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## **PROVING OUR REALITY**

**2 Peter 1: 5-11; Colossians 1: 21-23; Hebrews 3: 5, 6, 14.**

J.R. These scriptures would support the view that we are constantly being tested and challenged, and there is a need continually to prove our reality. Tests and difficulties are meant to be a means of proving our reality; the onus is on us therefore to make our calling and election sure. It is a remarkable expression. You might think that election is sure enough; no matter what we do or how we behave, things will be all right in the end. That is not how Scripture presents things; we are to make our calling and election sure, that is, we are to manifest that we are called and elected and to prove it continually. This requires diligence; verse 5 says, "using therewith all diligence", also v 10 "use diligence". 2 Peter 2 contemplates a condition of things that leads to apostasy and that tide is flowing strongly in our days; therefore there is a need to use all diligence that in our faith we have, also virtue, in virtue knowledge, and so on. In Colossians we have the same idea. The Colossians are addressed as "holy and faithful brethren in Christ", yet it says in verse 23, "if indeed ye abide in the faith founded and firm, and not moved away from the hope of the glad tidings". You see, an 'if' comes in there. This would encourage the Colossians to prove that they were real. Now in Hebrews we have a similar idea: "Whose house are we, if indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end". Then he says, "For we are become companions of the Christ if indeed we hold the beginning of the assurance firm to the end". Therefore we prove our reality by continuance. Is that clear?

A.B.P. And challenging too.

J.R. Yes, I think it would challenge each one of us. To be found proving our reality involves using diligence. If we give up or become easy and uninterested we will be caught in a strong tide that is flowing. Hebrews speaks about slipping away; "lest in any way we should slip away", chap 2: 1. It is not a wilful thing exactly; it is just that you are caught in a strong current. Now to enable us to prove

our reality we have to use all diligence. It is like the fish that were clean that had fins and scales which could go against the stream (Lev 11: 9). It speaks about "using ... all diligence" to have certain things in certain other things, that is, "in your faith have also virtue, in virtue knowledge ...".

E.E.H. I like your calling our attention to this word 'if': it is very important. The Lord says in Matthew 10: 22, "he that has endured to the end, he shall be saved". Salvation is secure in Christ but "he that has endured to the end, he shall be saved".

J.R. That is very important; and it would encourage us to continue to the end. Continuance needs diligence; it is like a marathon race not a short sprint; it is a long term matter.

E.E.H. It requires endurance.

G.D.W. Would this 'if' follow the one of 2 Timothy 2: 21, "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"?

J.R. Yes; it says, "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity". That is an obligation on every believer. So it says, "If therefore one shall have purified himself from these", referring to vessels to dishonour. We thus prove our reality as naming the name of the Lord. We can name the name of the Lord and not be proving our reality. This does not mean that persons who do not prove their reality are not real; there are many believers who are not on the line of using diligence to prove their reality: nevertheless we know they are real. Some are slipping away, giving up things, even features of the truth; I am not saying they are not real: "The Lord knows those that are his". The Lord knows every one who is real but "Let every one who names the name of the Lord" (that is every professing believer) "withdraw from iniquity" and purify himself from vessels to dishonour.

E.T.M. I wondered whether this attitude on our part would point up the necessity for the divine presence and provide the wherewithal to ensure the divine presence with us as we go through? What is

intended to be worked out in us was seen in the Lord personally pre-eminently; and He made a point of that, that the Father had not left Him alone because He did always the things that pleased the Father. I wondered whether that is the standard and whether that would help us to commit ourselves to be in this attitude of mind.

J.R. That is very important.

R.L. Daniel was a young man who purposed in his heart and could say "prove us", and he was one who continued.

J.R. That is very fine. He purposed in his heart not to be defiled, he was proving his reality. Not only did he purpose in his heart not to be defiled but he prescribed what he ought to be given - pulse and water. He knew what would build him up in his constitution, so that he continued. The secret of Daniel purposing in his heart not to be defiled with the king's delicate food comes out in chapter 6 where it says that his windows were open toward Jerusalem.

W.F. Do you think we have to be very careful not to fall into 'exclusivism', although I very much agree with what you are saying?

J.R. Yes, we need to see that what we go on with belongs to every believer. It is not an exclusive privilege that a few claim - in fact we can claim nothing. What we go on with is proper to every real believer. There are many (and we are thankful for every one who is converted, no matter by what means) but the Lord would speak to each one of us that we might be proving our reality continually.

W.F. Yes, I agree with you.

J.R. We certainly have ample reason to be humble; we have been humiliated and humbled. We have received the Lord's public rebuke as to what we were going on with for years; therefore it becomes us to claim nothing.

G.H. Would Daniel purposing in his heart not to pollute himself with the king's delicate food bring out the moral side? It is not in his mind but his heart, showing that his heart was right.

