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# GENERATIONS

Ron Plant

**Psalm 48: 11-14; Mark 11: 1-7; Judges 1: 12-15; 1 Chronicles 29: 1-5**

I want to speak as to the generations. It is an extensive subject right through the scriptures and it is one of the things that the men of God were concerned about; men like Moses and Jacob and others were concerned about the generations and I think it is a right thing for us to be too. It bore in upon me as coming here, how so much has changed over the past twelve years and how so many of those who were a help to the brethren in this area are now with Christ and the generations have changed. It is a very sobering thing. As far as man is concerned it is a thing of little consequence, Ecclesiastes says, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh ... The sun also riseth, and the sun goeth down" (1: 4), but I believe that in divine things God would have us care about the generations.

David was one of whom it says, "For David indeed, having in his own generation ministered to the will of God fell asleep" (Acts 13: 36), but I believe a feature of what is spiritual is not only that we serve to the fullest extent that we can in our own generation, and that is quite an exercise in itself, but God would have us concerned for the coming ones and this is seen also in David. Paul in his epistle speaks to Timothy about four generations, himself, to Timothy, to faithful men and to others also (see 2 Tim. 2: 2). I suppose in a company of this size and taking a generation as about thirty years, we have about four generations at various stages of life in this room.

There was a man in the scriptures who had little concern for the generation to come, Hezekiah the king who was helped of God in relation to the purging of the temple and so on, and for whom God came in in a marvellous way when he was sick and gave him fifteen more years of life (see 2 Kings 20: 1-11). Hezekiah responds by

exposing the precious things of God to the king of Babylon and Isaiah's solemn word to him was that whilst things would still remain in his lifetime, his sons would all be taken away to Babylon as a result of his unfaithfulness. His recorded reply in the scriptures is, "there shall be peace and truth in my days!", 2 Kings 20: 18. I wonder if any of us feel like that, if we are really concerned, not just for ourselves and our day, but that what there is for God in the generations might be maintained.

Every generation is different and each has its own special and particular exercises. It has been said that every generation needs a fresh ministry, not that the truth changes but the conditions of the day are very different in every generation and yet in some way God is going to be served through all of them. Moses, the great man of experience in the Old Testament says, "Lord, *thou* has been our dwelling-place in *all* generations ... from eternity to eternity thou art God" (Ps 90: 1,2) – wonderful! I like to think that all the generations represented in this room will prove this and will serve the will of God in their own day.

You will find that the subject is taken up in different ways in scriptures. There is the way I am speaking about it historically and then in the New Testament it is taken up in a moral way. The Lord Jesus in Luke says, "this generation shall in no wise pass away until all come to pass" (21: 32) after he had set out the course of things that were going to happen on the earth where men would be in fear and expectation as to what was coming, and going right on to the coming of the Lord Jesus. But the generation which was there was in unbelief and had no concept of all that was there in the presence of the Lord. The generation marked by unbelief goes on and on through our time, it is moral. All the happenings in the world that have and will yet transpire even the shaking of the powers in the heavens, will not change man's unbelief (see Luke 21: 26).

What things we have seen even in our times, and it will all go on, as it says, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it ... until he come whose right it is; and I will give it to him", Ezek 21: 27. Are we alive to all that is happening in this world in which we are, amidst a

groaning creation that is waiting for Christ to come? How much do we know about what is happening, how much do we pray about it?

Are we content with our own little private lives or are our hearts being expanded like God's heart so that in some measure you are a person who is affected like God is affected by all that sin has brought into the world. How many of us know about the awful things that are happening in Sudan for instance; 50,000 persons have died out there and over a million persons have been displaced from their homes with the suffering and privation that goes with it. Did we know that 400,000 of them are children? How much did we pray for them? How alert are we? When we speak of vitality and life, how much vitality and life is in me? I believe it would affect us and it would help us in our response, even in our assembly response if our hearts and our affections were opened up more to the compassions of God. I trust I say these things from the heart because I do believe that it is possible that there is a danger of lethargy affecting us in all our lives and we might just become deadened in almost every way in relation to His testimony.

