

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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WHAT WE VALUE

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JD I wondered if in this reading we could look into what we value. A scripture in Luke we have not read but which has been on my mind says, "For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be", Luke 12: 34. What we value becomes manifest and begins to demonstrate itself in our lives. When we think of what we value there is much to consider. We would not have had time to read enough scriptures that bear on everything that we value. If we think of what we value, I suppose most of us would initially think of the blood; how much we value the blood of Jesus Christ, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin", 1 John 1: 7. This is fundamental in the believer's life, to value of the blood of Christ. Then there is also one another; perhaps that is another thing that would come into our minds quite quickly as we think of what we value, the blood and then one another. We see that in Acts when Peter and John had been roughly handled, it says when they were let go, "they came to their own", Acts 4: 23. What a precious thing that is. Paul too enumerates certain things at the end of Hebrews, certain things we have come to, things that we value; and then he mentions, "the blood of sprinkling, speaking better than Abel", Heb 12: 24. There is the valuation, not only of the blood of Christ in relation to our sins, but as a wonderful matter as having secured the universe for God. Then we can think especially of what we value as coming from an ascended Christ, the blood giving us access into the holiest. There are all these matters which we can value and gather up in our affections.

In the scriptures that we have read, the first one refers typically to the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful matter it is to have an appreciation and a valuation of this unspeakable free gift which has been given to us. Then the second scripture we read is related to having an evaluation of the truth, valuing the truth; and the last scripture gathers up what we have and value in Christianity. It speaks of the first day of the week, which we know is slightly different from the thought presented in the Lord's day. There is not quite the same thought of history attached to it, but there we have pattern because Christ comes in. We value His presence more than anything, the current presence of Christ. He

comes in. The saints are together, and then Christ comes in and the Spirit is there. We know that Christ in that scripture is literally in resurrection but He comes in as the ascended Man, and He breathes into them. That is a wonderful matter, it is an impartation, and it is behind closed doors; there is pattern there for what Christianity really involves and how things can then unfold, and then they are sent out. There is what is specific to the disciples, but nonetheless it is the character of the spirit of Christianity gathered up in the scripture.

I wondered too whether the scriptures that we have read would also help us in relation to working these things out. It is not simply that we value things in an abstract way. Things start to work out in our lives, as we see in this widow woman in 2 Kings 4. She goes in and shuts the door, and again in John 20 the doors are closed through fear of the Jews. There are certain things currently taking place behind closed doors and, to get a true valuation of divine things, I think it is essential that we work things out in that sense behind closed doors. This involves exercise. It is not simply that we have some abstract value but we know from experience, and from what is worked out subjectively in our hearts, the value of what has come to us through the place that Christ now has.

DAB I was thinking that this widow must have had valuables because the creditor would not have come if there was nothing to take. But, closing the door enabled her to take stock of what she really valued. It seems to me that what she lacked was the means to hold on to what she valued. The Holy Spirit would give us the means to hold and use what God has given us?

JD That is helpful. You use the words 'to take stock' and - not that we want to be topical - we know in current conditions in the world at large, that men are having to take stock as to what is of value, and of course their valuations are quite different from ours. But as a believer, sometimes we need to take stock as to what we value and how we value things. Here she is asked, "What shall I do for thee? Tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thy handmaid has not anything at all in the house but a pot of oil", 2 Kings 4: 2. She recognised that she had something, but she did not recognise the value of it.

DAB I was thinking that maybe that is an exercise that would do some of us good, to imagine what we have that we might lose if we did not

have the power to hold it: Would we miss it, and how long would it be before we miss it? I was thinking of the Scripture when the Lord says, “and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret” (Matt 6: 6), not 'the' Father, but “thy Father”. That access is something that we have.

JD We also speak about what is stripped away and it causes you to think of Peter and John in Acts, “Silver and gold I have not”, chap 3: 6. It is a challenge to us that if these peripheral things were stripped away, what would we have that remains that we could then offer? These men in Acts were in the gain of John 20; they had received an impartation, they had something and they were able to offer it, “Silver and gold I have not; but what I have, this give I to thee: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazaraean rise up and walk”. Think of what they had in the way of faith in that Name, that Person. This would challenge us as to how we value things. I thought too that perhaps we could get some help in relation to having the gift of the Spirit, and for the young ones and the children it becomes an exercise. The Lord is working, thankfully we can say in His sovereign goodness, amongst the children, and many have given their hearts to the Lord as their Saviour, but then there comes a time when we need to be exercised and appreciate and ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

DJH Do we realise the tremendous potential that there is at that great point? The woman spoke of it just as a pot of oil, but not realising the potential. We have to realise what potential there is in having the Spirit.

JD That is very helpful because I was meaning to draw attention at the beginning of the reading that, although we have read verses 1 to 7, we should really keep in our minds and affections this whole chapter because there is something worked out. It might be said to be the same person who becomes the wealthy woman and then goes through the exercise of receiving her son back from the dead. It is resurrection, and then there is the man from Baal-shalishah. We have been taught that we have Romans, Colossians and Ephesians all in this chapter. In Ephesians the Spirit is the “earnest of our inheritance” (chap 1: 14) which would link with the fulness of the thought.

DJR Do you think the enemy would like to take the younger persons in bondage? You have spoken of them, and the creditor is going to take them as bondman; he has no valuation of the pot of oil.

JD It is a sobering thing. You may say the creditor is at your door,

and that is a real thing in your exercises. The brethren know the teaching of this better than I do, but it is how it is worked out practically in experience. In Romans the creditor starts to knock at the door and the flesh tries to impose its obligations upon us, but how are we going to meet that circumstance? We know from the working out of Romans; and through into chapter 8 we find that we are no longer debtors to the flesh. We have a resource which allows us to judge the flesh and be delivered from it, and then to meet every obligation that may come upon us. Then the younger ones may wonder why we need the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a very simple matter. It would be normal that we pray with our children before they go to sleep, and then there comes a time when they pray on their own, and then they become exercised about what they pray for. Maybe they find that they pray for the same things every night - some of us who are older do that also, but they perhaps feel the need to be able to pray for other things. Maybe they feel they need some help at school, or as they begin to become more aware and read and see things. As you drive through a city, you may see things that are displayed and you need help by the Holy Spirit to discern, and to be protected from what comes into your view. The gift of the Holy Spirit then becomes a very simple and a very blessed and real thing for the believer as he makes room for Him in his heart.

JW Do you think we appreciate the value of the Spirit as we make use of Him, do things by the Spirit?

JD That is almost a principle of Christianity, that as we prove something the appreciation comes out.

JW It says in Romans 8, "if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live", v 13. The most exalted thing would be worship by the Spirit. We need to make use of the Spirit and do things by the Spirit.

JD We are getting into the realm where we start to experience things, experience the help of the Spirit by using Him. You feel guarded in speaking about a divine Person by saying 'using Him', but I noticed that the term is used in accredited ministry and we can say carefully and reverently that we need to use the Holy Spirit in our lives.

