirit, but where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty". Transformed is that we are progressively changed. It is applied to the Supper - I suppose it does apply then, we are transformed at the Supper - but we come

back to where we were before. This involves a continual and progressive transformation, does it not?

C.F.D. You are helping us, giving us a general application of something that is to go on all the time. If five minutes ago you had put that question to me - we are transformed according to the same image - I would have related the idea of metamorphosis more to the time when we are progressing through the service of God. We are going forward, there is change, and it all involves the Spirit of God, involves looking on the glory; it is a progressive idea during that period of time. Would it be right to think that?

J.R. At the end of it we come back to it, we are formed.

C.F.D. We are still sitting on our seats: is that what you mean?

J.R. Yes. This involves, as far as I see, a progressive transformation - progressive and cumulative. Would that we progressed more in this way and were together more and like each other, because we become like the Lord by reason of the Spirit's work of transformation.

A.S.H. He makes Himself known in the breaking of bread. As He comes in we would view Him in the progression that we just spoke about and we would be in unison moving on together. We view Him through the eye of faith and the Spirit. Would that be right?

J.R. Yes, faith and the Spirit go together. It has been said - and I think there is some truth in it - that the Spirit helps us according to the measure of our faith. All we have down here is in faith. We do not see anything by sight yet: we will eventually. We see each other of course: that is very important, and to get the best of each other too. The fact that we are reduced in numbers gives us a fresh appreciation of each; maybe the Lord intends that.

J.A.P. What you are saying about the service of God expanding is very interesting and it leads to greater things, which is like the house in Ezekiel, the only house that expands as it goes up. I think it is very fine, that the Supper is in the wilderness and all the preciousness of it, but what it leads to is wonderful to think of.

J.R. It says, "according to the same image from glory to glory", that is progressive from one glory to another, is it not? I do not deny that it takes place at the Supper, but this is what is meant to come into our lives, that there is progression from glory to glory. We are together for an hour in the week at the Supper and we usually do well then, but it is through the week where we need this transformation. Would that be right?

L.McF. So we begin at home; we do not wait until we get to the Supper.

C.F.D. We come from a sphere of glory; there is glory in the houses as there was amongst the children of Israel; we come up with that into a realm of glory and that leads on to the glory of sonship. Is that the way this expands?

J.R. Well, do we go back to the glory of our houses again?

C.F.D. We would have to go back.

J.R. Yes, but it seems to me that "from glory to glory" is progressive; you do not go back to anything, you keep going on; it is cumulative, progressive.

C.F.D. I need help as to what you are saying because, if we get into what is heavenly in the service of God, which is the intention, we do not stay in it all the time; we have to come back to our circumstances, but we can come back as heavenly personalities. Would you say that?

J.R. That is quite true.

K.N.P. Is the key the "looking on"? Looking would be all the time, would it not? That is how it would work out and would maybe apply when we get home too.

J.R. That is what I would say. After the Supper we very soon drop down, do we not? There we certainly make progress on the way up, but when the meeting is over we very soon come back to earth.

C.F.D. After the meeting is over you can hear all kinds of conversation going on that really does not belong to heaven at all.

J.R. Exactly. This does not contemplate that; it is transformation, progressive transformation from glory to glory, not to come back to what we left.

K.N.P. Do we come back with something more than we left with?

J.R. Yes we do.

K.N.P. That involves progression, does it not? Our appreciation of Christ is increased as we look on Him and His glory.

J.R. Quite so. And we get impressions at tile Supper, too, which are very valuable, something to work out through the week.

K.N.P. As we get more impressions it would help us to keep looking, so it is a self-fulfilling thing, is it not?

J.R. I think so.

PLAINFIELD

13 November 1993

(These notes have been revised but not by Mr Renton)

Key to initials

C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; C.S.Elliott, New York; A.S.Hinkson, New York; D.McFarlane, New York ; L.McFarlane, New York; J. A.Petersen, Plainfield; G.D.Pfingst, Plainfield; K.N.Pye, New York; J.Renton, Edinburgh.

AT A BURIAL

of Mr J.C.Evershed

(1) Eric Burr

Philippians 3: 8

Our beloved brother is with Christ. He has been an honoured and respected man, a pattern left for us. We were reading last night in Acts 20 how Paul says that he had been among them in all lowliness. Our beloved brother has left that pattern of things amongst us. I trust it will become a pattern. One thinks of the general spirit of our brother, humble, unassuming, desiring to give no manner of offence in anything, as it says about love in 1 Corinthians 13; it suffers long, is kind and is not easily provoked. These things remain among us, tokens of our beloved brother who has been with us. We shall carry him in our minds. He, as I say, is with Christ.

