

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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"MY LORD"

ROOTED

VERSE

THE CHILDREN'S LESSONS

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THE TIME OF THE SPIRIT

Summary of Readings

A.J.E.Welch

(i) John 14: 1-4, 15-24; 20: 17, 18.

The Lord would give us a better and more extensive appreciation of what attaches to *this present time of the Spirit*. This is the great climax of the dispensations, never prophetically defined as to length; Mark 13 reminding us that the extent of it is the Father's own matter. The Lord sets it out for us here by relating it to His own movements, "I go to prepare you a place ... I am coming again and shall receive you to myself". No suggestion of man's failures has any part at all in the extension or conclusion of this time. Running along with this, the passage in John 20, which the Lord seemed to put into our minds together this morning, shows that the great divine unfoldings began at their full height - "my Father and your Father, and my God and our God". The Lord is ensuring that His living relations with those who love Him are never to be interrupted. It is a great challenge and stimulus to be constantly in living relations with Himself. It is through the Spirit we have part in the life of Christ. The Spirit would exceedingly enrich what is spiritual, and the need to get into what is *spiritual* is great. The realisation of Christ in glory strengthens confidence. We have the fullest furnishings from God's side, and the power to be engaged with glory. He could say, "Go to my brethren ..."; the glorious side of accomplishment bursts on our view, with the intenseness of what is presented, against the intenseness of what is presented against the background of darkness. The whole position is clear, and the feelings of the Lord are disclosed to us as He comes to this.

(ii) Matthew 13: 16-52.

The point of enquiry in mind is *this remarkable time* in which God has called us - this distinctive period of His ways in which what is richest and best relating to the scope of love's purposes is being secured. It is a momentous time in which there is no room for part-

time Christianity; it is to bring out the sweetness and power of the love of Christ for the assembly, and on our side the committed, refined and full answer of true hearts entering into what is in the Lord's mind. The intensive activity of the blessed Spirit should never find us slow or sluggish, but quick to enter upon these engagements in the realm of life, the great spiritual realm which more than ever is to be the occupation of the saints. This section of Matthew is of great import in what is before us, because we are shown how God in His infinite wisdom has established things in view of fruit for Himself appearing and being gathered, and indeed garnered, despite the intrusion of mixed conditions. God is working this out in proximity to what has altogether different origins, so that the word "suffer both to grow together unto the harvest is significant. The Lord indicates what will then take place - the darnel gathered into bundles, the wheat brought together into the granary. This helps us to understand how the good fruit is appearing in immediate proximity to that which results from what the enemy has done. The Kingdom - power and authority - is needed, so that God, in a way which to man is entirely mysterious, proceeds to the end He has in view. The Lord emphasises the importance of the parable, focusing His remarks upon the disciples ("Ye", v 18), distinguished from the crowds. The Kingdom involves power guarding the testimony, the saints and the truth. We have to be submissive to Christ, acknowledging His authority and the principles in which the Kingdom operates. We are to be genuinely unpretentious and humble in respect of much that is past and current at the present time. "Gathered together unto my name" (Matt 18: 20) provides a thoroughly legitimate position for Him to come to. There is intensity of feeling when the Lord speaks of the treasure and the pearl; "one pearl" is a concentration of what is most precious to Him, one single entity. Depth of conviction is needed of what the assembly is to the heart of Christ. Discipleship is seen in persons of subject wills and minds who assemble in the humility of those who would be taught by the Lord.

(iii) Acts 26: 15-19; 1 Corinthians 15: 3-10; Acts 20: 28-32.

The time of the Spirit has in mind the fullest and richest product of what is formed of God in manhood in the saints. Great potentiality lies in the Spirit for producing manhood like Christ. This priestly scribe, Luke, teaches this side of things, giving the episode of the Damascus road three times to show how a *man* was laid hold of by a glorified Christ. Luke links the idea of growth with the Person of Jesus, but what grew was just what it was in the perfection of His humanity, perfect at every step and point of growth. In every one of us, as in Saul of Tarsus, the power of sin had to be overcome. It could not be dealt with apart from the precious work of Christ, His suffering, death, burial and rising again. His work complete gives wonderful scope to the Spirit to form in the saints those features, so precious, of that manhood, having the assembly in mind. Paul is before us both as himself a leading subject of the living touch of a glorified Christ and then as a servant taking his place in the quality of needed service that would further this great work in persons, and especially in local assemblies. Paul delights to take his place in humility amongst his brethren. The Lord came out of heaven to secure him in refinement of formation. In present smallness young men are called to rise up and stand on their feet. The Spirit is needed for this. Formation of manhood in us we understand and practice continual self-judgment. The emphasis here is on the matter of appearings to Paul. "What I shall appear to thee in" is a reference to the assembly. We should be set for the carrying forward of formation, and strengthen, help and if need be, exhort one another. 1 Cor 15 is a chapter of spiritual matters, involving the distinctive character of Christ's work in the saints. We are here in charge! How shall we go away? What are we going to devote our energy to? Things in a locality will not prosper if there are not those prepared to commit themselves to the Pauline charge in energy. The Lord will sustain us in life by being kept in nearness to Him.

(iv) Revelation 21: 2-4, 9-12, 21 to end; 22: 1-5.

We need to keep this *expansive time* in our minds in the light of what was referred to in prayer, that we are those "upon whom the ends of the ages are come". The Spirit would give us to survey the great,

and in certain respects, complex area of divine dealings and see everything in its due place. It makes us very restful. God would have have us basically *restful*. John is affected by what he sees and hears, but is never in a disturbed condition. He knows his God too well. To refer to this book at this point would enlarge our area of interest, seeing all, as John does, in reference to one supremely attractive creature vessel. Our minds can be directed by the Spirit to a single entity though it be a city and though it have the characteristics of a bride. So we have a culmination of what is Pauline and of what relates to John's view, with which we began. We might well think of John and his lifetime; what diversity of experience he had. Now he is caused to regard what Paul has wrought and to see it in relation to the enemy's vigorous attacks upon it. We may perhaps get our affections expanded in these things that have to do with the final conclusion of everything in view of God's eternity. Abraham waited for the city. Why did he single out in his mind the thought of a city? His faith acted in view of this conception which he appeared to cherish - the city. That was compensation for leaving Ur of the Chaldees. The idea of a city in scripture is seemingly introduced by man, but God would say, "I already have that concept prominently in My mind". The psalmist speaks of a city "compact together". It involves inter-relationships of life. The city is tangible. The assembly is not just an abstract idea. Paul especially has that in mind. At Corinth, "I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ". There might be one brother and his wife in a place, but what is in view is the assembly, no less. In the Spirit's day there should be a great conception of what the city is. Mr Taylor used to say how Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day (John 8: 56). here was something he saw that intimated to his soul the glorious character of what God had in view.