QP It says of Esther that "she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women, appointed", Esther 2: 15. Paul says to the Corinthians, "thus also the things of God knows no one except the Spirit of God", 1 Cor 2: 11. Do you think it is not just that we

need the Spirit but that we do not really need anything else?

JD Perhaps we will get help on that as we progress to the other scriptures, when we come to the Spirit of truth. Our attention has been drawn to the fact that the truth is all held subjectively in the Spirit of truth here, although that matter is then to be worked out in us as individuals and collectively. The Spirit is here in the assembly in a complete way.

DJH It is wonderful that such a One who has this place in the Godhead should be available to us to use. These things are amazing, and something that we should contemplate worshipfully, do you think?

JD I think that is helpful. In grace, divine Persons are helping us in our circumstances, but nonetheless we should never forget, as you draw attention to, as to just who They are, the place that They have taken, especially when we think of the Son and the Spirit in the economy which we can read of in John's gospel, "the Spirit ... whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming", John 16: 13. He is not even speaking from Himself; He has taken a subordinate place in relation to the economy.

DJH I have often thought of that, "whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak", the place He has taken in that way as hearing Himself what is proceeding in heaven and bringing it to us.

AJMCS Do we need to be exercised as to what we are seeking support from, whether we are relying on the world for help or whether we are relying on the Holy Spirit for help? I notice here that it is the children who will be taken into bondage. I think that is a salutary word for us, that if we give ourselves over to the world for the world's help and support, then ultimately the children will be taken away.

JD That is a very solemn word. It is your thought then that those of us who have responsibility have to demonstrate the resources that we have in the Holy Spirit to be free from the obligations that the world would seek to put upon us, demonstrating that we have another resource. Elsewhere reference is made to the caller's spring (Jud 15: 19, note) and the springing well; there is this resource that we have in this wonderful divine Person.

AJMCS I did wonder that. I know what we mean when we say the creditor is knocking at the door, but the fact is the door was open. It was open to the influences of the world, so the door had to be shut. Of course that requires the power of the Holy Spirit to do that. The positive

side would be that when we do that, not only do we get the blessing of it, but the blessing spreads out to the children as well.

JD That is very helpful, and so in John's gospel it speaks about what the Spirit shall become, "shall become in him a foundation of water, springing up into eternal life", John 4: 14. And then later on it says, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water", John 7: 38. That would be something of the influence of someone who has the Spirit in liberty in his own heart.

DAB It seems as though quite a few things might have gone out from this open door already, so that she only had the pot of oil and her two sons left. The creditor is an insidious person. It is very helpful to bring in what is practical because the world claims your time, claims young people's time. It claims them when they have the facility to learn. It is something that young people may not realise, that you do not retain the facility to learn that you have when you are young, and it is in those practical things that you need to say, 'I have come to the point now, nothing else is going out through this door; and I am going to find some other way to meet my obligations'.

JD The creditor here is not having to knock on the door because the door is open; so the first thing that the Spirit is going to help us do is to close the door.

AAC I was noticing in a reading that a brother asked Mr Taylor a question: 'What is going down to Egypt?' and his response was, 'It is turning to the world for support' (vol 84 p4), and that is exactly what this woman had done; and the result was she had a debt which she could not pay. But as soon as she turns to the man of God, she finds that there is a completely different resource and she values something totally different, and she finds that the debt has already been paid. It is very practical but very attractive.

JD It is, and I trust that this will be an encouragement to the younger ones. There is help available to close the door on these other influences and to confide and seek help from the Holy Spirit. Galatians helps us in that too, "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (Gal 5: 17), and the way that is worked out in our soul's history is something to arrive at.

EFW In the scripture quoted earlier on as to praying to your Father, the word is to "enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to

thy Father”, Matt 6: 6. I wondered whether that is an individual exercise to close the door before we even ask, so that we ask rightly.

JD That is helpful because it may be that there are young, or not so young, ones who maybe ask for the gift of the Spirit and are not conscious that they have it. I know in my own history I may have had the Holy Spirit for quite some time, just as this woman did typically. And maybe perhaps my answer was the same, 'I do not have anything but a pot of oil'. I think what you draw attention to is that there are conditions that need to exist to empower the asking and the receiving.

AM What she found was that there was not only the means to pay her debt but the resource to live.

JD Yes, excess is brought in. I was thinking earlier as to the door being open and what was going out of the door, maybe her possessions were being taken away and she had less and less left to pay the creditor; and became more and more in earnest about it. I was thinking of the woman with the flux of blood, life was oozing out of her and she became exercised. She had to do, in that instance, with Christ, but then there would be an impartation; it is not just that debt is met but there is a resource to live on, Luke 8: 43.

AM It seems that at the end of this she becomes a woman with resource rather than one who is searching for a means of escape from the creditor. She is now a woman with resource of her own; she and her sons have the ability to live.

JD We have been taught (CAC vol 8 p64) that in Romans perhaps the first reference to the Holy Spirit is an indirect one, “Blessed they whose lawlessnesses have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered”, chap 4: 7. That would be elementary in the believer's heart, that the Spirit would maintain us in the blessedness of our sins being forgiven. But then it speaks of “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit“, chap 5: 5. So He is not only anticipating our need being met, but there is a certain assurance coming into the believer's heart. Then when we come to chapter 8 we have certain obligations met and we are led by the Spirit of God.

JW Before she shuts the door she is told what vessels are to be brought in. There is not only what goes out but what comes in.

JD It is notable that it is “empty vessels”: do you think it relates to exercise on our part linked to the door being closed? It also says that

once the door is closed she refers to those with her not as children but as “sons”.

JW I was thinking of the environment that there would be in the house, the empty vessel, and the sons.

JD I think that is helpful and links on with what we had earlier. We would think of this in relation to individuals but then it is also how this is worked out in our households. We often think of our households, and rightly so, in relation to the Lord and His rights in our households, but then too this matter of the Spirit. Something of this should be pervading our households so that there are resources.

TAO There was no alternative for this woman; she was in a very vulnerable position; and there is no alternative for us. If we are to go through, if we are to be maintained, it must be through the power of the Spirit.

JD There is no alternative. So the Holy Spirit here has been described as 'our best Friend on earth', JT vol 32 p140. He is already here as having come in at Pentecost, coming upon them as parted tongues of fire (Acts 2: 3), and now available as a gift for the believer.

PJW So John says, “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this he said concerning the Spirit”, John 7: 38, 39. I wondered whether that would link with your thought that there is expansion from these exercises.

JD There is a whole testimony starting to be borne by those in whom this is taking place. It links on with what we value becoming manifest, “where your treasure is, there also will your heart be”, Luke 12: 34. We can say that we value certain things but it will evidence itself in our manner of life. I have heard it was said many years ago that there will come a time when people will be valued more by what they have than what they are, and I suppose that is society as we know it now. But the believer would be different from that, it is what the believer *is*, and then there is what he has, but there is what he is and what can flow out of him, “rivers of living water”.

PJW I was thinking of the references to Acts, and whether it was worked out there in a special way. We see the rivers of living water that flowed out and on and so many were secured and brought in.