J.R. That is right. Nebuchadnezzar and his empire and all the university training that Daniel and his companions were committed to

by the emperor did not influence him. In spite of it all he used diligence. The onus is on us in that sense. It says, "in your faith have also virtue". It is not exactly adding to your faith virtue but "in your faith have also virtue" - have virtue in your faith; that is that our faith is not to be merely a profession but is to be real; and virtue involves, I understand, the idea of courage. Faith is not just a profession but it becomes active. James says that faith without works is dead (chap 2: 20). "In your faith have also virtue"; it is that feature which makes faith living and active.

G.D.P. Does the psalmist prove his reality when he says, "If I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to my palate; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy", Ps 137: 5,6?

J.R. Yes.

L.MacF. In regard of Daniel again, reality came out in his countenance. It is not a question of what we are assuming; the thing was there to be seen. The king had to take account of it that these persons were fairer and fatter than all in Babylon.

J.R. That was not profession; that was reality. He would not look fairer, and certainly would not look fatter, on profession, would he? It is a constitutional thing.

L.MacF. So Timothy is exhorted to pursue a certain line which is in view - "Strive diligently to present thyself", 2 Tim 2: 15.

G.D.W. Daniel says, "And whilst I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before Jehovah ..." chap 9: 20. As a result he gets the word of God.

J.R. Quite so. He gets divine communications.

J.A.P. Would the reference to Lot in this very epistle show that Peter was not passing over someone who was real but was not exercising his faith. That would encourage us not to forget many who are real but not in the exercise of faith.

J.R. We ought to be increasingly thankful that there are many believers in the world but, along with that, we are to be exercised and use diligence to prove our reality. That does not mean to say that others are not real, but the onus is on each one of us to make our calling and election sure, or manifest.

A.B.P. Would the items that are referred to here - "in your faith have also virtue, in virtue knowledge", etc - be the deepening of the work of God in us developing the inward man? It is not just adding one thing to another but that in the one thing, taken on rightly in exercise, there develops something else. So that it reaches the point that in brotherly love we have love: I presume that is the highest idea of love.

J.R. It seems like that. I like what you are saying about this deepening in the inward man. We begin in Romans 7: 22, " For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man". Then we have in 2 Corinthians 4 that the outward man is consumed but the inward is renewed day by day (v 16). These features - faith, virtue, knowledge, and so on - are features of manhood according to God in which we need to develop to make our calling and election sure. It is not a matter of profession and claiming things but of deepening in manhood according to God, after the pattern of Christ, as Mr Maynard says.

A.B.P. So the sureness of the matter would reflect in our consciousness of getting into the divine presence and having a link with God when we pray.

J.R. That is very important as linked with reality. In Matthew 6 the Lord says, "when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret ... " (v 6). It is an inward and secret matter. These things are basic but they are very important.

C.C.G. In the end of Luke, after the Lord had gone up on high, those He left came back to Jerusalem and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Would that be a connection with what you had in mind?

J.R. That is right: praising and blessing God is a fine occupation. The enemy would stop it by his attacks but using diligence is essential to maintain it.

A.B.P. They continued steadfastly.

J.R. Yes, or persevered. It involves manhood and the feature of endurance which is to be "in temperance".

B.T. When persons come in to analyse a business they see various names and titles on paper. What they ask is, Is he active? It speaks here of being neither idle nor unfruitful.

J.R. We are not to be sleeping partners; if we are we will slip away. There is plenty of work to be done and we are to know that our work is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15: 58).

R.L. It is put simply here. Peter says, Let the thing be operative, let the thing be functioning with us. If the thing is functioning it will be manifest.

J.R. Exactly; and each one is to be in this. This matter of having one thing in another thing, and depth and what is inward, is very important. "In your faith have also virtue": that is your faith becomes active and living because you use diligence to have virtue in it. We speak about active faith. "In virtue knowledge, in knowledge temperance, in temperance endurance, in endurance godliness": these are features we have tended to lose sight of. How important godliness is - to have godly exercise! We could criticise and find fault with things, and may be right enough in the faults we find, but what about godly exercise? What about committing ourselves to helping in such a situation?

E.T.M. Verse 8 is very important. I can see the wisdom of stressing that all the Lord's people are real, but the distinction of being real and expressing reality must be recognised. So it says, "for these things existing and abounding", not just existing but abounding would be an expression that the thing is there, I am thinking of what they said to David, "Thine are we, David" (1 Chron 12: 18), that goes for every saint on earth; but he says, "And with thee, thou son of

Jesse"; that is the distinction we are trying to make. The "with thee" is the test, is it not?

J.R. That is it, we tend to be content with a certain participation whereas it involves our whole committal.