But there rests in my mind what his widow and myself have referred to several times in conversation, both during the time when he was ill and the time after he died, that she did not know how people who had not the Lord come through these circumstances.

You go to hospital and see people in chronic stages of illness, very old people hardly knowing what to think about the next moment; more afraid, I think, to die than afraid to meet God, because the fear of God has largely diminished in the present day. Above all it needs to be revived but you think of men and women around us who have not Christ. It makes our hearts go out to them and we should think more and more for them, persons who have not Christ. I am not saying persons who die without Christ but persons who live without Christ. How would you get through these things if you had not the Lord?

The verse I read is about a man who had the Lord, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". I do not suppose that anybody here could say what Paul says in this verse, that he counted all things to be loss on account of the excellency of that knowledge, or that on account of it that he had suffered the loss of everything. Let us confess, we are all touched by what is material, but there is the excellency of His knowledge. The word in a meeting of this kind is not so much commemorative of the one whom the Lord has taken but it is intended to instil something into the hearts of those who remain, and what one would be glad of on this occasion, both for myself and for all here, all here, is that the knowledge of

Christ might become more and more excellent to them. You might ask yourself, When did you first come to know Christ? Was the knowledge of His name excellent? Did you not think of the Saviour as excellent? Did you not think of One who died for your sins as excellent? Did not something come into your soul on that happy day that fixed your choice on Him, your Saviour and your God? And has it grown? Our brother in his prayer has referred to the morning star arising in our hearts (see 2 Pet 1: 19), and another verse in relation to the path of the just - it says it goes on and brightens until the day be fully come (see Prov 4: 18). One asks oneself and every one here, beloved, Has Christ become more excellent to us? Have we wrapped Him up, as it were, in doctrinal thoughts and things of that kind, or is Christ personally more excellent to us than He was a little while ago? I was thinking as I thought about this meeting, of the hymn of Miss Havergal in which she says that:

'But with Him - O with Jesus!
Are any words so blest?
With Jesus, joy unending,
And everlasting rest!
With Jesus - hearts now empty
Filled with His perfect love;
His perfect peace each moment,
Till perfect bliss above'. (Hymn 220)

That is not a verse about being with Christ when you die; it is a verse about being with Christ now, having Christ with you now.

Paul says, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". He says, that I may have Christ for my gain. Whatever there was for Paul in other things - and when he speaks about his own history on another occasion he says he was advanced above all his generation (see Gal 1: 14) - yet he says, "that I may have Christ for my gain". Let these things enter into us now, let them grow in us, let the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ grow in us. Let us find that there is something more excellent, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". I just raise the question with everybody, with myself, Has Christ more

room now than He had when I first knew Him? Does He lighten the heart more? Is there more space for Him? Is he more and more the object of our souls?

This scripture is very well known. Most of us could quote right down to the end of the paragraph, and then right down another column and into another column. But Christianity is beyond quotation; Christianity is the reality of things formed in the soul of the believer as the result of the work of God, and God has given every person the possibility of having the greatest object for their lives that they could have, that is the Man Christ Jesus. May these things grow in us, may we become simple about the Lord, may we become those who are, as it says elsewhere, firmly attached to Him in the knowledge of Him becoming more and more excellent, and we shall know for ourselves that there is a great deal to be enjoyed over against those as to whom you have to say, How do you get through these things without Christ? You get through these things with Christ, and as you get through them He becomes more and more excellent, and the knowledge of Him more excellent than it was before, because He has taken you through the most profound things that can come upon any person. What it is to be widowed, what it is to lose a wife, what it is to lose children, what it is to lose a family, what it is to lose the brethren! What things these are, and yet in all of them we may learn that Christ becomes more and more excellent. May the Lord help us.

(2) David Hutson

Acts 20: 37,38; Philippians 2: 3-11

It is right, beloved, that we should mourn at this time. These occasions are in a sense a peculiar mingling of joy and sorrow. As we think of our beloved brother we cannot but rejoice for him that he is released from the conditions which attach to us in these mortal bodies. As our beloved brother has said, he has departed to be with Christ, which is very much better. How much better it is that our brother is now in the unclouded enjoyment of the love which has sustained him throughout that pathway to which our brethren have referred, for death does not separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and there is now nothing to interfere.

The anxieties which were his in his latter days are now over for ever, and there is nothing but the unclouded enjoyment of that love - which has been his portion, and is ours through grace, throughout his pathway here. So it says that they were "specially pained by the word which he had said, that they would no more see his face". On our side there is that which is gone in the departure of our beloved brother never to be seen again, but then there is what came into expression in him. The face would convey to us something which is in real and living expression. Our brother has referred to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It was not merely the physical presence of our beloved brother, although how much we valued him as he came in, but it was what was in expression in him which caused us to rejoice as he was found among us.