In the eternal view of the city very, very little detail is given. What can we say in our present conditions about that vessel in which the divine dwelling will be? We are just cast upon the Spirit of God to us a view, such as He alone can give us, of something which

awaits a new condition of things for its full unfolding, and yet the character of which is intimated to use now. The tabernacle of God being with men is perhaps the most blessed feature given to us. We come in the assembly to the culmination of everything God had in His mind throughout all the ages and we touch the vessel in which God can dwell with men. If the Spirit is free in this company nothing is out of reach of what is unfolded on God's side. The Spirit can tell us anything within the area of revealed truth. There might be a brother and his wife and maybe another sister gathered in a place to read the precious scriptures; just as much as is open to them, basically. There may not be a great assertion of gift, that has its right place in divine arrangements; but as to what the Spirit can unfold, just as much is open to them. Much is in the mind of God, but He has brought out something, a single glorious vessel which, so to say, presents to the universe what is peculiarly precious to Himself. Think of God, speaking with reverence, producing His masterpiece and displaying it, opening out what His mind is, to worshipping sons! It is something which He brings into view in tangible character as speaking of Himself. Is not that most blessed? These scriptures are peculiarly satisfying. God is showing us that to which the word "completion" does attach, but is scarcely adequate, because what is here is in fulness. "The former things have passed away". Earlier in the book it says, "The cities of the nations fell". The features that fill the world around have passed away and are not governing us. This is anticipated, according to measure, in the assembly now. Peter reminds us in the second letter, "All these things then being to be dissolved" (chap 3: 11). Are we to have our minds filled with *those* things? The Spirit would fill our minds with things which relate to the true portion of the assembly and its present engagement with Christ and His interests.

The thought of "a bride adorned for her husband" would have a sanctifying effect upon us. Can we just get a view of what the Lord has for His own heart, and what God has for His own pleasure, and move into what is touched later when it says, "his servants shall serve him"? What is the crowning object of our pathways? Is there

something we had in mind to do tomorrow which need not be done, or which would further God's dispensation which is in faith? What can we engage the attention and affectionate interest of the dear young brothers and sisters with? Could there be anything more precious than to engage their minds with this city? "Her shining" is a divinely accorded distinction in this choice vessel. There is reflected glory, and there is something constitutionally in this vessel which is of God, which marks off her distinctiveness from everything else in the realm of creation. John the baptist was the burning and the shining light. What was inward was first. The shining is wherever the assembly characteristically is, including the very small companies. Where the simple-hearted devotion of such a vessel is, the shining will appear. Philippians is an attractive epistle, a love letter as Mr Taylor said, but containing that gentle but firm injunction to those two sisters to be of one mind in the Lord. Conditions may be small; Abraham dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob. Occasions like this, arranged in a simple, informal manner provide great opportunity for those relationships to be deepened. We go away in a few minutes to the homes of the brethren and an atmosphere of liberty there in which the continuance of the same things is assured to us. This means that God is providing ways for what is of Himself to be built into the constitution of the saints, and built into the constitution of localities, so that they are no longer systematised companies of people with no life, and no enjoyment, and no objective, but companies of persons in the fulness of links with a glorified Christ, the enjoyment of those links proving fruitful immediately to God in His service. What John is presented in the eternal setting would be the fulness of what Paul had begun to teach as to new creation. He begins by saying, "If anyone be in Christ there is new creation" and then "I know a man in Christ". A new creation order of things is to come in; it says here "Behold, I make all things new". These things are in the Spirit's custody to open out to us. The Spirit of God has an attractive way of presenting things, to cause us to enquire in to these things and find in our experience what they mean.

As to the prominence of the Lamb, there is no change in the way Jesus is before us. The Spirit gives us to realise the extent of what that Person has accomplished for God and for us. All that we know of the blessed God we know through Him. It is an intimation of what, in its full character, constitutes the mediatorial system. God is known to us in that way - God and the Lamb, who in sacrificial love secured all this for Him.

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FORMATION IN MANHOOD

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Genesis 22: 15-18; 1 Chronicles 17: 16-23; 2 Timothy 2: 1-2.

What has come to us in these times together has unfolded the greatness of what God from His side is pursuing to its final culmination, which is God all in all. The history on the way to that, the course of events that shall yet appear, is very full. But a glorious finality is to govern us, and to govern us affectionately and intelligently as we seek our own way through in our times. What a God we have! How infinitely blessed is the way in which He has brought us to know Him! How appealing, and yet how full of divine power and wealth, is the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! What depth of knowledge the One to whom we may freely speak as our God would establish in our souls concerning Himself - the glory of His love, the way His love has taken in its majestic course through twenty centuries of a time in His ways in blessing which has not ended yet, but the end of which as we have sober assurance, is very close.

Well may we say, What a God we have been brought to know. And how glorious is the One, even Jesus, blessed Man, risen and glorified, who fills God's presence with that which answers to His satisfaction. He is the One through whom we come into the blessedness of that knowledge of God.

If I may linger a little upon impressions that have come to us in these past days, let us never lose sight of the fact that our present links in life are links with that glorified Man. Let us never lose sight of the distinctive, glorious place that God has given to His beloved Son. Let us never be drawn away again, as we have been, from that simple, living attachment of heart to a glorified Christ. Let that be the great governing link in our souls, by which in any little time of testimony that may remain we may be kept steady and resolute in the features of God's testimony that might yet need to be worked out.

But what a testimony it is! There is no testimony known to men that matches it. Let us reflect now on the character of the testimony itself and see what God has secured and sustained right through this wonderful time. Let us carry our thoughts right back to when God began to open out the stupendous extent of His thoughts to Abraham. Let us carry our minds back to the time when God had kingship in its time, royal shining character in view in David. I single out these two because the Spirit does. In giving us the gospel of Matthew, He says as to Jesus, "Son of David, Son of Abraham".