JD It is wonderful because there you find it is irrepressible; there

were so many obstacles put in the way of the testimony but still it went forth despite the increase in suffering and so on, the testimony continued to flow, those “rivers of living water”. It is wonderful to think that there is something irresistible to the individual and irrepressible in relation to the testimony that can flow out.

DAB What has been referred to reminds me of the difference between Romans 5 and Romans 8. I suppose, as we all are bound to, the woman underestimated what might flow. In Romans 5 it says, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit”, v 5. We might think, 'That is very well, I brought the vessel in and it is full and I might be satisfied'. In chapter 8, we have “the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (v 39); you cannot measure that in vessels exactly. That gives you some sense of the scope of the divine resource.

JD It reminds you of the man where the waters were to the ankles and then to the knees, then to the loins, and then “waters to swim in”, Ezek 47: 5. It is the wonderful potential that we have to enter into things by the power of the Holy Spirit.

RHB The verse in Romans 5 says, “for we being still without strength”, v 6. I wondered if we have to come to that in our souls before we value what is available to us in the Spirit? If we are living in the flesh there will not be that valuation, but the consciousness of an inability to fulfil righteousness is what makes us greatly value the abiding presence of the Spirit in us.

JD If we live in the flesh we cannot truly value the Holy Spirit, but then we also cannot live in a vacuum; we require a Person to fill our hearts and the Spirit helps us in that. It is very blessed that chapter 5 comes in before the exercise of chapter 6, sin in the world, and then chapter 7, sin in the flesh, as if there is an assurance given to the believer before we go through these exercises. Certain things will have to be put out and then we can come into the fulness of things in chapter 8 leading onto the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

RHB It says, “to walk and please God” (1 Thess 4: 1); the only power to do that is in the power of the Spirit.

DH Would you say more about the vessels? I was thinking of 2 Timothy 2, “If therefore one shall have purified himself from these, in separating himself from them, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified,

serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work”, v 21. It is something that holds the line of preciousness and value.

JD We have this treasure in earthen vessels and despite our own frailty there is God's work in our hearts. We can say that humbly without claiming anything, but from God's side He has worked, and it gives the Spirit a basis to come in. There is a vessel that has capacity for the Spirit's presence.

AJMcS In 2 Timothy 1 we have to “Keep, by the Holy Spirit ... the good deposit entrusted”, v 14. The exercise in chapter 2 is to “pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart” (v 22); this can only be taken up in persons in whom the Spirit is free.

JD That is helpful, “Keep, by the Holy Spirit ... the good deposit entrusted”. There has been much said as to what that may be, one of the suggestions being holding to the truth of the one body, holding to the truth of the house of God. But as you draw attention to, the point is that it is “by the Holy Spirit” that we need to do these things and hold them in our hearts, and then it has a practical effect in 2 Timothy 2 as to where our feet lead us.

AJMcS I think we need help to see that 2 Timothy 2 is the working out of Christianity as God would have it to be worked out in the last days. It is nothing less than that. Separation is involved, in fact it is essential in that setting, but it is much more than that; it is Christianity according to God's standard.

JD These exercises - “withdraw from iniquity” (v 19) - are practical and for many brethren have involved suffering as well, but worked out from the basis of the “good deposit entrusted”, worked out from having an appreciation of the blessedness of Christianity. It is not in an arbitrary way but as knowing how precious divine things are as holding them by the Holy Spirit. The affections are moved in a certain way that affects our pathway.

DSB Do we get progression in relation to the Spirit? I was thinking you referred to Romans 8, being “led by the Spirit” (v 14), and in Galatians we get, “Walk in the Spirit”, Gal 5: 16. I wondered whether this woman went through such an experience in this chapter - she had a little, she then appreciated it and she was able to provide something for the prophet.

JD I feel the exercise in my own heart as to how much I may have progressed in my own links with the Holy Spirit, making more room, learning how to make more room, learning how the Spirit may operate. If we think of the type in Genesis, of the dove, it suggests what is sensitive. Do you think that should be part of how we progress, being sensitive as to the Spirit's feelings?

DSB I wondered whether there was that need of progression. The Spirit is always going to lead us to Christ and if I let Him there will be a result, and if we follow His leading and His prompting we will be filled with Him and He will fill us with Christ.

JD The onus is on us to do that, to enable it to happen. I think it is right to say, although we must always remember that He is a divine Person and part of the Godhead, that in the economy the Spirit does not exactly impose Himself. It is upon us to make way as this woman does; she starts to appreciate what she has and makes these vessels available.

I wondered if we could get some help in John 16 - again it is the Spirit who is referred to as the One who "shall guide you into all the truth". In chapter 14 the Spirit is referred to as the "Comforter", and the Lord speaks of Him, "but the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, *he* shall teach you all things" (v 26); then in chapter 15, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father" (v 26), and then when we come to chapter 16 it is, "the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth". I think it has been said (JT vol 11 p167) that chapter 14 is John's ministry, and chapter 15 has been likened to Peter's ministry and chapter 16 to Paul's ministry - I do not really understand why that has been said, but I can understand that when it says, "he shall guide you into all the truth" it is a reference to how the truth has been opened up from an ascended Christ, and how it was given to Paul to complete the word of God. One of the things that we can value is the truth as it has come to us and to value all the truth. That would be another exercise because in John's gospel the soldiers parted the Lord's clothing, John 19: 23. There are various schisms that go on with part of the truth, and there is also an official system which may claim to have the body-coat, but the desire would be that we are able to hold in our affections all the truth.

DAB What those systems do not have or do not seek is the Head, the

Head in heaven. The Spirit has come from an exalted Christ and that completes the work of God, Christ is exalted and the Spirit has come to bring a testimony to that so that the truth at the present time has that distinctive, heavenly, out of the world, character.

JD In the ways of God there was evidently what was here when Christ ministered, and the company at the beginning of the Acts would be a direct result of Christ's own ministry to which the Spirit was free to come at Pentecost. But then it was left until the Lord was not only risen, but ascended, and as such it was that He should appear to Paul. Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, which I suppose involves not only the ministry of the assembly, but also the ministry of the gospel. We perhaps understandably think of it more as the ministry of the assembly but it would include both.

DAB I am interested to see the connection of what was given to Paul and what was the spring and inspiration of the recovery of the truth, that there was an apprehension that there was a Man in glory and His body here. That is the crux of what the Spirit is ministering at the present time.

JD It says, "But when *he* is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth". The word 'teach' is not used here; it is, we trust, how something of the truth is being opened up today in this occasion. We get help from one another, guided into things. That can only be truly realised or occur where the truth of the body is held.

JW You made emphasis on "*all* the truth" - Mr Raven said that there is no such thing as 'truths', he spoke of the truth as one whole (vol 3 p167). We need to see how one feature of the truth fits in with another and not to give any feature of it up.