I would like to speak about the generations and I love the first reference in Psalm 48 where it says, "tell it to the generation following". The subject of Psalm 48 is about mount Zion. The sons of Korah were those who would have known what it was to be preserved when their fathers died in the rebellion in Numbers and generally speaking they greatly appreciate mercy. In their Psalms you very often find special touches of mercy. They speak here about Zion. I could not explain to you how Zion got its spiritual import.

Zion was a part of Jerusalem but somehow it acquires a place in the scripture, almost mystical as far as the Jew was concerned. It seems to relate to David's conquests when he came to Jerusalem and he "took the stronghold of Zion which is the city of David" (2 Sam 5: 7), and it came to represent a spot that was dear to the heart of every Israelite, their object was to reach Zion. The spot that is so precious to the heart of the believer is God's intervention in sovereign mercy. What a wonderful thing! He says here, "tell it", tell them about it, "tell it to the generation following". "Walk about Zion,

and go round about her: count the towers thereof; Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces ... For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide until death". I love to tell every soul in this room, especially young persons here, of the wonderful character of the fact that God has intervened in His grace and in sovereign mercy. There are many persons here who are triumphs of His grace. It says, "count the towers thereof ... Mark ye well her bulwarks". The lives and the experiences of the saints, not only of this generation but so many that have gone before them are testimonies to the glory of what here is called Mount Zion, beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth. The greatest thing on this earth at the present time is that God had and is operating in His mercy and even today there are persons here, the whole room almost, who have been secured through the sovereign mercy of God. I will tell you about that, I might struggle with what else I am trying to say but I will tell you about Zion! And if there is anyone here who really has an aching heart in relation to their need before God, unknown to the brethren, unknown to parents, or even to anyone else, I would assure you and tell it to the generation following that He is still operating in His grace today and He will come in in relation to your need and He will touch your heart and fill it with Christ.

One of the things that is encouraging at the present time with younger men amongst us is that there is a growing ability, energy and affection in the presentation of the glad tidings. May that continue and may it be a blessing in His testimony and amongst the people of God.

The scripture in Mark makes reference to the Lord Jesus about to go into Jerusalem for the last time, and He says to the disciples, "Go into the village which is over against you ... ye will find a colt tied upon which no child of man has ever sat". It is a very striking passage, it comes into all the gospels, and in each of the synoptic gospels it says, "the Lord has need". We have been speaking about man's need and God's answer to man's need in mercy but it is something to think of and to communicate to a younger generation that the Lord has need. I believe the present

time is a particular moment to draw attention to this incident. It is a colt here; Matthew's gospel is the ass and the colt, this gospel and Luke it is the colt, and it seems to represent another generation.

What I particularly wanted to draw attention to is that the Lord does not fetch it Himself – in John's gospel he procures it Himself, but in the other gospels he lays this on the disciples, "Go into the village ... ye will find a colt tied, upon which no child of man has ever sat: loose it and lead it here". He puts that upon the disciples, "And they departed, and found a colt bound to the door without at the crossway, and they loose him". I think that most here would be aware that the present time is near the crossway for many younger ones. Love has bound them, as it has held many of us and we thank God for it, bound in conditions of love but the crossway is near. The main route of the world is passing near to us at the present time and it has great appeal. What I wanted to draw attention to is the task of these disciples because the Lord entrusts them to go and to "bring it here". I wonder if those of us who are of an older generation, how do we respond to that at the present time – bringing the colt here?

How are we responding to it? It says, "And they led the colt to Jesus". I want to raise this as a challenge not only to those who are older but also to a younger generation, for time quickly passes, the younger men and women here with little children, they will not be so little for long, and this same thing will be posed to you, how do we lead the colt here, and how do we lead the colt to Jesus? How do we bring it here? It was Bethphage and Bethany, and the Mount of Olives, it was the environment in which Jesus moved, it is a spiritual area. Bethany was the place where He loved to be, Jerusalem was the city of the great king, it is the environment in which Jesus moved. How do we bring the colt to the area where Jesus is today? I think we need help from the Spirit of God at the present time, we need to be very prayerful and on our knees that we may be helped to be those who can serve the Lord Jesus in bringing the colt here – "they led the colt to Jesus".