That is, something is being carried forward; the generations in the first of Matthew would show that God is carrying something forward which in its quality is connected in His mind. So we can go right back, beyond our dispensation, and take account of such men as these two, Abraham and David. They are to assure us of the kind of manhood that God delights in: the kind of manhood that He is able to develop. The miracle of this time of the Spirit is the immensity of the work of formation that God is treasuring up as the fruit of the way He has come in since Pentecost. What a lovely study that is! Think of the men that God raised up - not all prominent ones; not all gifted ones; not all apostles or prominent servants, and yet contributing to the aggregate wealth and substance of what the Spirit of God has had to do in formation since Pentecost. The city that we have been engaged with can rightly be regarded as the aggregate of it all.

What a size it was as John saw it! It could be measured and shown to be of stupendous proportions, not just to cause admiration to the universe, but to secure for God the full wealth that belongs where His dwelling is.

So all these sorrows, all these pressures, all the times of searching exercise, maybe of questioning, God has come into, that something may be contributed to what He is gathering up for Himself. God does not willingly afflict His people. There have been times of affliction; few have escaped it - I doubt if any have escaped it. There are sorrows in families, sorrows in local meetings, sorrows of many kinds; God has been in them, not just that the negative side

should be in view, but to produce something in depth of formation which in the perfection of His wisdom He chose to secure that way.

So God is seeking formed men, formed women, persons who have something established of God in their souls. The way of it, initially, is submission to Christ; the way of the continuance of it, continuing submission to Christ. I say that for the benefit of the youngest here. Your submission to the Lord leads you into the grandeur of what God is doing. Your submission to the Lord brings you into the great divine scheme of operations in a positive sense, in which He would make something in you that contributes to His satisfaction. Submission to Christ, submission to the Lord, is the first great thing for many beloved ones here, including younger ones to attend to!

Now I read of Abraham at a very significant moment when, as the scripture we read says, "the Angel of Jehovah called to Abraham from the heavens *a second time*". He had spoken to him before, and now he speaks to him a second time; it is as if the Spirit of God, by the use of that expression, is marking off something distinctive that He has in view to convey. Here is a man that God took up for His own sake. That is, for God's interests He took up this man. He had a glorious matter to work out, and He took up this man to work it out. We have to understand sovereignty in that sense, and yet to understand, alongside of that, the responsibility in which God sets us. So that God went along with Abraham in a most singular way.

He called him out in chapter 12; He caused him to move to what must have been to him a strange kind, to leave his former place, to leave his kindred, to go out and become a sojourner. And he went.

It must have been a very great proposal for Abram but even then the divine promise was singularly full, for God said to him as He sent him out, "Go out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to the land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation" (chap 12: 1, 2). "A great nation" - he might have said that there was not a shred of it in view yet, but God is committing Himself to make of this man a great nation. And God is standing by that in all that follows. What follows is a great deal of

history which shows that God is not hurrying over this matter, but is absolutely definite in going forward with it, "I will make of thee a great nation".

Think, therefore, of the potentiality of Abraham, of what that man meant under the eye of God as he continued. Abraham was marked off as He looked down upon the sons of men; here was a man that He would make a great nation. Men would have said, 'How shalt it be?' God proved Himself abundantly able. So it is that the testimony may seem in our time to be reduced. Some of us are favoured in being in settings with larger numbers; we are the more responsible. We do well to keep continually in mind the faithfulness of persons in smaller companies, and do everything that faithful love in the truth would do to support such practically. What a time it is, then, for binding together in mutual support in a testimony so glorious! And yet, what can God make of one? Abraham shows us. "I will make of *thee*", he says, "a great nation". We might have said, "It will take a long time". It *did* take a long time; but God is prepared, if need be, for the furnishing of what is for His own satisfaction, to spend a long time. God is equal to that. Some of us, as one or two were remarking in conversation, are apt to be very impatient in respect of these things; but let us go on, dear brethren, and let us pray on, and let us be expectant of what God can do with one, or with two, or with three, or with four, or whatever it may be. God is able; "a great nation", He says to Abraham. The means none could foresee, but God has it all in His hand - all, as we might say, in reserve.

I have been very impressed of late with the distinctive character of that scripture in Matthew 18, "Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them" - wonderful promise! If you have one person, it is just one person. God can use one person and bring much out of one person. But if He has two, or if has three, He has a point of territory which He can claim in a special sense as His; "*There* am I in the midst of them". Let us not be afraid of being small. Let us be dependent in being small. Let us be resolute in being small. But let us not be afraid in being small,

because "where two or three are gathered together unto My name", the Lord says, "there am I in the midst of them". That is a bit of territory secured and held for God. It is more than a person; there is a significance in what Matthew presents in that relation. If the Lord has that in a place, He has a point of territory in that place that belongs to Himself and His own testimony, which He takes very great account of and will delight to sustain and, maybe, to expand.

Abram's history goes on from chapter 12, and we get the idea of a seed as the dust of the earth; and then we get the thought of a seed as the stars of heaven for multitude. Coming on into the chapter we read, we get those two sides, somewhat differently, emphasised again, "as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is on the sea-shore" - two figures that God brings forward in respect of Abraham. The heavenly side is first, the saints according to their heavenly calling. See the stars in the heavens, distinct, star differing from star in glory, to quote from an other scripture. It is a majestic sight, even creationally, to see the stars in the heavens, especially in a clear atmosphere - thousands upon thousands of stars. They are shining, distinct, marked off in their constellations, related to one another, and related to the whole, but each with a certain distinction, a distinct place. The heavenly order of things affords delight to God as expressing the expansive character of His thoughts, the saints in their heavenly dignity, the dignities that belong to sonship, marked off by God Himself in His heavenly conceptions as to those who belong to Him.

Then there is the sand on the sea-shore; it is something that is related to what is here, but has a formative relation to what is here.

It seems to me to link on with what God can produce in the immediate circumstances, the wearying circumstances, of what is here - yet something that is distinctly for Himself.

All these things are opened out to Abraham. What a man he proves Himself to be in the midst of these experiences! He proves himself in relation to his brother Lot. He is singled out by God for what we may speak of as miraculous support by Melchisedec; he is strengthened by bread and wine, ministered to him by the priest of

the Most High God. We see how God is dwelling on this man, how God is bringing things out in this man. God is testing this man, and proving that he is equal to the testings. God is going to make a nation of this man.