JD We would feel in our affections the desire not to place one part of the truth against another but to value and to hold all the truth. We may, especially when we are young, seek to put the truth into pigeon-holes and that is understandable when we perhaps do not understand much. But when we understand a little more we may still seek to do this and say, "I understand that now". Then you perhaps go to the meeting and an older brother says something and you think, 'Perhaps I do not understand that after all, or at least not quite as well as I thought!'. The truth is a living thing; we cannot segment it. The church publicly has sought to do that and has introduced catechisms and creeds but the truth is a living thing, "as the truth is in Jesus" Eph 4: 21. It is really in

Him that we have the fulness of the matter.

PMW Is that one of the ends of the glad tidings, “our Saviour God, who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”, 1 Tim 2: 4? It is a whole, and it is a knowledge that we should have and value.

JD We know the truth of the assembly is not opened up in Romans, but Paul ends the epistle by speaking about that, “as to which silence has been kept in the times of the ages, but which has now been made manifest, and by prophetic scriptures, according to commandment of the eternal God”, Rom 16: 25, 26. It suggests to the believer that, as having come to know God's glad tidings the truth of the assembly is not optional, that God intends through the “commandment of the eternal God” that we should come into the light of the assembly and not stop short.

PMW The Spirit guides us into the truth; His power is essential for that.

MRC How do we come to value the truth? Paul speaks of, “as the truth is in Jesus”. Do we have to see that it is attractive?

JD Yes. I was thinking earlier, Pilate asks the question, “What is truth?” John 18: 38. I wondered if I was asked the question, 'What is truth' what my reply would be. I think the essence of it is what you draw attention to, what is in Jesus, but I think too that we have to work this thing out. We would say, from a responsible point of view, coming to an appreciation of the truth begins in Romans 3, “let God be true, and every man false” (v 4); that is the germ of the believer who has started to appreciate the truth. But from the divine side in John 1 it says, “for of his fulness we all have received, and grace upon grace. For the law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”, v 16, 17. The footnote there is very helpful, 'but grace and truth actually commenced to be, not in God's mind of course, but in revelation and actual existence down here. But its so taking place supposes its continuance'. There is what we would start to arrive at in the way of valuing the truth through responsible exercise. That only occurs because of the wonderful revelation there has been in Jesus, in Christ, and in the economy in which God has been pleased to make the truth known.

DJW The truth has also been opened up in temple enquiry. I wondered whether one function of the Spirit today for us, in view of what

has come in, in the past, would be to keep that truth in our hearts in a fresh and living way.

JD Temple enquiry is a very blessed thing to prove. We referred at the outset to valuing one another; it says, “they came to their own”, and that is what we come to, these conditions, temple conditions, where there are believers gathered who have the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the body functions, and the Spirit has liberty. These conditions facilitate the opening up of the truth. The truth is not preserved simply on our book shelves, or some of us may now have the ministry on a computer disc, which is a wonderful resource, but it is only information unless the thing is worked out and the truth is actually preserved in our hearts and in our affections, involving formation.

PJW Do you think subjection is vital? “The Spirit of truth, he shall guide you”; you cannot guide a wilful or insubject person.

JD That is helpful. We need to be subject to the Lord, and then to the Spirit's leading. There is a certain sensitivity to the Spirit's operations which means that we need to take account of that and make way for Him. As we know, we can quite easily grieve the Holy Spirit.

RHB Do these activities go on until the Lord comes, guiding, speaking and announcing?

JD What wonderful grace that they do go on, and that they are still available to the overcomer. How blessed to know these matters of guiding, speaking and announcing. I suppose we see something of it in Genesis 24 when the servant leads Rebecca to Isaac; how well he can speak of his master and that continues. The Spirit would magnify Christ. It says in 2 Corinthians when we come to the new covenant, “but where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty”, 2 Cor 3: 17. It is not that there may be liberty, but “there is liberty”. It is wonderful what we have in the Spirit.

RHB I was thinking of the Lord's words to the churches, “He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies”, Rev 2: 11. Having an ear for what the Spirit is saying, not only what He has said, would express our valuation of that divine Person. It would exercise us as to what the Spirit is saying today, not only what He has said.

JD I think that is critical and the devil has subtly used that in previous conflicts, to engage the brethren with what was right but what had been said previously. It is not that anything that is said now would

not be in keeping with that, but there is the Spirit's current voice and the imperative is to know the Spirit's current speaking to us and to be able to hear. Hearing is another sensitive matter. It is easy not to hear and not to hear rightly. Paul heard things, "heard unspeakable things said which it is not allowed to man to utter" (2 Cor 12: 4) and we have something of the flavour of those things in Ephesians. But the Spirit continues to speak and bring to us things from such an exalted sphere from where Christ is in the Father's presence.

DJH The note is interesting for, "he will announce to you". The end of it says, 'Here I conceive because it is a message brought from another'. It is wonderful that the Lord Jesus, speaking simply, would send messages to us by the Spirit. It is a very simple expression but very profound.

JD I think it links with what we have said earlier, a Head in heaven and the body here. We speak often of the Lord nourishing and cherishing the assembly; this is partly how it would work out.

RHB It has often been said of this divine Person that "he shall not speak from himself".

JD It is what we thought of earlier, the glory that belongs to the Holy Spirit in relation to the place that He has taken in the economy, a subordinate place. He is not speaking from Himself but what He hears He speaks, and His delight too in doing that and magnifying Christ in our hearts and bringing us to the Father. It would link with the part and place that the Spirit has in the service of God.

RHB It is to give character to the speaking in the assembly. If a divine Person has taken that place that "he shall not speak from himself", none of us have, in that sense, the right to do that. What proceeds is to be under His impulse and direction only. Peter says, "If any one speak - as oracles of God; if any one minister - as of strength which God supplies", 1 Peter 4: 11.

JD It thus brings out the greatness of the answer there is to Christ in glory in the assembly and in the body. The body has been described as the vessel of His - the Spirit's - manifestation, CAC vol 25 p69. It is a remarkable expression. So the Spirit does not speak from Himself, but there is, as a result of His activities, a wonderful vessel that He delights to have, in all its glory and detail, for the pleasure of divine Persons, the Father and the Son.

QP So the Lord Jesus says something very similar, even of Himself, “The Son can do nothing of himself save whatever he sees the Father doing”, John 5: 19.

JD When we are speaking of the economy; it is the place that the Son and the Spirit have taken, the Father remaining in supremacy. That should affect our spirits. We have been speaking of the Holy Spirit, but then there are our spirits. That is another thing that has been said as to the body, it is not a congregation of individual spirits, there is one body and one Spirit and that involves our own spirits being formed by these things. That links on with what we said at the outset, we can claim to value certain matters but as we do value certain matters it has an effect upon us, it becomes demonstrated by the type of persons we are.

QP Did you have any impression as to this particular title, “the Spirit of truth”?

JD Not really except attention has been drawn to the truth being seen by us in Christ objectively, but then the Spirit of truth having come, the Spirit will never be without witness and the testimony will continue as we know because the Spirit is here, despite the failings of those of us who are in the testimony. But the truth is also held subjectively in the Spirit of truth. It also involves what is characteristic. I think as we make way for the Spirit and value Him, and value the truth, there then becomes what is characteristic in us that is of the truth.

DAB It shows how deeply the one is identified with the other and that it then becomes the source for us of guidance into “all the truth”.