The colt was tied at the crossway and they had to release it, to undo the knots. Sometimes the knots have become very difficult,

sometimes what is governing persons in their lives is very difficult, do we have the patience for it? Do we have the heart for it? Do we have Christ and His needs sufficiently in our hearts that we might have the patience and skill to untie the knots and lead the colt to Jesus? Can we do it? No one had ever sat upon it; what potential it represented, no one had ever controlled it. Beloved young people, there will come a time in your life when someone or something will control you. The desire here of the Lord and of all here today is that you might come under the influence and the control of the Lord Jesus. I believe it is an exercise for those of us who are older that we enter into how in skilfulness, how in ability received from the Holy Spirit, we can be helped in leading the colt to Jesus.

The scripture in Judges is a well-known passage; the taking of Kirjath-sephar, the city of the book. Someone once suggested to me that the book was a history book. I know we usually speak of it as representing the world and its literature, but perhaps it is the history amongst the people of God that stands as an obstacle to you to entering into the land, into the inheritance. Perhaps it needs to be taken so that it does not just remain as names and ministry and accounts of what has entered into the recovery of the truth and what has entered into the teaching of the assembly that we have been speaking about. Let it not just end as words but you take it and take it for yourself and you find that there is entry into the land, into the inheritance.

What I wanted to draw attention to was that Caleb provides the incentive to this young man to take this city, which stood athwart his inheritance. Much of what is in the book of Judges parallels the book of Joshua; Joshua details the conquest of the land of Canaan and it is the spiritual aspect of it, so why do we have the book of Judges? This section of scripture is in both books – but Judges is written in a different way. Judges is not written historically, it is written in a particular way for a particular reason. Caleb who was coming into his inheritance seems to realise the problem that confronted them in taking up the land and the dispossessing of the inhabitants and the people. The book of Judges is written, not to set

out the conquest of the land but to illustrate the lessons that needed to be learned by the people and especially by the generation to come because it says, “these are the nations that Jehovah left, to prove Israel by them, all that had not known all the wars of Canaan; only that the generations of the children of Israel might know war by learning it” (3: 1,2). I think Caleb was aware of the fact and what I would like to convey to the younger generation is that the land, the inheritance, the preciousness of divine things will not be taken and enjoyed without conflict.

I know that sometimes exercises amongst the people of God seem to be inexplicable to the younger generation but I wanted to show here, what I believe Caleb understood and that is that we shall not enter into the inheritance of Jehovah, the land, the taking up of the promises of God unless we know what it is to learn war, the wars of Canaan. You get the wars of the Lord in the wilderness and the wars of Canaan in relation to the land. I hope the brethren will bear with this and be prepared to enter into some of the exercises that there have been for the truth, conflicts that the truth may be preserved, that precious things as to the Person of Christ, the Sonship of Christ, and much more have been necessary that the people of God might enter into the inheritance. I believe we would fail if we do not encourage our younger brethren at the present time, to enter into the inheritance and seek God’s help to enter into the conflict that will be involved.

Caleb was perfectly capable of taking this city himself. We see the strength that was in him, but we do not have Caleb going for an opportunity here in relation to Kirjath-sepher. To encourage Othniel he says, “to him will I give Achsah my daughter as wife”. We know that there is much as to Achsah and as to the springs of water, but I just wanted to leave with the brethren that we will not enter into the great things of God without conflict. Do not be disappointed in it, do not be one who is disillusioned in the fact that there is conflict at times amongst the saints, because the truth has been hard won and it will be hard won for the generation that is to come, the conflict and the wars of Canaan are necessary to our education.