Human wisdom would have said, "A long time is being spent over it". God knows. We may say that God has not yet chosen to answer our prayers very much in respect of recovery, for the expanding of through the history of Abraham, and see how God produces His result. See that He takes a long time over it, twenty-four years or so in the episodes that are covered by the piece of history that I am speaking of - a long time. God is in that. He is not having things done in any arbitrary way. He is entering in divine care, in divine wisdom, in divine love, in divine power into every point of the matter. He is working it out.

Very often in the very manner of our prayers, we seem to want to work things out. God would say to us, 'I am going to work this out; you may not even figure in the finality of the thing'. That is a lesson we may see in David. 'You may not even be on the scene when the finality of the matter arises but I am keeping the situation in mind'.

Yet God would remind us that He looks for a man from whom to make something. A great principle that is brought out in Abraham's case is, Am I ready to answer to God, that He may make something of me? The way is rigorous for Abraham. His course is not what men would speak of as an easy course. It is beset with testings, beginning with his calling right out of his own country and his kindred, and his becoming a sojourner in a foreign land. You might say, 'What a break!', but Abraham sustained it. What are we ready for, dear brethren? We may pray every day, or more than every day, for increase in the locality where God has set us; but what am I ready for in the sense of the making process that God has in His hands? What am I ready for? Is there something in me that God can take up, and make into something that answers to Himself? There was something in Abraham. God set it there. And if He has something of which He can make a nation, something of which He can make a local meeting, something of which He can bring

increase, that something must be such that God has had to do with the fashioning of it. What a need there is to be submissive under the mighty hand of God, and to realise that He is forming something in the souls of His saints which is of such quality that, if He please, in His sovereign wisdom and love, He can take it up and make something distinctive out of it.

You will understand how I am applying the point. It may come about in many ways. The patriarchal thought is very strong, pre-eminently so with Abraham. Can God make a patriarch of any one of us? Shall we have sons spiritually, grandsons spiritually? Is there something progenitive in any one of us that God can use in a productive sense, to build up among His beloved ones what is like Christ in the sense of formation and development in true manhood?

The time comes when Abraham is supremely tested. When this beloved son comes on the scene, as the previous history of this chapter shows, God says, "Take him up to the mountain and sacrifice him". What a test! Just think of the character of the test, driving right into the depths of Abraham's affections. What a test - to yield up his son! Yet he moves as God directs him. He takes the knife in his hand; what it must have been to carry that knife up the mount, knowing what the divine intent was in that knife, and yet submissive to it! But he goes on just as God tells him. There is something in the man that is ready for the supreme test. Hebrews 11 reminds us a little of the depth of what God is working out in this by referring to Abraham in two distinct sections of the chapter, the second section beginning with this very episode. The light of resurrection power was in Abraham's soul, and that relates to this great point of the second time. He called to Abraham from the heavens a second time; that is, the glorious light of resurrection power was in view now. In principle Abraham has reached the point of the power of resurrection working to raise up his son from the dead; in principle he has reached that, as Hebrews 11 shows us.

Now the voice comes a second time. That is, we look on now beyond the power of death and see that God has a generation in view outside of death and its power. What He would make us relates

to that - not to the scene of death, nor to what is to come under death. So the word is, very significantly, "the Angel of Jehovah called to Abraham from the heavens a second time, and said, By myself I swear, saith Jehovah, that, because thou hast done, this, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, I will richly bless thee".

There may be many matters in which God is testing us. God is not hard - far be it from me to represent that - but He delights to bring out the qualities of manhood formed in His beloved saints. The sisters are not outside of this in any sense. Scripture would support us in referring to many who bore the burdens of the testimony at crucial times. Think of Hannah and the way she carried things in secret. This is all part of the glorious testimony, at least in its antecedents before this time of the Spirit, the testimony to which God has called us.

How much God worked out in David. What a history! What a man! If we were but to dip into the history of David we would need another three days for it. The wealth of what God can effect in a man is an impression that I would leave, because we see it happening in our time. We see changes going on, great changes. We see stature being taken on. We see depth being realised in persons in a most remarkable way. God is in that.

So the history of David is a long one, but there came the time when, thinking for God, he conceived the thought of a house for Him, a house for God. We might say, 'What a right thought'. God confirmed it in the sense that the house was soon built; but David was not to be the builder. I trust I can briefly put the point of what is contained in these chapters. The true heart of David considers for his God, looking on to the great point of a spot where God should dwell, and find His rest. Do we seek that, dear brethren? Do we long that there may be a complacent divine dwelling, where everything answers to God and is for His satisfaction? Are we yearning after that beyond all the vicissitudes of detail in the current course of His testimony? This is the way in which the heart and the mind of David were moving. And he makes the proposal. At first the proposal is accepted by one in whom, as a prophet, David placed trust. Then

the prophet has to be adjusted and go back and say to David, putting it very simply, 'This proposal is not of God. You shall not do this'.

How does David display himself at such a moment? It says that he went in and sat before Jehovah - a unique reference, showing a measure of liberty with God in David which is distinctive of this point; he went in and sat before Jehovah. Have we ever done that? I ask myself, Have I ever done it? Have I ever done anything like it, going in and just sitting before Jehovah?

Here was a man, I suppose, who was a greatly disappointed man; but he goes in and sits in the presence of God, and speaks to Him. And it is the speaking of *manhood*; it is the speaking of a man with no self-interest; no *self*-interest. He is thinking of his house because he knew what his house would be in the sight of God; but he was not speaking as a man with self-interest. How often self-interest runs along, and into, our exercises in different directions! How often the keen, precious point of what is for God is blunted by some point of self-consideration on our side. What a view we get of manhood in David! He is not concerned for his reputation. He takes his place before God; he addresses God, as has often been pointed out, under a remarkable variety of titles, expressive of spirituality in David, in principle. How do we speak to God? Has He not disclosed Himself in His infinite blessedness and glory and love and power, even in these days we have had together? Do we not say - as we said at the beginning - What a God we have? Go in and sit before Him. Maybe you have disappointments; maybe things have not eventuated as you thought they might have done. Maybe the local meeting has not increased as you thought it might. All these things are very, very real. But as we go in and sit before Jehovah, everything gets its right place and setting in our view. We speak to God about it, and He is able to speak to us about it. He uses a prophet to speak to David here, and God makes remarkable use of His prophets in the history of David. That may be a pointer to us. Let us in no way neglect what is prophetic; let us cherish these prophetic meetings, as we speak. Let us be concerned before God to put something into them in a right sense, not always expecting