JW I was thinking of the Spirit not speaking from Himself but as He hears. The Spirit speaking requires vessels, and do you think these vessels take character from that; they do not speak for themselves but before they speak they hear?

JD There is a common expression 'to think before we speak', but we need to hear before we speak, especially in the meeting and in the assembly. That would be a habitual thing for a spiritual person that they would hear before they speak. That would test us as to how current our hearing is and our speaking is, whether we are in communion. I suppose that is what underlies all of this, communion with the Lord and with the Spirit which is a searching thing as to how constant our communion may be.

JSG Would the reference in verse 13, “whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak”, also gives us to value how immediate the availability of the Spirit's voice is, because circumstances are changing, conditions are changing; but this is abiding?

JD That is very encouraging; despite what may belong to the wilderness path and the changing circumstances of the testimony there is a constancy that remains with the place and position that divine Persons have taken up to support it.

RHB It says, “he will announce to you what is coming” - what is your impression as to that?

JD I do not know whether it would simply have reference to what yet lies ahead in relation to the Lord, but I am sure there is more to it than that?

RHB It seems to include the great scope of what is eternal which is about to be displayed. Perhaps in our conversation we spend a lot of time speaking about what is past, but the Spirit is announcing what is coming. That is particularly true when failure has come into the church publicly. The view is forward to what is to be so shortly brought out publicly, but the secret of it lies with those who have an ear.

JD That is very precious. So, it is one of the Spirit's services, “the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth ... and he will announce to you what is coming”. He gives us to have to do with what is eternal now. We can come into a sphere which has the characteristics of eternity attaching to it, which is a wonderful thing. That is something else to value. We live in a world that is passing but we have to do with what is eternal.

That leads us on to John 20 because the Lord comes in and says, “Peace be to you” (v 19), and then again “Peace be to you” (v 21), as if He would bring in confirmation as to matters. I think the Lord was seeking that they should be confirmed in relation to what was going to be eternal in its character.

DAB If you look from the point of view of the juncture at which the Lord said this in chapter 16, “he will announce to you what is coming” it would encompass the present day. It is not only future. Some very profound changes were about to take place, Man was about to go into heaven, the Holy Spirit was to come, and I wondered whether the Lord takes that up in John 20, “I ascend”, v 17. That was one of the things

that was coming, and then that was going to affect not only the source and power of faith here, but it was to have the profoundest effect on the way that things were administered here as well. The whole thing was going to come under the influence of His having gone above. Only the Spirit could bring us into the good of that.

JD So that in the context of when the Lord spoke about these matters in chapter 16, He had yet to rise and yet to ascend, and we know there were the forty days in which the Lord helped the disciples to become acquainted with a spiritual condition. Then there were ten days in which the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit were together, and then the Spirit comes from such a sphere; and they were going to be able to bear these things. The Lord says, “I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now”, which has also been linked with chapter 17 and the wonderful things the Lord speaks to the Father about in relation to His own.

AJMcS Mr Taylor said that “what is coming” relates to Paul's ministry, vol 52 p173.

JD It links again with, “guide you into all the truth”, and it being given to Paul to complete the word of God. We have been taught (and it is easy to say these things and it is horrible to think we may sound academic), that there were four ministries given to Paul; the ministry of the gospel, the ministry of the new covenant, the ministry of reconciliation, and the ministry of the mystery. It is wonderful to think of all this being part of “what is coming”. We were reading Acts locally and it was mentioned that Peter lays the tracks for Paul's train, and Paul's train is coming we may say with those wonderful 'carriages'; with only first class passengers because of the ministry he has. He is a competent new covenant minister and is going to introduce what abounds and subsists in glory.

DAB All that would have a practical affect in the Christian company. It is of the essence of Paul's ministry that it related to the 'me' (Acts 9: 4); that was to be the repository of all these things. The Lord establishes here the atmosphere in which the Christian company is to subsist, an atmosphere of grace. It seems a very wonderful thing to me that he should do that here. He does not lay out doctrine or anything official but he sees to the spirit of the company.

JD One of the things Paul does in Acts is that he helps in the establishment of local assemblies. What helps local assemblies to

function is atmosphere. That is another thing that particularly the Spirit of God would have to do with, that the atmosphere should be such that there can be a manifestation of Christ. The Lord comes in here and makes Himself known and then He breathes into them; there is an impartation, the whole thing becomes very wonderful. You can see then how this has been linked with what should characterise the Christian company.

DAB The temple is a place of function, but in order to function there has to be a certain number of people there. It has been pointed out that a meeting for enquiry is an important part of temple activity. You cannot have enquiry without two people, and you cannot take the Supper very easily either below a certain number. There are one or two with whom we have fellowship who are on their own and the young people need to reflect what a privilege the access they have to Christian company really is, because it gives them entrance, they are brought and have been brought all their lives, into this environment.

JD Again, when they were let go in Acts the first thing they did was that they came to their own, they had no thoughts to go anywhere else. It is a challenge then when we are set free from our responsible affairs whether the first thing on our minds and affections is to come to our own, which would involve coming to the meetings, and then we find that the thing is functioning. We may say, 'Why do we not sit at home and read a ministry book?'. How wonderful the ministry is, but then there is something current and particularly special and precious as we prove the currency of these things and what we have been referring to as the temple functioning. It is linked to what we hear currently, not simply what is past, but what we hear currently.

PJW Do you think Paul's practical ministry that he speaks of in Acts 20 amongst the Ephesians showed his valuation of the saints? Would that be something for us to think about?

JD Yes, that is very helpful and links on with our scriptures because there he moved in and out of the households of the saints and he did not shrink from announcing all the counsel of God, v 20, 27. That would be part of the Spirit's operations through Paul. It involved something being established that would be a demonstration of the truth being worked out at its highest height.

AJMCS He descended and he enfolded Eutychus, v 10. I wondered whether the in-breathing here represents the Lord's life and character.

It gives character to the saints so much so that remission comes before retention.

JD That is helpful. There were many lights in the upper room, but there was more than light there and you see that in Paul's activity, the spirit of the thing, the life of Christ was manifest in him and he was able to enfold. Here in John's gospel there is an impartation from Christ, He breathes into them, but Paul had also received from Christ and he is able to impart something to Eutychus that there might be restoration. It says, "ye who are spiritual restore such a one" (Gal 6: 1), and that is a great test, but it is not a theory, it is worked out practically in what we value. And as we depend upon Christ and the Spirit, and one another, these things take place and there is an atmosphere of life and an area where life is preserved, where practical salvation can be known.

AJMcS I think it has been pointed out that John writes after the church had broken down publicly and he also provides the means whereby things can be settled ecclesiastically, meaning that the remission before the retention not only relates to what is moral but it relates to what is ecclesiastical as well. There is a way out.

JD There is. There is a way through, and we often speak about not becoming over engaged with the breakdown, but there are resources to meet it. None of the conditions now have caught divine Persons short. In that sense they were anticipated and there are more than adequate resources to meet the current day.