E.T.M. The enemy would readily use any assertion but this distinction is to be made plain. As you said, we are not claiming anything, but what Daniel pursued - the confessing of his sins and the sins of his fathers - is diametrically opposite to an exclusive claim, and that has to be recognised.

J.R. Exactly. We always spoke of having part in the breakdown, but really we were somewhat detached from it; we thought that others had failed. But now we have to face the fact that we have all been involved in the breakdown, and we have all in fact, more or less, promoted the breakdown; therefore we ought to feel more deeply with God about the public breakdown, and the discipline of that ought to help us in our spirits and produce some depth that maybe could not have been produced otherwise.

E.T.M. So you find the necessity for insisting on this not only in public prayers but in private prayers, that you have been part of it. But that is not the end; recovery and the deepening of the work of God in us, involving substance to carry on, is what we are after.

J.R. It is meant to lead to being more committed than ever with diligence to apply ourselves to these things that Peter speaks about.

D.T.H. This epistle is not addressed to any company but to individual Christians, is it not? Does that help to 'bring it down to each one of us rather than to a company. Some of us may feel we are in a certain company and we can drift along with the tide.

J.R. The company is just what the individuals are who compose it. We have to face tests and apply ourselves individually, and we have found one another as individuals having right exercises and following right principles. We are not just drifting on as belonging to a position. It is a question of being individually disciples of the Lord Jesus and individually using diligence to prove our reality. If my

objective is to prove my reality I am not claiming anything, and I will meet somebody else who is on the same line and we will be together in the proving of our reality. Do you think so?

D.T.H. Yes, if we held to that it would preserve us from making exclusive claims.

J.R. We ought to desire to represent what is proper to every believer.

D.T.H. Yes, you would trust that that would be the outlook of each one.

J.R. Each one of us ought to be set to represent what every believer should be.

F.N.S. The ground we take, if we can use that expression, is the only proper ground that every Christian should take. So in 2 Timothy 2, in days of breakdown, the foundation of God stands but it has two sides to the seal, and this puts obligation on every believer. It is encouraging that there are some to go on with, is it not?

J.R. That is right. 2 Timothy is an exhortation to every professing believer: "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity". Every professing believer is obligated to withdraw from iniquity and by doing so he proves his reality. Now if he does not do so I am not saying he is not real. "The Lord knows those that are his" and the loaf at the Supper reminds us of this every Lord's Day morning. Every believer who has the Spirit is part of that loaf and we are to recognise that, but the onus is on every professing believer to withdraw from iniquity.

H.C.MacG. Would that connect with the right they who wash their robes have a right (Rev 22: 14)?

J.R. "Blessed are they that wash their robes", that is a continual process; it is not a once and for all matter any more than withdrawing from iniquity is a once and for all matter; it is to be maintained.

A.B.P. Do you not think that there has been enhanced in recent exercises the fact that out of the side of Jesus came blood and water? John stresses the matter of the water; we may be inclined to

overlook it. But I think that recent exercises have stressed the need for the water. The priest could not go into the sanctuary if he did not use the blood and the water.

J.R. Is there not a certain stress on the continuance of the use of the water - the laver for instance? It is a daily matter. Is not the water what we make use of?

A.B.P. Yes. The efficacy is in the ashes of the red heifer, the result of the terrible burning that took place (Numbers 19); and its blood was sprinkled seven times before the entrance to the tent of meeting. I think that the Lord is stressing in our day, despite a strong trend against it, the urgent need for water.

J.R. So the severity of judgment in Numbers 19 came upon persons not because they became defiled but because they did not use the water of purification (v 13). We all become defiled but we are to make use continually of the water of purification which is always available.

A.B.P. I think that is a very vital matter because Scripture clearly indicates that we can inadvertently become unclean, but the point is that once we realise our uncleanness our responsibility is to use the water.

J.A.P. Another reference in that regard is the heifer in Deuteronomy 21; it says that the heifer shall be brought unto an ever flowing watercourse (v 4). Is it a reference to the Spirit?

J.R. I think so. The Spirit, the water and the blood are connected in John's epistle (1 John 5: 8). They bear witness and the witness is one.

A.B.P. The scripture that Mr Petersen refers to is very helpful because it is not water in a vessel - it is not the extent to which I may have the Spirit - but it is the fresh movements of the Spirit Him self that are recognised.

J.A.P. It was a very difficult matter that had to be met there. Do we not have to get to the Lord Jesus and to the Holy Spirit about these difficult matters?

J.R. I am sure that is right. Is not the matter in the hands of the priests eventually?

A.B.P. They are the sons of Levi; not simply priests in a locality but of the priestly family.

J.R. That would be, in New Testament language, spiritual persons. That would be persons who have the Spirit and are controlled by the Spirit.

A.B.P. "Ye who are spiritual", Gal 6: 1.