another brother to give the word. The sisters are to be prayerful, and expectant of what the Spirit of God may bring in. I express myself thus, because I feel that these are occasions of immense potentiality as we rightly take them up, and as we understand how God might speak to us. It might, literally, be in five words with the understanding. We sometimes have in mind a kind of framework that a prophetic meeting should follow, and we might be a little critical of it if it does not measure up to the framework; but let us leave the Spirit of God just free to speak to us in the sovereignty that is His, being Who He is, and address Himself to us in a prophetic way, the way that bears in depth upon the current situation, and is bringing in from God the strength, the grace, the power, the wisdom, to meet it. So God used a prophet, but as for David, he went in and sat before Jehovah. What had God promised him? That he would make of his son a king whose throne would abide. This was not to be David; it was to be Solomon. God has looked right down the course of His testimony and He is saying to David, "I am going to establish his throne". It does not say David's throne, but his throne.

But David goes in as in character a worshipper, not taking any self-seeking part or place, but acknowledging the mighty hand of God upon him. God is going to carry forward in royal dignity and power that which David himself had conceived. Solomon would build the house, and Solomon did build the house. It is a sad reflection how quickly decline came in even with, and after, Solomon, but that is not the point before us; the great point is that God is looking right down and is preparing for a continuance of what is precious to Himself, and He is saying to David, You have had your part in the course of the conflicts; you have shed much blood. It is not exactly that God is attaching specific blame to David for that at this point; it was the battles of the testimony that he was fighting. But God is, saying, I have full regard to your concern to build a house, but another shall do it. And another did do it.

So it may be that God will not allow us to see what He finally has in view. But He would have us in the connected course of what He would do. And He would have us content to fill the place that He

in His love and wisdom would give us immediately in the filling out of what is due to Himself. God is moving in the long term. He is able to extend things if it please Him. I do not think the extension will be long, if I may venture that; but God is working out things according to His own time-scale, and He would have us to be submissive to the manner and timing of what He does. So maybe, brethren, we have to pray yet, and labour yet, and be before God yet, that His testimony might expand, maybe just a little, before the Lord comes; that in places where He has set His Name there may be something that in a fuller way answers to Himself, and provides conditions that afford Him His rest.

I read that well-known scripture in 2 Timothy, not to dwell upon it; the reading of it, in one sense, is enough. When we come down to Paul we think of the remarkable heights of his ministry, the remarkable extent of his service, the remarkable volume of his untiring labour. It is not just the heavenly level upon which his ministry was - not just that. Think of the area this man travelled over. Think of the energy unsparingly committed in the testimony of God by Paul; think of his willingness to do more yet at a time when God in His wisdom ordered that he should be in prison conditions. What a life was the life of Paul! This is the character of the testimony of God in the day of the Spirit.

So we are not to be surprised if our lives are full. We are not complaining of the number of meetings. God's testimony is a very great matter, and all our purely personal and domestic interests are to be in their place, made dependent upon it. Let us see to that, dear brethren. Let us, to use a simple, common expression, be marked by putting first things first, with some added sense that God would give us of what His testimony is to Himself.

Would this continue? Was the character that Paul set on just to die out? Was there never to be another man in the least like Paul? That challenge faces us to-day. Paul personally we recognise as a special vessel, raised up of God and distinctively commissioned; but is the Pauline character to be lost in our time, dear brethren? Just weigh that, dear brother or sister. Let me leave it with you to be

weighed and pondered over. Is the character of the testimony that Paul set on not to be found in our time? God forbid that it should not be! But it calls for committal; it calls for a Timothy. It calls for faithful men, competent men, ready to take on what needs to be taken on; ready to keep by the Holy Spirit the good deposit entrusted.

We might well just take a look at that bookcase at home and think of what has been ministered in the power of the Spirit in the course of these times of recovery. Let us each say to himself, or herself, is the character of that to be lost in any degree as to its expression in vitality and power in saints under the eye of God? Bear in mind that it depends upon me, and it depends upon you; it depends upon all of us, to carry on the line in continuance in that true, energetic heavenly character in which Paul himself set it on.

So God is going on, dear brethren, to the glorious conclusion, that glorious climax, God all in all. But He would have us with Him intelligently with Him, affectionately with Him, understanding the way in which He is working out things amongst His own until the Lord comes. May we be so, for His Name's sake!

BUCKHURST HILL

26 December 1972

"MY LORD"

E.M.Walkinshaw

Luke 1: 43; John 20 : 13, 27, 28; Philippians 3: 8

The Lord has brought us to see the importance of our personal link with and knowledge of Himself. It is intended that we should know God and that a man or a woman should be with God; that we should not be merely dependent on others but directly in touch with God Himself. There is a lot in the world that is a the result of influence, influence of others, and of course there is argument, and argument leads to persuasion, and persuasion to brainwashing; that is the way someone put it. But those things are not intended to influence the believer because each has the Spirit - that is if he has the Spirit, of course. I am assuming that each of us has and that each is directly taught by God, directly in touch with God. The Lord is exercising us about this in these days and far from weakening what is collective it strengthens it, because it must be evident, I think, to any thoughtful person that if I am with God and you are with God we shall very quickly be together. In fact the break-up of what is collective is because of the breakdown of what is individual. While the collective in the years past has been used to weaken what is individual, we have found a swing in the other direction, that the emphasis, at any rate in argument, on what is individual has been used to destroy the collective. Now properly in Christianity our individual link with God is the basis of everything, and the more you are subject to the one Lord in the power of the one Spirit and the more I am the more we shall be together, and that becomes the basis of what is collective and is the way in which the truth proceeds in 2 Timothy 2. The letter is not written to a company; it is written to an individual. So that the exhortation to the individual is to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart", that is to say, I judge, with persons who are doing the same thing. So that as I have said, far from weakening what is collective, the more each strengthens his individual link with the Lord the more we shall be together and have what is properly collective according to God - that