PFE The Lord comes and stands in the midst and says these words and, where we first read it says, "the doors shut ... through fear of the Jews". He stood in the midst; all could see Him and He brings in what is most needed and imparts the Spirit.

JD I think it is an exercise that the woman in 2 Kings shut the door, and here the doors are shut. We might say what a reward for perhaps not the most attractive exercise, especially when we are young, being in an area where the door is closed. We would perhaps like to see a bit more of what is out there, but what recompense! He comes and takes His place in the midst. It has been said, 'He stood there as the divine centre of the spiritual universe', JT vol 77 p222.

DAB There is a place where the ascended Man has breathed, and we look round on the brethren who are passing on and think, they have kept the door closed and retained an atmosphere. Would any of us

dare to defile it or associate anything with it that was incompatible with that sanctified condition?

London

16th May 2009

Key to initials:-

D S Bodman, Dorking; R H Brown, East Finchley; D A Burr, London;
M R Cook, Maidstone; A A Croot, London; J Drummond, Aberdeen;
P F Eagle, London; J S Gray, East Finchley; D Hawgood, Bexley;
D J Hutson, London; A Martin, Buckhurst Hill;
A J McSeveney, Twickenham; T A Oberg, Villa Grove;
Q Poore, Swanage; D J Roberts, Gillingham;
P J Walkinshaw, Gillingham; P M White, London;
E F Woodford, Dorking; D J Wright, Havering; J Wright, Havering

THE CONTINUANCE OF THE TESTIMONY

Brian W Burton

1 Chronicles 22: 2-16; 29: 3

2 Kings 2: 1-14

2 Timothy 1: 13, 14; 2: 1-3, 7

I wish to say a word about how the things of the Lord may be handed on from one generation to another. We were speaking in the reading of the perfect work of the Lord Jesus. No one worked like He did in absolute perfection, preparing vessels to fill their place in the testimony after He had gone to glory. I am sure it is a feature that has marked men and women who have been with God too all the way down this dispensation and, as seen in the scriptures we have read, in the previous dispensation. Anyone who has been with God has had a concern as to what will follow if the Lord does not come in their life time. Will they leave behind something locally, and maybe universally, that will be able to carry on the testimony in the grace that the Lord would give? I think it is quite an exercise for the older ones to look on the younger ones and to be able to recognise something that is coming to light in them that will form manhood and womanhood in relation to the testimony of our Lord. I think it is something for the young ones here to think about. Can you live above all for Christ, and perhaps draw on the experience of older ones who have been here a good while in the testimony? I can remember as a young man the many older ones who we looked up to and realised they had stood in their place in the inheritance and filled it out to the best of their ability, and I believe many of them left something valuable behind. The hymn we began with (No 424) touches on that, as the Lord's servants are taken, and it happens often. It is well to think about what such persons may have deposited in relation to the testimony of our Lord and what can we learn from it. Are we going to take up the challenge and stand in our own day?

I read about these three pairs of persons - David and Solomon were royal persons. At the moment I am not thinking of them as types of Christ, which of course they are, but thinking of them as men who filled a responsible place in the testimony here. I believe they secured and carried through the royal line, and I would suggest that has been amongst the saints; dignity and royalty belong to those who belong to our Lord Jesus Christ. Elijah and Elisha were prophets, thank God for the prophetic line too that has been amongst the saints. That needs to

be continued. Paul and Timothy were ministering servants. Paul was more, he was an apostle, but they were both ministering servants. The grace of the apostle comes out in many things to Timothy, instructing him and encouraging him.

I seek help to say a word as to David and Solomon - this chapter is beautiful. How much it meant to David! We read in the Psalms of his longings and affection for the house of God. He wanted to build that house, it meant everything to him, and he devoted so much to it. But the word of God came through Nathan that he was not to be the builder because he had shed much blood, and made great wars. While David was a beautiful type of Christ, and though his history as a whole was wonderful - beginning as a shepherd boy, meeting the lion and the bear and Goliath (1 Sam 17), and so on, a man after God's own heart (Acts 13: 22) - yet the failures of David were very serious. He failed in relation to Urijah the Hittite (2 Sam 11), and he failed in relation to his own household and as to Absalom, 2 Sam 13. Think of him mourning over Absalom, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died in thy stead" (2 Sam 18: 33); these things in God's governmental ways stood out and David could not correct them. I do not want to dwell on that but it is a sobering thing for us to remember. We may be greatly helped in the Lord's testimony, but there may be these things which come in. We should never let natural links intrude in the things of God. David failed grievously in relation to Absalom. He was a murderer, and David let him back under Joab's influence; he did not exercise righteousness in relation to Absalom.

But there were beautiful traits in David. He was a man after God's own heart and he is speaking here so wonderfully of what he had prepared. In this chapter it is in his affliction. He knew affliction, he suffered, sometimes because of his own failures, sometimes he suffered in battles of the Lord and many other things, but through all that, as the Psalms bring out, he provided the material for the house of God. It was so much before his heart and soul. The verse in chapter 29 says, "moreover, in my affection for the house of my God". David was a lover. He loved God and God loved him. God loved Solomon too; God sent and named him, "Jedidiah, for Jehovah's sake", 2 Sam 12: 25. All this bears on the interest that God takes in His people, and the way He selects people for His testimony. He has selected you. None of us are like David or Solomon exactly, of course, but we have a part in the Lord's testimony here and that is a great thing at the present moment.

There is a beautiful abundance in these verses, things that were required for the house of God, valuable things, gold and silver, timber and so on, prepared abundantly before David's death. He knew, as a result of God's word, that he was not going to build this house. That must have been a disappointment to David, but he did not give up because God had said, 'No, it is not you who will build the house, I have someone else, a man of peace'. Both of them are sometimes types of Christ: Solomon sets out the millennial glory of Christ, and he was the One whom God had selected to build the house. David is listing these things here and he called for Solomon his son and "charged him to build a house for Jehovah the God of Israel". Earlier he says, "Solomon my son is young and tender"; that is a beautiful touch. I think the Lord looks round on a company like this, and the older ones would look round on the younger ones and say, 'This young man, this young woman, they are young and tender'; the potential is there that will make a man or a woman who will consider for Christ, who will be here in relation to His testimony. It has not come to full maturity yet, "Solomon my son is young and tender" - I lay that upon the saints. The older ones should be looking for that in younger ones and having in mind that the features of what is young and tender should develop into full maturity, and there should be conditions amongst the saints - and I believe there are - that will help that development forward. As you sit in a meeting like this, maybe the young ones do not always listen. The Lord wants you for His testimony, and the older ones want you to commit yourself to Christ and to his people and to be available in relation to the work that is going on.