G.D.W. Referring again to your remarks on reality, in Laodicea it says, Thou knowest not certain things (Rev 3: 17). In other words they did not prove reality. But then they are counselled to buy gold purified by fire. Would there be something enduring in that, something to get free from and something to come into?

J.R. That is so, and at the end of that address the Lord says, "Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking; if any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me" (v 20). Would not such a person be proving his reality? One who does not open the door might still be real, the Lord knows that, but we are to manifest our reality. Real testimony results because persons are continually proving they are real in the midst of a general Laodicean condition.

E.E.H. What we have here, these elements that are expressed, are just normal, what is to be found in every believer. He says, Have it. We need to have it.

J.R. That is right. We would do one another a good service if we remind each other what real Christianity is. This is normal Christianity. This is not something extraordinary that some attain to and others cannot; it is open to every one of us.

G.H. In quoting Matthew 6: 6, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee", did you have in mind reality?

J.R. Yes. It is in contrast with the hypocrites who love to stand in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets so that they should appear to men. But the Lord says, "Thou" (emphatic), "when thou prayest"; such a person is proving his reality. If anyone here desires to start proving his reality let him go into his chamber and shut the door and speak to his Father; "thy Father" - it is the believer and his Father. It is not our Father but his Father, it is the individual side of Christianity, which is a most important thing.

G.H. The apostle in writing to Timothy uses that expression "but thou".

J.R. That is very good, because the emphatic "*thou*" comes in, I think, three times in 2 Timothy. It is in contrast with the strong current that is going on to apostasy.

A.R.S. The Thessalonians were marked by "work of faith, and labour of love, and enduring constancy of hope", 1 Thess 1: 3. Do you think that is the idea?

J.R. That is the idea, and they were new converts. Paul had been there three sabbath days and preached to them. They soon proved their reality. Christianity is very simple when you are newly converted, and when a person knows that he is nearing the very end of his life here he finds Christianity very simple; in between these two points we can become very involved. Christianity itself is never involved.

R.L. Would Paul's word to the Philippians be on a similar line as to working out your own salvation with fear and trembling (chap 2: 12)? It would preserve us from claiming anything, as you say, but at the same time manifest that we are in salvation.

J.R. That is right. That actually refers to a local company working out its own salvation. With the personnel available they work out something to a result. There is nothing more testing in a sense than being in a locality working with others; it needs this kind of manhood we are reading of in 2 Peter. To be one of a local company and work with others we need to have in our faith virtue, in virtue knowledge,

in knowledge temperance, and so on as this verse indicates. How much brotherly love is needed, and love.

R.L. So that the thing is seen collectively, it is where you enjoy the collective expression of it.

J.R. Exactly, and we are not to be afraid of the collective idea, nor of the local idea. The gospel has in mind that there should be an expression of things collectively, locally. In Matthew 26 and Mark 14, where the woman anoints the Lord's head, the Lord says, "Wheresoever"; not 'whensoever' but "wheresoever these glad tidings may be preached", that is the glad tidings preached in a place. It has in view producing persons of that character. If you have persons in a place who are proving their reality what do you have? You have assembly personnel. Now such persons would not claim to be the assembly but there would be there what answers to local assembly conditions.

R.L. As you say, we would not claim to be the assembly, for every one who is indwelt by the Spirit belongs to it, but the expression of it is seen in such person .

J.R. We ought to be thankful for every believer on the earth who is real, and the Lord knows every one of them. Along with that we are to be committed to provide assembly conditions for Christ. The recovery that began with Mr Darby had in view what was collective locally. The recovery is not to a Pentecostal order of things; the recovery is to Paul's order of things which involves local assemblies. As a result of Paul's preaching at Corinth and Ephesus and elsewhere there were local assemblies. He could address the assembly of God which is in Corinth. We could not do that now, nevertheless we are not to give up the idea of providing local assembly conditions for the heart of the Lord Jesus in His absence.

A.B.P. John very carefully avoids anything official, does he not? It is lovely to see how he expresses the local position: "where the disciples were", John 20: 19. What could be simpler than that? Yet they were disciples and were together, and the doors were shut for fear of the Jews.

W.F. With that in mind I was wondering what you think of these popular preachers and revival meetings going on. Many young people have been converted through them.

J.R. You are thankful for every one of them. It is somewhat like what James and John said to the Lord: "We saw some one casting out demons in thy name ... and we forbid him". The Lord said, "Forbid him not ... for he who is not against us is for us", Mark 9: 38-40. The Lord did not say, Link on with him and help him in his work. What do you say about that?

W.F. I think that is very excellent.

J.R. Much depends on the objective in preaching. I would like, and I think you would, to preach having the objective to secure persons for the assembly. Your objective colours your preaching even unconsciously. If a preacher has the objective to save souls from hell, you are thankful for that, but that objective colours his preaching, it is a limited objective. Preachings should have in view securing persons for the assembly.