David had concern for the next generation. Scripture refers to David's affliction and his affection and I wanted to finish with a reference particularly as to what David was ready to give in relation to another generation out of his affection. Affliction came upon David during his lifetime, upon him and his family. It came upon him in his circumstances, in his kingdom and in his personal life and family life and even his affliction over the ark of God. These things brought out a treasure for God as they have done in the lives of the saints. How much affliction there has been amongst the people of God. I took the liberty of looking up the Bible Dictionary as to the things that David gave in his affliction to the house of God – one hundred thousand talents of gold and a thousand thousand talents of silver. According to the Bible Dictionary that amounts to millions of pounds. What an impression that gives of all that affliction has yielded for the house of God in the generations. Affliction is not premeditated, but what David gives out of his affection is premeditated, it does not come about through circumstances that arise and result in affliction, it comes about through premeditation. He says, "This palace is not to be for man, but for Jehovah Elohim. And I have prepared according to all my power for the house of my God". But he was concerned for the generation to come. He says, "Solomon my son ... is young and tender, and the work is great", I think Solomon would be about twenty years old here and now he says, "moreover, in my affection for the house of my God I have given of my own property of gold and silver". What a fine way to end a life, what a fine way for any of us to end our lives to give something more out of affection for the house of our God. He says, "who is willing to offer to Jehovah this day?" In Paul's letter to Philemon as to the return of Onesimus his runaway slave, Paul appeals to him to receive him and puts everything that he could into the appeal. It is a very affecting letter in which he appeals "for love's sake" (v 9). He could have argued all kinds of things, but above all he pleads "for love's sake ... do *thou* receive him" (v 12). Beloved brethren, I wonder if we are ready at the present time in the sorrows and pressures that there are amongst the saints to operate with a bit of love. I wonder if we will. You will find amongst God's people that

you can try all kinds of things, to affect something, you can try pressure, you can try force of personality, you can try everything, but there is only one thing amongst God's people that will always work and that is love, only love works. If you want to know how to solve problems in localities, if you want to know how a future generation can be encouraged and stimulated amongst the saints, let us operate with affection for the house of our God. The generations are passing and some of us are passing with them, some like our brethren of twelve years ago are about to go off the scene, let us all demonstrate affection for the house of God and let it be an operative force amongst us at the present time.

For His Name's sake.

**Glasgow**

**14<sup>th</sup> August 2004**

## **HOW DO WE VIEW THE CHURCH TODAY?**

**Garth McKay**

**Revelation 1: 9-2: 1; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-20; Ezra 3: 10; 4: 10-13**

What is in mind to speak of is how are we to view the church in our day? We live in a difficult day, a dark day, when evil is very advanced in the world. There is a reference in Revelation to the “vine of the earth”, (14: 18). Evil is rampant in the world and it is flourishing; it is like the vine of the earth. That is one thing we have to deal with in our day, evil is so advanced. There are special tests given to God’s people in the day in which they live. Other Christians who have lived in years gone by have faced other tests. One of the tests we face today is the advancement of evil, that vine of the earth which is flourishing.

Another aspect of the day in which we live is that the Lord is about to come. It says just before where we read in Revelation, “for the time is near” (v 3), and the time for the Lord’s return is nearer today than it ever has been before. I ask myself a question, How am I to view His church in such a day?

I began in Revelation – here you have a view of the church, but before that you have a view of the Lord Himself, in connection with the church. Let us not rush into a judgment of the church without thinking of the Lord. John is very skilful here and he presents the Lord in a certain way. This great vision that he has of this one who is like the Son of man, “clothed with a garment reaching to the feet ... his feet like fine brass”; it could be none other than the Lord Jesus Himself – a vision of our Lord Jesus Christ, and He is presented in a certain way. I want to bring out a couple of things.

Firstly, “out of his mouth a sharp two-edged sword going forth” – this view of the church is the church in its responsibility to the Lord, what the church is as left in the hands of men, and the Lord is, for a reason, presented in a certain way to that church. He is presented at the One who has, “out of his mouth a sharp two-edged sword going forth”, His word will be final. His judgment will be final. There

is no word which has any more authority than the word of God Himself and it is that which is seen going out of His mouth.