Therefore I read in Philippians 2, this scripture so well known to us, because I believe it epitomises the spirit which was found in our brother, as it says, "let nothing be in the spirit of strife or vain glory, but, in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves". I feel our beloved brother was always marked by that feature. He always seemed to give credit for more than we felt ourselves when speaking to those of us who were younger, "each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves; regarding not each his own qualities". What qualities

our beloved brother had, but how he delighted to regard the qualities of others also. If we were on these lines, beloved, I believe what the apostle exhorts in the earlier verse would be found more distinctly among us, that we should be thinking the same thing, "having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing". I believe this would be the great secret of unity among us, and as this spirit is found with us there would be diligence to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace", Eph 4: 3. I read on because how often we refer to these verses, "For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". I believe it was in our beloved brother in his manner among us, the spirit in which he served, his lowliness of mind. But the note says it is not only 'be found in you' but 'be found amongst you'. As long as our brother was here this mind was amongst us because it was in him; but now the point for us is whether it is still going to be found amongst us, and therefore there is in a sense a charge put upon us that it may be so, and the secret of it, I believe, would be occupation with our Lord Jesus Himself in these blessed features which are set out for us in the following verses. One would recall that these verses end with that verse, "becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross". So far as I recall, one of the very last words which our brother gave us in this room was an exhortation to keep near to the sufferings of Christ. I believe if we carried that forward we should be helped in this matter. It does not here refer to the atoning sufferings exactly, although they must be involved in it; we know the question of sin is not mentioned in this epistle. Nevertheless He became "obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross". The cross was where man was exposed, and all that I am according to the flesh was dealt with unsparingly by God, but also where God's heart in all its love was expressed in the giving of His only-begotten Son; and all this is to be before us as we recognise what was effected there in the death of Christ. So as we keep near to those sufferings we shall be helped in this mind being found among us that we should also be, as our beloved brother was, serving "in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves; regarding not each his own qualities, but each those of others also". Well, may the Lord

help us, that these features may be carried forward by us, and thus there be an increasingly affectionate bond in unity between us in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of the Lord Jesus.

(3) Donald Burr

1 Timothy 6: 11-14

These words have just come to me in relation to what has been said already and in relation to some small acquaintance with our beloved departed brother. I think those of us who knew something of him would be able to refer to him as a man of God. What it is publicly in circumstances that are around us for men to strive to be men of the world, but the world, beloved, is ruined, as Moses was able to convince Pharaoh's bondmen in saying, "Dost thou not yet know that Egypt is ruined", Exod 10: 7. What it is to a man of God in the midst of those circumstances of ruin! One thing that might be in view as a result of this occasion is that more men of God might appear to stand in the present course of things against the rising tide of evil and corruption. I think that is what God is looking for.

Understandably when it says "man of God" it is not excluding women: it is that character of uprightness and strength and reliability and steadfastness that is looked for in men and women. So there is a line of material things to flee from, and there is a line of positive spiritual things to be pursued. We can say that our brother knew what it was to pursue these things - righteousness, piety, faith, love - he knew too what it was to endure, and certainly expressed features of the Spirit.

The good conflict of faith is not an easy matter, it is not something that comes to us readily, but the injunction is given to "Strive earnestly in the good conflict of faith". I think what the Lord would desire to see as a result of one pious and faithful generation passing is that there might be the evidence of a new generation that would "Strive earnestly in the good conflict of faith". So we are to "Lay hold of eternal life, to which thou hast been called". It is one thing to be called, how blessed to recognise God's sovereign rights and to respond in some measure to the call, but there is the need of laying hold of eternal life, something that in its practical effects and responsibilities easily escapes us. So we are required to lay hold of eternal life.

God is the One who preserves, and we are thankful for every one here who has been preserved in some measure of the knowledge of God in faithfulness to His claims, but it goes on in the next epistle to speak of those who love His appearing. I trust we are here today, a company of persons who love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not far off when the Lord, the One who is publicly in rejection, is going to take up His rights and reign in righteousness. Well, "until"; none of us knows what that "until" involves, none of us knows how long it is, but we are called upon to "keep the commandment... until". Not merely have in view that wonderful appearing, but may we be committed to maintain the true Christian profession and confession for the rest of our time, however long or short it may be. Our brother has died, and He has died in the Lord. "Blessed the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth", Rev 14: 13. Beloved, if the Lord does not come for us (some of us no doubt will yet be called into death), may it be said of all such that they died in the Lord and receive the blessing that results from it.

Well, may we be exercised that the evidence and reality of men of God and women of God might appear, might be in evidence, and that we each might be among them, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

3 February 1994