E.E.H. Yes, the preaching of the cross.

J.R. That is right, Paul's gospel ought to be preached today, "for obedience of faith", Rom 1: 5.

G.H. God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2: 4). That is the way it is put.

J.R. I can understand concern as to attending popular preachings. If you read Mr Stoney's ministry you will find how concerned he was in his day as to the popularising of preachings; he condemns placards, distribution of bills and all these kind of things.

S.B.F. Ought we to regard these things as a challenge? "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?" Jer 8: 22. That is what we should be asking ourselves, is it not?

J.R. It ought to concern us that the preaching should be maintained. How much light has been vouchsafed to us as to the gospel and divine objectives in the gospel!

G.D.P. The end of the section in 2 Peter is in view of entrance into things being richly furnished to us. We should enter, that is, go the whole way?

J.R. That is good.

E.E.H. I may stop and listen to somebody on the street; if he is talking about God I want to hear what he is saying.

J.R. Yes, you thank God for every person who preaches and gets souls. But what we are at is converts being maintained in the proving of reality. Converts usually manifest by a certain exuberance that they have been called and elected; but then what happens afterwards, is it maintained?

A.B.P. There is a difference between the gospel of relief and the experience of taking on the faith which God has given and finding that, if I am to be diligent in it, there must be some expression of it; and in the expression of that I get to know God. In the knowledge of God I realise that I cannot just do anything I like; we are to be temperate in all things, and in that temperance there must be endurance so as not to give way. In endurance we need God's help and that develops piety, and in that piety you find that there are others who are walking the same way as you, so you find an area where brotherly love can flow, and that leads to the flow of love which is response Godward. The gospel is the gateway, but this is experience in Christianity.

J.R. That is very encouraging and helpful.

T.D.N. "Use diligence to make your calling and election sure, for doing these things ye will never fall", v 11: is something active, is it not? The disciples persevered; things were against them but they went on nevertheless. So things may be against us but we are going to persevere because we have an objective.

J.R. That is right, and the perseverance forms us in these features which Mr Parker has spoken about. The scriptures read in Colossians and Hebrews support what we are saying. The Colossians had made some progress; Paul speaks about "seeing

your order", Col 2: 5; things in Colosse seemed to be all right but there is a certain danger area, and the "if" comes in there. We are only safe as we are linked with the headship of Christ which Colossians presents, the greatness and glory, the personal glories of Christ, the One who is the Head. In Colossians that is how headship is presented, it is the greatness and glory and sufficiency of the One who is our Head. We need never lack anything because of the One who is our Head.

E.E.H. Verse 23 fills out your point.

J.R. "If indeed ye abide in the faith founded and firm, and not moved away from the hope of the glad tidings, which ye have heard".

E.E.H. The glad tidings has an object in mind.

J.R. That is right. It is Paul's glad tidings: "of which I Paul became minister".

B.T. Should we not see that the glad tidings has an object for us in assembly life here now?

J.R. That is it, we are to have that objective before us continually. In your contact with persons and in preaching you cannot avoid being coloured with what your objective is. You may not say what your objective is but it obviously gives colour to your whole outlook and presentation of things.

A.B.P. Apollos was a popular preacher, was he not? He did not object to being instructed in the way of God more exactly. That is where you often find the barrier with persons who are prepared to go so far but no further.

J.R. It is to the commendation of Apollos that he accepted fresh light from Aquila and Priscilla, not gifted persons but simple Christians, and he listened to them and gained by what they presented to him.

T.D.N. Paul left at Ephesus the persons that helped Apollos. That is a good place to leave the brethren. Paul had an objective: "to the end that we may present every man perfect in Christ" . That is what our preaching should be.

J.R. That is right.

E.T.M. Does it not make you restless when you seek to pursue quietly and unassumingly what is normal to Christianity? You do not need to be apologetic. Paul says to the Corinthians in the second epistle, "our word to you" (chap 1: 18) - "our word", that was the way he received it from the Lord normally to express it in the area where the Spirit of God was free. He says, "our word to you is not yea and nay"; that is not assuming anything; that is normal. We need to be restless about these things because what is normal is normal.

J.R. Persons who have been vouchsafed light as to the assembly have special responsibility to be real, and our reality involves light as to the assembly, the local assembly. I think you will find that, after the division at Glanton where the issue was local responsibility and the Lord's rights in a locality, we had over forty years of ministry largely related to the local assembly. Now it seems to me the challenge in our day is: are we to act in the light of the assembly in our localities, being governed by assembly principles and looking for assembly features? You cannot have the service of God without persons locally secured by the gospel and who have some light as to the assembly. You cannot have these things without separation and faithfulness, and proving our reality. Separative exercises prove our reality. 2 Timothy 2 is the way by which we arrive at local assembly conditions.