The other thing I want to remark on is His eyes, “his eyes as a flame of fire”. These two things show me that nothing will be hidden from His gaze, divine perception, perfect judgment of the state and condition of things, will be what He brings in. I also want to draw your attention to where He is. “These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven gold lamps”. That is where He is, walking in the midst of the seven assemblies. He is walking around Christendom to see what He can see, to judge what it has become. He is walking in the midst of the seven gold lamps; these are the seven assemblies, and you can apply this to the whole of Christendom, every corner of Christendom that professes the Lord’s Name. This is speaking about profession, some of it is real and thank God for that, but some of it is not. Here is the perfect judge, the Lord Himself will walk in the midst of the seven assemblies, and He is walking today. He is there, He is in the midst of the seven gold lamps, He is looking at you, He is looking at your locality, the different churches that there are, He is looking at everything that professes His Name. Then you can read on in these addresses to the assemblies to see what He finds. He finds that the strength of first love has been departed from, and He finds that there is falsehood, those who say that they are Jews and are not. He finds that there is allowance of evil and evil doctrines. You can find all these things in Christendom – it is one thing to have a judgment of what the world is, but it is a very solemn thing to see that the Lord’s church has embraced these things and has become a ruin. As left in the hands of men, as left to their responsibility, that is what the Lord will find: a ruin.

At the very end of all these addresses to the assemblies He comes to Laodicea and he finds apathy. There are certain tests for the Lord’s people in our day and I do not know whether this is true of the whole world, but I know it to be true of this country – a great test today for the Lord’s people is apathy. It appears from what the Lord says of it that there is nothing that He hates more than apathy;

“Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spue thee out of my mouth”, Rev 3: 16. I do not want to dwell on this side of the church, but I do want to say this, that I would like to suggest to you that maybe we do not feel this enough. We are not excluded from it, you cannot exclude yourself, or the brethren, from the failure of Christendom and this aspect of it. Responsibly, we have failed the Lord. You say, what is left then? It is wonderful grace that to every assembly, even Laodicea, there is the possibility of overcoming. The systems themselves will not be saved, they will be discarded, there is nothing for the Lord in them. They are finished, but it is possible for persons to overcome, even in such a day as we are in, even in such conditions of apathy, it is possible to overcome. It is possible that there will be those who have not defiled their garments, it is possible that there will be those who will open to the Lord’s knocking – let us be among them. But, let us feel the departure, maybe we do not feel it enough. The Lord, how He feels it, walking in the midst of the seven assemblies, how He must feel the departure, the allowance of the world in all its wickedness and evil, in His church, that which professes His Name: let us feel it too.

In Corinthians I want to speak about the church again, but this is very different. This is what we often call the assembly, or you can use the word church. I somehow prefer to call it the church, this is the true church. This is not now just a profession, this is not now a falsehood, not now what is entrusted to the hands of men, this is what is established in the power of the Holy Spirit here on the earth.

It is as real as the precious aspect of the church that I spoke about.

You can find it today. It exists. The Lord Jesus Christ having completed the great work of redemption, risen from the dead, glorified on high, crowned with glory and honour, the Holy Spirit was sent here to the earth to establish His church. It says, “even as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ. For also in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body”. What a difference this is! This is something that is established on the earth that cannot be overthrown. The Lord said, “on this rock I will

build my assembly and hades' gates shall not prevail against it", Matt 16: 18. You might say, they have prevailed to an extent in Christendom, but they will not prevail against this church, His assembly, that which is precious to the Lord and that which is established here in the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Consider for a moment the wonder of the fact that the Spirit has come. You have believed on the Lord Jesus, you have asked for the Spirit and the Spirit has given to you. What a thing that is, that you should not be alone and helpless in the world but that you might be empowered by a divine Person! He has come. It is not that God has given a little of His Spirit to you, He has given His Spirit! The Lord stood up at the great day of the feast and He said, "He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water", John 7: 38. This is the power of the Spirit that is available to you and it is a wonderful thing to know that for yourself, individually, to know that a divine Person indwells you, and to know the power that He can give you, and to know how He can help you overcome the world.

I want to draw your attention to something greater, because if the Spirit is in you individually, He will draw you into this great body of persons that He has established here on the earth as the church of Christ. His true church, that which is true to Him, and which will not be overthrown. You see it there at Pentecost when the Spirit came, you see there the one body. You ask yourself, what about now? The Spirit is still here. These are easy words to say, but a great profound truth to get hold of, that the Spirit is still here, and if the Spirit is here, has His mission failed? Could you say that of the Spirit of God, that His mission has failed? You could never say that. Therefore the one body is here still, and it will be here until the Lord comes for it. The Lord will not come for profession, the Lord comes for the assembly. The Lord comes for that which is established here for Him and you can find it. That is the test for us today – you can find it, have you found it? Have you found the body of Christ where you are?