which is of the assembly in its nature and character - and the more we shall find the expression of the assembly and be able to enter with our blessed Lord in what is so near to His heart, and that is the praise of His God. Now I suggested these four scriptures, in which we have two women and two men. I think I am right in saying that they are the only persons in the New Testament who are recorded as saying "my Lord". Elizabeth says, "the mother of my Lord". The expression "our Lord" is quite common in scripture and it is often quite common on our lips and in the documents of men - 19th day of October or November or whatever it may be, in the year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and seventy-two. But the question arises to whom is He Lord? It is a very easy thing to use the words but it is a test to us as to how far we are subject to Him. So we begin with what is personal. You and I would speak of 'Jesus Christ our Lord' and the gospel teaching brings it frequently before us, which shows that what is in mind in the gospel is that persons should be together, but that must be reached individually. When it comes to a question of my saying 'my Lord' that is another question altogether. So these persons I suppose are lovers of Jesus and this one, Elizabeth, says, "whence (is) this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Think of the spiritual instincts with that woman. These persons dwelt in the hill country and I think were devoted to the Lord. They are a link as we know with those "that feared Jehovah and spoke often one to another; and Jehovah observed it and heard, ..." I wonder if we realise when we speak together that the Lord is listening with the keenest interest to the subject of our conversation. These persons had a link with those persons; they are in the hill country, and they had conversation that was according to that elevation. I wonder what our conversation is. Again that is a test; it should not be of course, because our conversation should centre in Him who is the centre of God's purpose. Here Jesus was coming in and as we have been taught He was coming into an environment that was sterile as far as evil was concerned, and these persons were consistent with that. I believe this woman knew God in personal experience. Often when we think of the scriptures and prayer, or of reading the ministry or having time for deliberate prayer

and meditation, we put it on to the brothers as though it is essential for them because they take part in the meetings. The sisters do not take part audibly: in God's ways in government they are not the vessels of audible expression in the assembly except in singing and therefore there is a tendency as not carrying that public responsibility to neglect the private devotion to the Lord. I hope I am not being unfair in saying that, and I would only suggest that in two women as well as two men we find brought before us the need for sisters also to have their personal link with God. I have heard some say, and maybe you have heard me say it before, "I never realised until I lost my husband how much I leaned on him in spiritual matters". That is not the intention because what God would have is that sisters should develop their personal link with Himself. True they have a link with their husbands, true they have their family altar, but it is essential that each sister should, as this dear woman, develop spiritually and develop in a personal knowledge of God. Now as each develops you will say, 'they will develop a distinctive personality and will that not then set them one against the other and cause a rift between them?' Never! I say, and I am convinced of it, that any two persons developing their link with God will increasingly and imperceptibly develop their link with one another because it is the same Spirit that links them with Christ above that links them with one another.

Immediately we get social links, fleshly links, natural links, and they become the power in our lives, it is then that the rift comes in. The difference always lies in society, nature, riches or poverty, but if any two persons are developing their links with the Lord Jesus and their knowledge of Him those two persons necessarily are being drawn together. So I would suggest that our sisters weigh it over. I am only really taking example from Mr Raven, who said, 'all I want to do is to throw out a few thoughts for you that might help you to develop in the knowledge of God'. What more can anybody do - throw out a few thoughts, you know, about twenty-four volumes of them, that is all! Just a few thoughts to help you! That is of course with that beloved man, but in lowliness he developed and helped the brethren. So I would suggest to our beloved sisters that this is the way that they will give body to our assemblings. It has often been said that

spiritual sisters give substance to our reading meetings and our gatherings together. The brothers may speak, but I think from experience we have learned the difference in the atmosphere and the power of the meetings when there are spiritual sisters present.

Here is a woman speaking to another woman, Why does she not say the mother of 'our' Lord? He was equally Mary's Lord as the Lord of Elizabeth; why then does she not say 'our'? No, she is suggesting that she has a personal knowledge of God. Mary of course would have the, same, but Elizabeth expresses this unique word "the mother of my Lord". Now what about you? What about me? What about our sisters, younger sisters, older sisters? Perhaps we could bring in a simple exhortation for the younger sisters if they would bear it, just to spend a little time with the Lord each day. It is well worth while. It does not take long to read two verses of scripture or to speak to the Lord for a little while on your knees when you get up. It does not take long to spend time on your knees before you retire and gradually you will find you will get a taste for it. And the more you pray the more you will want to and you will find also that the less you pray the less you will want to, the more you look into the scriptures the less you will want to, the more you look into them the more you will want to.

Now I think these persons in the beginning of Luke showed that they were devoted to God and to His interests. There was breakdown; it was very much like our day, it was the end of a dispensation. Israel had broken down, the recovery had broken down, the recovery after a recovery had broken down, everything publicly had gone to pieces. What this must have meant to God to find a handful of persons speaking often one to another! That is what we are doing, dear brethren; we are only a few but thank God for every lover of the truth. Our brother thanked Him at the end of the reading for those with whom we could walk. Thank God for every one of them, and because they are few we are learning to value them the more. Now these persons were few but they were energetic. This particular one to whom I draw attention was a sister and she says, "the mother of my Lord". No jealousy with her - 'why

should not I be the mother of the Messiah?' The outlook of every godly woman in Israel would anticipate that in God's ways she might be privileged to be the mother of the Messiah. No, in God's ways it was Mary and it was simply accepted by this beloved woman; she was a spiritual person and we need in these days spiritual sisters, not only spiritual brothers but spiritual sisters. May the Lord grant that in our looking to Him and in our links with Him we may have such developed among us. Let us look to the Lord for it and let younger sisters and older sisters take on this character of being able to say in sincerity and truth 'my Lord'.

Now the next is Mary to whom we have already referred and her devotion and real affection for the Lord Jesus is very evident. When the apostles had gone to their own homes she remained at the tomb. She represents as we have already said formed affection for Christ, but she was a sister, and I think the Lord would develop that. The service that is rendered by sisters in the gospels is remarkable. You never read of a man washing His feet, do you? As far as I know none of the disciples ever washed His feet; it is never recorded at any rate that they did so, it was a woman. And you think of the service that can be rendered to the Lord by sisters in obscurity. 'Lord when did we do that', some said, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren". Now this sister Mary is devoted to the Lord. As far as I can see she is entirely alone there, she has no company in the early hours of the morning at the tomb. I suppose men generally would think she was mad, hanging about the tomb where there is a dead man, and she thought he was dead; but she loved Him so intensely that she would have Him, and to her great surprise and no doubt to her joy she found that He was alive. The expression she uses to the enquirers is this "they have taken away my Lord". O how possessive that is! She was not concerned whether He was Lord to others, or whether they recognised it or not. As far as she was concerned He was the object of her affections and she belonged to Him. Now I would like to ask you, do you claim the Lord as your own in this way? While we could say it is another sister, yet at the same time I think she represents

spiritual affection which is to be formed in us all, that is formed love for Christ. You say, well she was not very intelligent - how very intelligent to say that, is it not? You do not need a very high measure of intelligence to be critical. O what affection she had and how quickly she was enlightened, and she had the company of the Lord too. If your desires are earnestly after Christ He will not disappoint you whether you are a young man or a young woman. If your desires are intensely and devotedly after the Lord Jesus He will not disappoint you. In fact He says, "I will manifest myself to him", that is to an individual. So here is this sister and she says, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him".