J.A.P. The address that Mr Taylor gave on church principles was in your city in 1915 (NS Vol 7, p323). It is a very instructive word as to what governs us in our local assemblies.

J.R. I think you will find that Mr Taylor's ministry after Glanton was largely related to local assembly conditions. That is what the recovery had in view, Paul's economy of local assemblies. Now that does not mean that those who meet and break bread claim to be the assembly, because the loaf viewed rightly reminds us that all who are indwelt by the Spirit form the assembly. Nevertheless we are to be concerned to provide suitable conditions for the Lord to come to us.

R.M.C. Would these assembly features be embraced in Proverbs 4: 18, "But the path of the righteous is as the shining light, going on and brightening until the day be fully come"? There is something that would be pleasurable to the heart of Christ.

J.R. That is right. It is what you have in 2 Timothy 2: 22; "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace". These features did not begin when the breakdown came in; these are features that always marked assembly persons whether at Pentecost, or at Corinth or in Ephesus under Paul's teaching. If you get a person pursuing righteousness, faith, love, peace, you have an assembly person. In Matthew 18 (v 20), "where two or three are gathered together unto my name", the Lord anticipates conditions in which we are, yet assembly principles are still workable. There is always a way of righteousness in the midst of the breakdown. We are more conscious than we have ever been that we are part of the breakdown, yet there is always a way of righteousness in the midst of it.

R.M.C. That is very helpful.

**Brooklyn NY**

**12th May 1973**

## **KNOWING THE FATHER**

**C.R.Byng**

**Luke 12: 32**

The Spirit would help us, I think, to lay hold of the prophetic touch in our hymn (Hymn 120), so that we are enlarged in our detailed knowledge of the Father. We are being helped to develop our links with the Lord Jesus personally. If we think of our bodies physically, we need Him as the Saviour of the body. The completion of matters here, the transformation of our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, will be by the power that Jesus has even now.

Those of us who are still here will, of course, be quickened by the Spirit into the new order of things, and yet the power of the Lord Jesus as Saviour will enter into it. The more we are strengthened in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the more we shall learn to have confidence in the Father. There is depth of instruction, no doubt, that when John begins to speak of the way that God has been declared he relates it to the Son, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father (see John 1: 18). Who can unfold to us, beloved brethren, the richness of the grace and love of the Father, as the Only-begotten? If we think of the great creatorial order of things, we trace it back worshipfully to Christ, the One through whom every thing received being. When we work that out in Christianity we find that we are connected by the Spirit with the Father. We would normally give thanks for our meals to the One whom we address reverently as God and Father. Creation itself was the work of Christ, God operating by Christ, and yet the realisation of what we are as creatures, and our dependence on help as creatures, relates us at once, thankfully, to the Father. Mr Taylor has an interesting expression: he would have in mind that the word of God would come to him for each meal (Vol 85, p 393). He does not say he would read a scripture, he would have in mind to have a word from God; so it would be far more than a happy custom to give thanks to the Father; every meal would be intended of the Spirit of God to cause us to not

only feel our dependence on the Father but to feel increasing confidence in the One who is a faithful Creator.

What meaning there must be when the Lord Jesus says, "My Father ... is greater than all", John 10: 29. That would be, of course, speaking as a dependent Man, and yet immediately the Lord guards the greatness of His own Person by saying, "I and the Father are one", John 10: 30. That is mystery. Mystery is intended to baffle the mind of man, but is wonderful food to the worshipful believer. Beloved, let us lay hold of some fresh impression of how great the Father is, as the Lord Jesus says, "My Father is greater than I", John 14: 28. When the Lord says, "My Father ... is greater than all", that is over against "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life", which is of the world and not of the Father (see 1 John 2: 16). I think the Lord and the Spirit are bringing us increasingly into the understanding of the greatness of the Father as the One who is greater than all. So it is intended to enter into the details of our lives; whether, as our brother has been saying, in relation to business matters, or home matters, or other matters, we would view them all as related to the Father. We would not invoke Him as Father and pass our time here without fear. That would not be consistent. If we reverently and happily address God as Father, and are enlarged in our understanding of His care for us, then we would understand that everything has to be related to the Father. It is not that we relate things to this or that or the other; we relate things to God, and in this wonderful dispensation of grace through Christ and by the Spirit to the Father.

And so, where the Lord speaks here, He brings it in in connection with food and raiment, with the detail of life, eating and drinking. He says, "Fear not, little flock". We link that with all saints. It has been a feature of the recovery that brethren have learned to know God as having a little flock here; not a position of outward strength and yet spiritually impregnable. A little flock: defenceless, as men would think, and yet what the Spirit has wrought out in the time of the revival in relation to the little flock! It is not without significance that the hymnbook we use has for many years been 'for

the little flock'. All the saints in the world do not get the advantage of it, but we would have to grieve over that and pray that more might be brought into the gain of the treasury that we have in the hymnbook. I do not think we need be concerned about taking time to revise the hymnbook. Let us value the hymnbook we have. Maybe some of us need to be concerned to know it better, so that we can use it more.