So, "he called for Solomon his son, and charged him", and then David explains that he had had in mind to build the house, but God had said he should not, "for thou hast shed much blood". And God said to him, "Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about", all these details God had been over. That is true of the company here; God has been over the history of each one, and He has set you in a particular place and He has given you certain features that can be useful in His interests, that can be patterned after the Lord Jesus Himself. You can grow up to be a brother or a sister that is devoted to the Lord's work and available to Him. The older ones might look to the younger ones too to come forward and carry the burdens of the testimony. This is a beautiful touch, the building of this house. It was to be a magnificent house, a wonderful house, and represented a dwelling place, at that time, for God. Things are not material now, as we know; God's dwelling

is in the assembly. So our committal now is to the assembly, and in serving the assembly we are serving Christ. We are looking after and furthering what is for His own peculiar joy and interest at the present moment. David goes on here, "Now, my son, Jehovah be with thee, that thou mayest prosper, and build the house of Jehovah thy God ... Only, Jehovah give thee wisdom and understanding, and place thee over Israel, and to keep the law of Jehovah thy God". This idea of God giving Solomon wisdom began with David. We know that when Solomon became king after David had gone, God gave Solomon the chance to ask for what he would. Solomon asked for wisdom that he might be able to judge so great a people, 2 Chron 1: 10. He had a respect for the people of God and he asked for wisdom and God was pleased with that. When we pray and ask God for something, it is a wonderful thing if we have a sense that God is pleased with what we ask, "Because this was in thy heart, and thou has not asked riches", v 11. God gave him what he asked for, wisdom. There was no one as wise as Solomon anywhere; he was the wisest man in all the earth. Along with that, God gave him things that he did not ask for. What a God we have to do with! David is touching those things here, "Jehovah give thee wisdom".

I wanted to speak of the last verse we read here, "Arise and be doing and Jehovah be with thee" - it is a good word. No doubt it goes for all of us; we need to get up and get on with the work under the direction of the Lord, the Master - "serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work", 2 Tim 2: 21. We should have that in our hearts and minds for ourselves, but in relation to younger ones too that they might be serviceable to the Master. David says here, "Arise and be doing and Jehovah be with thee". It has been seen abundantly in the history of the testimony that if persons commit themselves, and make themselves available in a way that is serviceable to the Master, the Lord will take such on and use them in a way we may not have thought of.

I trust we might get some impressions of these two men, the affections of David coming in in relation to his son Solomon. It is not recorded that Solomon said anything here, but when Solomon did begin to speak there was no doubting the wisdom of Solomon's words. His Songs were a thousand and five (1 Kings 4: 32); we only have one of them in scripture, the Song of Songs. What a man Solomon was. He spoke about all sorts of things, from the cedars of Lebanon, to the hyssop that springs out of the wall, v 33. What words! God had Solomon sovereignly ready, but I see too the provision and the

influence that David had as his father, as an older man; he brought in the sense of blessing for Solomon, he directed him in the way he should go and he left him with all this material that when the moment came he should get on and build the house. I love this word and trust it might touch every heart here, “Arise and be doing and Jehovah be with thee”. God makes way for what you and I might do, and that we might take it up and do it. We see that repeatedly in the history of the testimony.

I go on to Elijah and Elisha, another beautiful pair. These two men were prophets and Elijah had thrown his mantle over Elisha while he was ploughing, 1 Kings 19: 19. Elisha was a young man who had taken up his responsibilities seriously. He was ploughing with twelve yolk of oxen, Elijah cast his mantle over him and he left the oxen and followed Elijah. It says “and Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal”; you might have thought that it would be the other way round. You would expect the older man to give the lead, and in the rest of the section he did, Elisha went with Elijah; but in the first instance Elijah went with Elisha. I just wonder whether that is a word to the younger ones that you might not necessarily always have to wait for other persons to ask you into things, but you might take the step yourself, you might make yourself available. No doubt Elisha loved this man of God who had taken him into path of service with him. So Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal, the place where the flesh is cut off. What a journey it was, and Elisha was learning. He was a young man who was learning from this older, more experienced man. Elijah was communicating things to Elisha. It speaks of the vantage points that they visited. It says “they went down to Bethel”. No doubt Elisha would have learnt something of the truth of the house of God. We all need to do that, and if you want help as to the house of God, the first epistle to Timothy is rich. Read about Jacob's history too; he found the house of God quite early but he said it was a dreadful place. But when he came back to it in his spiritual history he found that it was a place of blessing and he was recovered there to God's great thoughts in relation to himself, Gen 28: 19; 35: 6.

Here they are, these two, at Bethel. Then, “Jehovah has sent me to Jericho”. No doubt Elisha would have understood something of the judgment of the world's system. Men like Elijah would have had a very strong judgment of Jericho and all that it stood for. It had been rebuilt in spite of the curse that was laid upon it, 1 Kings 16: 34. This was part of his education. There is that, beloved young ones, for all of us, we have not finished our education yet but, for the young ones

particularly, it is the time of the education. You have a lot to learn, I do not say that in any hard way, but it is true.

Then they went on, and at each point you have these “sons of the prophets”. They were not at all helpful, they were not in things vitally. Elisha was getting into things vitally in company with Elijah. Then they go to the Jordan, and at each point Elijah challenges him, “Abide here, I pray thee: for Jehovah has sent me ...”, but Elisha was not having any of it; if Elijah was going on, he was going on with him. How worthwhile it was. Elisha was not willing to be separated from Elijah; he would go on. The whole blessing and basis of his service for God rested upon that and his link with Elijah until the point when Elijah was taken up from him.

So, they carry on and cross the Jordan - that is a point in soul history that everyone has to come to, and especially those who are going to serve the Lord in any measure. Anyone who is going to serve in the prophetic word has to face the truth of the Jordan - our death with Christ. We come to an end of all that the natural man is and see the light of another order opening up on the other side, life that is in Christ, a link with Christ in relation to the heavenly realm of things. That is the way of the blessing, where Elisha comes into this. They get across the Jordan - I think this is very beautiful: “they went on, and talked”. Think of the converse between these two men, Elijah a man with considerable experience, he had a history with God, and they talked. This talking was in the light of resurrection on the other side of the Jordan. Elisha would be learning all the time. Young ones must come to a meeting like this with the object of learning about Jesus, learning of the sphere where He is and the sphere that is here amongst the saints too, a sphere of blessing in which you can find your part. Then Elisha gets this great opportunity, “Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken away from thee”. What does Elisha ask for? He asks for, “a double portion of thy spirit”, and Elijah says, “Thou hast asked a hard thing: if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so to thee”. Elisha must have kept his eyes on Elijah; he must have riveted them there: he was not going to be deprived of this wonderful gift. He had asked a hard thing, but if he had his eyes on Elijah when he was taken up it would be so. He did not have to wait too long, “And it came to pass as they went on, and talked, that behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire; and they parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into the heavens”. What it must have been to see that, to see another taken up, his

teacher, the one whom he loved, taken up “by a whirlwind into the heavens”. There are only two ordinary men in scripture who are recorded as being taken up without going through death, the other being Enoch. The wonderful thing here is that Elijah completed his service and the power of heaven intervened and took him up, and Elisha saw it; so he got the double portion of Elijah’s spirit and that was no mean thing, the spirit of Elijah was a great thing. He had served in that power himself as used of God. But Elisha had a double portion of it. It speaks of the wonderful dispensation in which we are, the spirit of grace that marked the service of Elisha. He served in the light of a man gone up, and the power of that spirit here, which is very much like the position, dear brethren, in which we are.