How enlightened she became. He says, "Mary", and she suddenly became aware of the fact that Jesus was there. I have thought sometimes it is like the experience you get at the Supper; you may not be aware that the Lord is there, you think it is somebody else, then in the power of the Spirit of God you become aware of the fact that it is not the somebody that is speaking, it is the Lord, known by the Spirit. She thought she was speaking to another, in fact the gardener, "supposing that it was the gardener". Think about that for a moment, why should she suppose him to be the gardener? Was there something not too distinguished about Him, to be the gardener? Would He appear something like that, do you think? If He had stood out in some way she would hardly have supposed Him to be the gardener. She was speaking really to the same Jesus that she had always known. In another sense He was the gardener of course, divinely so, and of course He was in the garden, as it says, "But there was in the place where he had been crucified a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had ever laid". (John 19: 41). Now He is alive in the garden, the same Jesus and when He says, "Mary" she recognises Him. We have often said of the Lord Jesus that He was looking at one of His sheep; "my sheep hear my voice ... and they follow me" (John 10: 27), she was one of them. She says immediately "Rabboni". Now that means 'my' teacher or 'my own teacher'; it is that personal devotion that claims that Man for myself. But then I come into the understanding that others are doing the, same, so immediately Jesus says, "Go to my

brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God". She comes bringing word to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and I wonder dear brethren, if we ever go from the Lord's Day morning meeting and can say in sincerity and truth that we have seen the Lord? Or I have seen the Lord. We may say it is not possible, this was physical; we get happy impressions and we have a good time and some nice singing and so on, and sometimes it is not so good, and the meetings fluctuate, they are up and down and so on and so forth. She carried the message that she had seen the Lord; now in the faith of your soul do you believe that? The challenge is, do I believe that Jesus comes to those who assemble in this room on Lord's Day morning? Do I believe that Jesus comes to those who assemble in the various rooms of those who are represented here or am I infidel about it? Do I think that it is just a happy gathering of certain believers who hold certain teachings and claim, some say, that they are the only people to whom He comes and the like? Or can I go away from an assembling of the saints and say 'I have seen the Lord'; because seeing especially in John's gospel is not necessarily seeing physically, but seeing spiritually. It is discerning, and I think in the power of the Spirit we are to discern the Lord coming in and we are to be with Him and to discern when He goes out. So He comes in and He goes out. Now I think, dear brethren, we should individually take this up with the Lord so that His presence in the assembly might be realised by us and our apprehension of Him in the midst might be greater and more real. You must take it up as being with God. It is not a question of coming and finding something there. If I might again quote that beloved man, Mr Raven, when you come the room might be empty, but what is there that is available to the Lord is what you bring. And what do you bring? Do you come to get or do you come to give? Primarily you should come to give and the more you give the more you will find you will get. How wonderful that is!

Now Thomas is an object lesson for us, is he not? He did not believe it. They said they had seen the Lord and he would not

believe it. Moreover he does not say it is just something I cannot believe, he says, I will not believe it.

He says, "Unless I see in his hands the marks of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe". Think of Thomas saying that. I know he represents dispensationally the remnant, but he is an object lesson for us. How often we find ourselves like that, dear brethren; unbelieving about these things. What about the younger men? Think of John who wrote this: I suppose when he wrote this he was an old man. When he had the experience of it he was a very young man, but he had had many an experience between those two ages in his life. What about you young men? I will tell you I would love to see young men, or a young man, prepared to sacrifice for the Lord through devotion to Him. We commented earlier today that may be he was only seventeen or eighteen years old - what that must have meant to the Lord to have such a young man. When an older man is devoted to the Lord I think the Lord appreciates it very much, but when a young man, perhaps seventeen or eighteen, is prepared to sacrifice, give up his life for Christ, I think the Lord values it even the more. Do you not think so? Think of what may lie ahead of a young man, think of Mr Darby when he was quite a young man and what lay ahead of him. I doubt not that what has been said is true that he had the capacity for the highest offices in this country. There is a sublime character about his poems, no doubt from the Spirit of God: nevertheless, there was something there natural to him that he gave up. He gave up his life but he found it, how wonderful! Is there some young man here to whom the Lord could make an appeal. Are you prepared to give up the many things that interest you, the many things that hold your attention, which might be quite right and normal in themselves, to give them up for His sake? I think the Lord would make an appeal to younger men in these days that from their youth up they may be prepared sacrificially to serve Him and they will find that if they give up their life whatever it may be, as He says, they will find it. You will find your life with Him in another order of things altogether.

Well, there is hope, however unbelieving, Thomas comes to it, he says, "My Lord and my God". What an utterance from such a man, who just before that was an unbeliever, but now he comes to it that the One that is before him is "My Lord and my God". Now this is a brother. The two sisters we have been speaking about were very good sisters, but we might not think that this brother was too good, not at this juncture anyway, but the Lord in His infinite grace brings him, as He does us, to saying "My Lord and my God".

Now I will just say a word or two about Paul. "But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all". There is another man; he was not an old man, but relatively a young man. I suppose from the time he was very young the Lord laid hold of him, but here it is the energy of the man himself; his devotion, sacrificial devotion, to that Man Who died for him and was raised, Who was sitting at the right hand of God, and absorbed him absolutely; think of that! So that he was engrossed with Christ, he says in this passage as we know, "but one thing", and that of course is some people's definition of a madman, he was absorbed with one idea you see, a madman in the eyes of men. You think of this man, absolutely engrossed with the Man at the right hand of God. The whole of his life, his service, whatever it was, was controlled by a glorified Man. I wonder how true that is of any of us. You say well, of course, he was an apostle, he had a very special place. That is true but also he was a simple Christian, and as we have often reminded ourselves in this epistle it is Paul the Christian, it is not Paul the apostle. I could never have his gift nor could I have the gift of such as Mr Darby, but it is open to me to be committed in devotion as these persons were. The fact that I am not does not mean that the resource is not available in the Spirit, because it is; if we are not devoted, it is failure in our responsibility. It is no reflection on the resource available in the Holy Spirit that we might as having the Spirit, and being in the Spirit, and walking by the Spirit, and living in the Spirit, be here for God.