Let us hold it as available to the little flock and as the divine provision of the Father. The Lord says, "Fear not, little flock". One of the ways in which our confidence in the Father would be increased, and thereby our independence of every source of man, would be to take advantage of the depths of prophetic power in our hymns. What depths there are in those hymns of beloved Mr Darby. They have not had to be revised (although perhaps altered here and there to make them suitable to sing) because they are the result of the Spirit's touch over a man who was with God. Many hymns are written by sisters, many by brothers. That is just detail, the vessels that the Lord chooses to use. The purpose of the hymnbook is to relate us to God, whether we think of the Father, or the Son, or the blessed Spirit of God. Under the prophetic touch of Christ it is to enrich us in the knowledge of God. So that when David set on the service of song (because Moses did not set it on, although I suppose the oldest psalm that we have of which we know the author is the psalm of Moses, the prayer of the man of God; whether other psalms go back as far as that is not clear; many of the psalms would seem to have been recorded at the time that the service of song was set on by David), one of the touches that he has as to the service is that they "prophesied at the direction of the king", 1 Chron 25: 2. So the King would use the hymns that are related to the little flock and increase our response to the Father Himself. The very way in which we learn to know the Father, in all the details of our lives and above all in the assembly, is intended to enrich the service of God. We have been, no doubt rightly, instructed that the main part of the service of God would be to the Father. The Lord as the Minister of the sanctuary, and the Spirit of the Father as strengthening us within, would see to it that, as we are subject to Their direction and Their strengthening, there is full response to the Father.

So the Lord here would direct us to the Father. He says, "It has been the good pleasure of your Father to give you the kingdom". Well, you get confidence in that, the confidence that "Your Father knows that ye have need of these things", Luke 12: 30. How in dependent of the resources of man it makes us as we desire to be developed in true piety as fearing God! Piety, we have often been reminded, is the basis of spirituality. I suppose none of us would claim that we are spiritual, but it would be right to desire to be spiritual, and piety as the basis is within our scope because we have the Spirit of God to help us. Whilst the main part of the service of God would be to the Father, perhaps if we searched into our individual experience with God we might find that many of our prayers are either to the Lord Jesus or to the Spirit, and that we have not been so enlarged in practical, current experience in speaking to the Father. Let the Spirit of God encourage us and increase our confidence in the Father Himself. Think of the desires of One so great as the Father to see His children prospering here! How false it is to think of the Father as looking for faults! That is absolutely foreign to the very thought of the Father. The riches of the glory of God as made known in the Father would assure us that divine Persons are looking and expecting to see us doing what is right and delighting in it. How active divine Persons are to protect us in doing what is right and how quick They are to warn us if anything comes in which might hinder the enjoyment of our communion with the Father, and with Christ, and with the Spirit. The Lord's word here is, "Fear not"; so let us be strengthened in our confidence in God and especially in our links with the Father Himself. The Lord says, "The Father himself has affection for you", John 16: 27. What confidence that gives, that we can have direct access to the Father, and it is in the name of Christ and as strengthened by the Spirit of God. May the portion that the Father has from our hearts and from our lives be increased as we are related to the assembly of God, remembering that the assembly is Christ's chief interest here. Let us ensure that all that we do tends towards enlargement of the place that the Father has amongst us, so that men may see that the Father is being

glorified in persons moving here in the dignity and power and joy of sons.

**London**

**28th August 1973**

# **"IF ANY ONE THIRST"**

**A.J.E.Welch**

**John 7: 37-39**

What I seek to say is intended to engage every person here with Jesus. Many voices are heard, many proposals made to men, many ways set out in which supposedly there may be benefits for men; but the one matter which is open to everyone here with no exception is to have this glorious Person of God's Son as the supreme engagement of their heart.

What is prominent in this gospel of John, in which I suppose everyone here has read at some time or another, is who this glorious Person is, "over all, God blessed for ever", Rom 9 : 5 - God well known in grace, addressing Himself to men as coming near to men in the acute need which lies in the guilt of their sins, to bring out the perfect final divine answer to the need. All that the Lord Jesus Himself in suffering and death and blood shedding and burying and being raised again and set on high in the place of supreme power has effected and that in suffering to establish the divine answer to the need in which you and I and every soul of man stands presented to you. Whether or not you acknowledge it when as a sinner you need a Saviour, that is true in the sight of God. Why should you resent the suggestion when the God, the blessed God who causes His word to go forth in glad tidings, is Himself presenting the final and absolute answer that provides for the need? Why be resentful of the preacher speaking about your sins and their guilt? We are often encouraged in different ways, in these times in which we are, to face facts. Many a situation has been lost through failing to face facts.