The ministry of Elisha was remarkable, full of blessing, interesting stories; the things that he did were quite remarkable, the double portion rested upon him. What a wonderful thing, what a gift. I encourage the young ones here: the Lord will bless you too. You need to set yourself, and ask the Lord for these things. As you are asking for great things, He may not give you them all at once, He may not give you what you ask for either, but He will give you something, I am sure of that. It is a wonderful thing to set yourself in relation to Him, in the way of divine blessing so that you might be useful amongst the Lord’s people.

I love to come to the beloved apostle and Timothy. These two men were in our own dispensation; so maybe we can link on more easily with Paul and Timothy. Where we began Paul is instructing Timothy as one he could trust. Timothy was nearer to Paul than anyone, “I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on”, Phil 2: 20. He was a relatively young man but he had endeared himself to Paul because of his committal and faithfulness to the Lord. I have often wondered how Paul knew all these things about Timothy but I suppose it must have been as they walked on together and served together. I think above all Paul must have listened to Timothy’s prayers and, of course, Timothy listened to Paul’s prayers too and that was even more wonderful. What it would have been to listen to the beloved apostle outpouring his soul and exercises to God and to the Lord in prayer!

Here he is saying to Timothy, “Have an outline of sound words, which words thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus”. What an exhortation that is. How much Paul had said to Timothy we do not really know. There must have been a great deal they

had conversed about as Paul ministered and Timothy listened, and Paul sent Timothy to various localities and Timothy comes back and reports upon it. Paul relied on him, and that is a wonderful thing. That is what I am thinking about for this occasion that the older ones might be able to rely on the younger ones, not without good reason of course: you do not have confidence in anyone or rely on persons unless they have really proved themselves. That is fine, if you see a young brother or a young sister proving themselves in relation to the things of the Lord. The older ones greatly appreciate that and the Lord Himself greatly appreciates that too. Paul had found something reliable in Timothy, “no one like-minded”; there were others, of course; according to this epistle, “Luke alone is with me”, chap 4: 11. There were others, fellow-citizens and fellow-labourers and fellow-servants with the beloved apostle, but Timothy had a distinct place. This word of exhortation here is very beautiful, “Have an outline of sound words, which words thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus”. Then in the second chapter he goes on, “Thou therefore, my child, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus”. We know that Timothy was not literally Paul's child, but he was so spiritually; Paul had been a father to him in a spiritual sense. I can look back to my young days and there were persons who were men in the assembly who were regarded as fathers in that way; you learnt from them, men of experience. We are not without those today either, but I would like to encourage the younger ones in this, and to encourage the older ones too to look for the same features which were found in Timothy in a measure in one and another: “Thou therefore, my child”.

Then he says, “the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men” - this is a verse which is very often referred to, and rightly so, illustrating that which I have been seeking to bring out in this address, that there is a line in the testimony of our Lord that has gone through. The testimony is Christ Himself; He has set things on. It is then empowered in the coming in of the Spirit, giving life and buoyancy and power to the testimony as it flowed out in those early days in the Acts. It has gone through. The word to Philadelphia shows that it will go through, “a little power”, but it is there, the same character of power that was there in the beginning, going through, Rev 3: 8. It is above all by virtue of the presence of the Holy Spirit of God, but it has also gone through by faithful men and women who have filled their part in the testimony: “these entrust to faithful men”. It is not suggested here that there would be any time when such persons would not be available, and I think you can say that

through much weakness and much difficulty and maybe much failure too, there has been this line of faith, of faithful men and women. It has run through and been passed on from one to another, older ones to younger ones. Then it says, “the things thou hast heard of me”; that was Paul’s own teaching, but under Christ. His own ministry was distinctive; the ministry of the assembly, the heavenly ministry, the line of the truth, came through Paul distinctively, and it was to be entrusted to faithful men. Then it says, “such as shall be competent to instruct others also”; that was the third level. I suppose that is where we are today. This line of instruction, persons have availed themselves of it, “faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also”. Paul is laying this on Timothy with the confidence and assurance that Timothy would take it up and work it out. I think that is very fine.

Then he says, “Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things”. No doubt there were many things which Paul said that Timothy did not fully understand. There are lots of things which might be said in ministry in a meeting like this, some of which may not be understood, but the answer is here - “Think of what I say”. Take time for the contemplation of what is said; what Paul said would amply repay contemplation. Like the Bereans, “receiving the word with all readiness of mind, daily searching the scriptures if these things were so”, Acts 17: 11. That is a good line of exercise which has often been laid upon us. Understanding is to be greatly coveted. It is much the same, in one sense, as wisdom, but I have an impression that understanding relates more to the heavenly side of things. The truth is not something you can study like you study science, mathematics or other subjects at school, but it is something that has to be understood in the spiritual sense, and affection for Christ is a wonderful start. Then the words have to be taken in and you have to think about them. Think of all that Paul said. Perhaps very little is recorded in scripture; some of it is and thank God for that, for his words in the epistles and so on, but they do require our attention and we are to think about them. Some of those wonderful epistles, all his writings, sit down and think about them and ask the Spirit of God to help you. It may mean that you might need to look at the books too, and see what others have said about the Scriptures and their wonders, and gradually you will begin to get a picture of what the Lord has in mind for you and has in mind for all His people. That is where we began, “Have an outline of sound words”. You need to get an outline. There is a very interesting piece by Mr Stoney on the Scope of the Truth (vol 3 p239), where it is pointed out

that all departure from the truth, whether in our own hearts or in Christendom, flows out of taking an aspect of the truth out of its true setting and emphasising one aspect at the expense of another. What we need is some impression of the scope of the truth and for that we need the help of the Spirit of God. None of us can take in the whole truth at one time, but there is such a thing as the scope of the truth and the Spirit has that in His heart and mind for us and as we make way for the Spirit in listening to ministry I believe we begin to grow and we begin to see how various aspects of the truth fit together. They are not opposed to each other. We are not like some who take up an aspect of the truth and press it at the expense of everything else; we are to see how it fits in to the whole scope of Christian truth.

I think this is beautiful here, “the Lord will give thee understanding in all things” - I trust that the younger ones here will have a desire for that. You want understanding in all things, and I believe what we have been saying this afternoon might help us a little on that line of things. If you give time and attention to the things of the Lord and the words that are spoken, the words of the scripture and the words that are spoken in meetings like this, then sit down quietly and think about it. Maybe you only got a few phrases, but think about them. You might get the others and more help later on. That is the way, here a little, there a little; that is the way that the truth takes form in our hearts and becomes formative in us. I think that is what the Lord and the Spirit of God are looking for at the present moment.

May we be encouraged in these things, thinking about these three pairs of men. There were very different circumstances and a different lesson in each case and each is profitable and put together in this idea of the old and the young going on together, with the old looking for blessing and help for the younger ones, and the younger ones looking too for what is in the older ones that it might strengthen them and establish them in understanding the truth as to our Lord Jesus Christ at the present moment.

May the Lord bless the word.

Malvern
21st February 2009