Well, I do not think I have more to say other than to draw your attention to these two sisters and two brothers each of whom said "my Lord". Paul pre-eminently, who is our apostle is the one I think whom the Lord would bring before us. We so often think of him as unique, and in a way he was unique in the place the Lord gave him, but I do not think that Paul as an individual ever had any experience in privilege that was greater than what is proper to the assembly. I do not think any person at any time anywhere has ever had any experience in privilege that is greater than what belongs to the assembly. Do you believe that? I believe that to be the truth, and I believe as we touch it a little it becomes the spring of this devotion to Christ which was so seen in the apostle Paul, or in the Christian Paul perhaps I should say, and can through God's grace be seen in us.

May the Lord encourage us, dear brethren, to see that all is not lost. As we reminded ourselves God had a Man here in whom there was no ruin, no breakdown, no failure, and now He has that Man in His presence and He is at perfect rest. May we know more about His presence and enjoy His peace and His rest for His glory.

MAIDSTONE

25 November 1972

ROOTED

W.F.Flowerdew

Luke 8: 11-15

The burden of what I have to say lies in our having root in divine things. The divine intent when the word of God comes to us is that it should take root in us, as it says in Isaiah 37 v 31, taking root downward and bearing fruit upward. We are often made to feel in circumstances that arise in relation to ourselves and to others too, how shallow our roots have been and it would be a test as to what has been the effect of the reception of the word of God as it comes to us - and it has come in this place from week to week on many occasions. What capacity have we to receive the word, and allow it to take root in us so that when the time of trial comes we do not fall away. Of some it says they "believe for a time". How often we have seen that; some have gone along for a time, a short time or a longer time, but a time of trial comes and they fall away. I think what our brother has said and what has been said previously too, as our knowledge of God would bear on this, where our roots are, whether the word is going to stand by us in a time of trial so that we do not fall away, but are preserved in the testimony. The Lord has need of all of us, every one in this city is needed in the testimony. So we could well afford to look at our roots and see where we are founded, and the word of God would come and quicken us in that relation.

There are the thorns here, and many things may come in to choke the word. One of the things which we know has come in and been a great test to the saints has been the question of natural relationships. The word of God is something that comes from God Himself; it tests us out very much, even the closest natural link is tested. God may allow the trial that way. Through God's mercy some of us have not had to face it so much, but God's word is to have its way with us, and thoroughly too, so that when the time of trial comes, we are able to go through, taking root downward. If we are taking root downward we shall not fall away, and there will be evidence of fruit upward for God. We need to be preserved from

allowing damaging things to come in, but to take account of the roots and the fruit too, so that the ground is right and our hearts are right to hear the word and keep it and "bring forth fruit with patience".

That will always be needed while we are here in the testimony, to take account of the patient working of God, how He goes on patiently with us. But the fruit comes in season and we can take encouragement from that. We can afford to wait. Our brother has referred to the early and the latter rain. James refers to that in connection with fruit-bearing too, so we can afford to be patient and wait on God and be with God that our roots might be such as can stand and we be here in the face of test and trial, whatever it may be. How closely it may touch us we do not know but we need just to be kept in faith God, kept too in the sense that God has everything hand. "All things work together for good to those who love God", Rom 8: 28. Mr Taylor said very beautifully that any one circumstance might overcome us, but God works all things *together* for our preservation. It would help us, I think, to allow the word of God to have its effect with us so that we might be rooted firmly. It speaks in Ephesians of "being rooted and founded in love", Eph 3: 17. What fruitfulness there is on that line as we are found in that sphere, but my burden particularly was in relation to the matter of responsibility as the word comes to us, that we might not allow other things to come in, but that we might allow it to take root, so that our links with God are strengthened and we are preserved in the testimony. We are getting near the end of the period of testimony; the Lord's coming is very near and we want each other to be preserved, that the enemy may not get in and divert us. Perhaps the Lord would use the word and what we have had this evening to help us to be more firmly rooted and founded in divine things; above all to be rooted and founded in love. What a glorious expression that is! "rooted and founded in love". What a great expanse we can go into, what fruitfulness God will get in His service too as the warmth and blessedness of divine love finds its response in our hearts. May the Lord preserve us as in being rooted in the things of God, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

8 August 1972

VERSE

O blessed Lord, with one consent
We come, obedient to Thy claim;
To Thee, O Lord, is our desire,
To Thy remembrance and Thy Name.

We look around upon the saints
And see a workmanship divine;
A holy circle formed in love,
Who treasure that blest Name of Thine.

This simple service shall go on:
Till Thou dost come, Thy death we show;
But, through these emblems of that death,
A love unsearchable we know.

The bread bespeaks Thy body given,
The cup Thy blood poured out for us;
We do what Thou wouldst have us do,
And blessed Lord, recall Thee thus.

E.C.B.

LONDON 1961

THE CHILDREN'S LESSONS

The lambs we see in the fields in the spring learn very young to feed with the older sheep and on the same food. So we are all learning to feed on the Lord Jesus so that we should enjoy the grace of God. The epistle to Titus, which speaks of 'believing children', tells us that the grace of God has come as a teacher whilst we are in this world, which is therefore our schoolroom. This grace has brought with it salvation without which we could not avoid the wrong things and do the right things. We have therefore every help to do our lessons properly and the first one is to refuse everything that is displeasing to God.

Then we have to learn to behave ourselves well, to do what is right to other people and then to reverence God. If we had written the Bible we might have put these lessons the other way round, but Scripture is always wiser than we are. So we must first of all be careful for ourselves what we think, say and do.

We are always in God's school and are not waiting to be dismissed. We are however always looking for the coming of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. First He will come secretly for those whom He has redeemed and then He will come in glory with them all. Will you be amongst them?

J.C.Evershed

London