Later on in the chapter it says, “if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it” (v 26), have you experienced that? We have experienced it, if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it: what sorrow there is to bear, but the members of the body bear it together. There are many members in the one body. If you can say that you have experienced it, you have found the body. You have found the assembly. Have you found a place where there can be glory to God in the assembly unto the ages of ages; have you found that? A place where God is worshipped in Spirit and in truth? If you have found that you have found the body. It is a wonderful thing!

Well, you may say, I do not know anything about these things, but if you ask yourself these simple questions, you will find that you have found the assembly. What rejoicing there should be in our hearts when we have found the assembly. You do not just find a part of it, or a representation of it. In the past I have described the fellowship as being a representation of the assembly, but a brother has helped me to see that you cannot really have a representation of the assembly, or a part of the assembly. The assembly is the assembly, the one body, and it is one. You need faith for it, you cannot see where all the members are, but the Lord knows those that are His, and the test for us today is to find the assembly where we are.

Touch it! Touch the body of Christ, it is a wonderful experience, not only to know that it exists, not only to believe it, but to find it practically. Find the features of it among your brethren, find it in your locality. Great possibilities exist in our day regardless of the failure of men, regardless of the ruin of Christendom, great possibilities exist because of the presence of the Spirit here. This true church is what the Lord Himself will come for.

Think of the terrible division that there is in Christendom and how many recognised churches there are (it is a fearful number, a testament to failure), but it is a wonderful thing to me that when the Lord comes, in a twinkling of an eye, the divisions will be gone. That which is beyond you and me to accomplish, beyond any man, except for Him, there is one answer to that situation, and that is the coming of Jesus Himself. In a moment, what is true and what is false will be

divided from each other, and what is true will go to be with Him forever. Think of it! The Lord Jesus is coming back to the earth to reign for a thousand years, a reign of peace and happiness and righteousness, coming here to receive the acclaim of the whole earth, more than that He is going to receive acclaim from heavenly, earthly and infernal beings. His influence is going to be universal.

All of that He has before Him, but before that, the first thing is that He will come for His assembly, “that *he* might present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things”, Eph 5;7. It is possible, dear friend, to reach that great vessel today.

Let us weep about the departure, but let us rejoice in what is possible in the power of the Spirit, even in our day.

I just refer to Ezra. You could say that this is a terrible day, a dark background, that the Jews had been taken captive, after all God’s promises, everything is finished. Just like those chapters we referred to in Revelation, you might say, everything is finished. Yet there is a wonderful thing; a day of recovery. These men come, full of faith, and they set the altar on its base. The house and the walls and everything was ruined, there was no house, there were no walls, where did they start? They started with the altar. What possibilities these men had in their hearts! What was possible if God prospered them? They set the altar on its base so that there might be glory to God. I have this vision of them standing around the altar, no house, no wall, the threat of attack from these people of the countries (their opposition became clear later on), and yet they set the altar on its base. I want to encourage you, the Spirit is still here, what possibilities there are for His people even in such a day.

Later in the chapter it summarises what I had in mind. You have the foundation of the temple and you have the praising and the singing, “And all the people shouted with a great shout to the praise of Jehovah”. I would like the joy of the assembly being here, and the possibility that we can touch it, to encourage us together so that there might be this great shout of joy. In this section the two aspects I have spoken of are brought together because also these ancient men “wept with a loud voice”, and what it says is, “And the people

could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people” – let us feel deeply the departure which is around us, and of which we are part. Let us weep, not exactly for what it means to us, but for what it means to the Lord. These men had seen the house in its former glory, they saw what it was in the beginning and they wept. Why did they weep? They wept because of the breakdown that there was, but you could not discern the noise of the weeping from the shout of joy. I think in some way this summarises the view we can have of the church in our day. I trust that it might be of some help, to bring clarity, because there is a terrible danger in giving up either one of these things. If you give up the weeping you are at risk of taking high ground, of saying “we are The Church” and have not failed: you cannot do that. But if you give up the other, God alone is robbed because there is a possibility now, in the assembly, for glory to God until the ages of ages. May we be faithful to these things, ready for when the Lord comes. His coming is very near. When He comes He wants to find us actively functioning in the body the place where the Spirit is.

I just want to finish with a reference to the prophet Haggai because at the same time as the section in Ezra the word through the prophet Haggai comes, “But be strong, Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, Joshua son of Jehozadak” (Haggai 2: 4). You can put your own name in here, be strong, “all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work”, do not be afraid, do not let the departure weigh you down, feel it, but do not let it weigh you down, “work: for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts. The word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit remain among you”. I finish with that, very interesting words in the Old Testament, “my Spirit”. It is a word for us all tonight, the Spirit is still here, the assembly is here. Let us be found faithful when the Lord comes.

**Malvern**

**August 2001**

## **“BE OF GOOD COURAGE”**

**Jeremy Brien**

**Mark 6: 47-50; 10: 46-52; Acts 6: 5-8**

I feel very challenged, and yet encouraged to share an impression that I have had throughout the day. I felt challenged by the word previously as to substance. In days of reduction there is smallness, but at the same time God's work is not limited. My impression is, "be of good courage". I would love to learn from the older brethren what it is to have courage in times of discipline, what it is to have courage in times such as the disciples here, where they are out rowing in the middle of the sea. There were winds and they were challenged and seemed to be going away from the Lord. The thought struck me that, as we go through exercises, and the brethren could share their experiences, it is the Lord saying, "Be of good courage: it is I". I would love to have the impression in my soul and in my heart of the Lord saying, Be of good courage: it is I. It is the Lord Himself who is reaching out to us. I was thinking of Peter, when he went to walk on the sea in a different presentation, he began to sink and he said, Lord save me and the Lord put out His hand and pulled him up. I was wondering whether these experiences of having spiritual courage and knowing the presence of the Lord saying, "it is I" would help us grow in the way of substance. Is that how our hearts are to gain experience and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, to gain knowledge of God and His thoughts? To gain knowledge of what God's thoughts are in purpose. How wonderful His thoughts are and how far beyond each one of us they may be, but we can enter into them in some little way. "It is I; be not afraid".

I was impressed with the section in Mark 10 and was wondering whether as we go through our experiences and go along in our Christian pathway we have points of time where we are afraid. The common definition of courage may be that you go forward in the face of fear, but I wonder if God would want us to have a spiritual thought of courage in that when the Lord asks you to do something you go and do it. This man, in one sense, had courage. He was

saying, "O Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me". What a wonderful thing it is to be able to reach out to the Lord, whether we are going through extreme discipline or whether we are in times of joy, and to have the sense of freedom that we can reach out to the Lord at any time and say, "O Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me". I am sure all here can say a little of their experience. I know a little in my own experience to be able to reach out to the Lord and say, Jesus have mercy on me. (What a thing that is to be able to have the Lord come and say, "it is I; be not afraid"). It is wonderful that Bartimaeus was able to reach out to say this, and I think in the context of courage, people were rebuking him here and telling him to be silent, but he continued to call out. It is a wonderful thing when you want to reach out to the Lord and you do not stop. When you want the Lord Jesus in your life, and you want to work out things in your own life according to God's will, nothing can separate or stop you from that. What a wonderful thing that must be and I would love to learn more about that in my own life. The brethren here have so much experience that I could learn from. "And they call the blind man, saying to him, Be of good courage, rise up, he calls thee". What a wonderful thing that it is to be able to rise up and go to the Lord.

In Acts 6, I was asking myself the question, how do these things work out? How do we have spiritual courage? I wondered whether Stephen tells us exactly what it is, "and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit". I would like to learn more of being full of faith and the Holy Spirit. A brother once told me, it is an amazing thing that the Holy Spirit lives in you! What a wonderful thing that is to be full of the Holy Spirit and full of faith. I wish I knew more about that.

These are my simple thoughts. How do I have spiritual courage? I would like to know more about it so that I would be of more substance, and be of use to the Lord. Perhaps something simple or great. We do not know what the Lord has ahead for us, but I do know that He wants us to serve Him. I entrust these simple thoughts to the brethren for His glory.

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