In many walks of life, in many affairs of men, many a situation has been lost through failing to face facts. All the preacher is asking those who are here to do is to face facts, facts about your self, but above all facts as to Christ, facts as to God, facts as to God's provision for the satisfying of the hearts of men.

This was "the last, the great day", the great day, the day which I suppose was publicly accepted as a day of great celebration, and yet the Lord Jesus contemplates that there might be some that are thirsty. Whilst many of us have never had the experience acutely we are told that thirst is perhaps the worst kind of degradation. I wonder if deep down, right deep down in your heart, you are thirsty. On the surface the situation was fine, "the fast, the great day of the feast", a great time of celebration in Jerusalem, but is there someone there who is thirsty, who has not found a true spring and source of satisfaction. Is there anyone here who is just thirsty? You might not be able to say much about it or to speak to anyone about it in any accurate sense but deep in the heart there is a longing. You may not even know yourself just what it is but deep in your heart there is a longing. It may be so deep that you have never admitted it to anyone but it is there, and linked with that longing, I believe, is an unsettlement of soul; you are not absolutely assured where you stand with God. If I have any right understanding of the thirst of men - and I can say simply I have some from a little experience of my own - that deep longing is very often connected with an unsettlement of conscience and heart in regard of God and of Christ and of where you stand before God and what your relations are with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that which increases this unsettled, thirsty condition. But the Lord says here, just as He is saying today, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink".

The proposal is perfectly definite, it is perfectly positive; it is not that any kind of calculation has to go on before the drinking takes place: "come to me and drink". Is it not perfectly simple? God's heart is towards you and it is not according to the heart of God to make things hard for you; He loves to make things simple. It is a question of what He sees to be right. He is not passing by what dishonours Him or dishonours Christ, but the great point is to be simple, to say to you that this is the fact of the position from the lips of Jesus: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink". The Lord does not say anything about the thirst, He does not say anything about the cause of the thirst or about the measure of the thirst, far less does

He suggest any restriction of what is to be drunk into, but just a simple heart-affecting appeal: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink". Did you ever have that experience? If you did you certainly will not have forgotten it, just coming to Jesus to drink. You say to me, and it is a right question, What do you mean by drinking? How shall I drink? What do I drink into? What is the point of suggesting that I drink? How do I do it? Right questions! The first thing is that the blessed Lord Jesus knows your condition absolutely. He knows your history, every tiny detail of it, He knows it all. He is not setting any conditions on account of that history whatever it is - "let him come to me and drink". Some might say, the Lord Jesus Christ could never say this to me. If you say that you fail to grasp just what the heart of God is towards you. The Lord Jesus is here presenting Himself to us to bring out what the heart of God is towards you, to bring you into settled blessing, satisfaction, fruitfulness toward Himself. He has nothing but your blessing in mind. Whatever your need is, however far back you can trace it, whatever its character is, however frequently the need in some sense has recurred, He knows it and He has made absolute provision to meet it. You say, Can God forgive me my sins? Yes.

Can I the guilty sinner stand righteous in God's sight? Yes; great subject that is followed up in the epistle to the Romans, "Righteousness of God ... towards all, and upon all those who believe", chap 3: 22. God has a righteousness for you, it meets the whole case because you have none, I have none, no one here has any. What I am saying is not an accusation, it is a fact which affects me as much as it affects any. We have no righteousness of our own. Every claim to a righteousness that we might assert has gone in our sins. God says, I have a righteousness for you to meet your case.

You say to me. How can I earn it? You cannot. How can I justify it on my side? You cannot. How can I present anything that merits the getting of righteousness? You cannot; you cannot do any of those things because the point is it is " righteousness of God ... towards all, and upon all those who believe". What you could never do for yourself God has done and established for you in Christ, He gave Himself for our sins "the just for the unjust", 1 Pet 3: 18. That is just

accepting the facts of the situation, the just, Jesus; the un just, me or you or any other man or woman or child. God is making provision.

Well may we speak of this great matter as glad tidings, it is God's provision. Oh the cost of it when the Lord Jesus suffered on the cross in those atoning sufferings where every man in the scope of that scene at the cross, apart from a few who looked on and stood by that cross, was against Him in bitter hatred and despising and murder. We live in a day when so much takes place to harden the feelings of men, but stop and think of the sufferings of Jesus, forsaken of God, the cry coming from His lips, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt 27: 46. Ponder those things; let the Spirit of God have something to say to you in those things, because He suffered that way, He suffered on that cross for you and for me, He suffered on that cross that the heart of God, just as it is, might be told out to you today, nineteen centuries and more later; and He went to the grave, His precious blood was shed, answering every just claim of God in respect of sin and sins. He went down into death that the man in which sin was active as the great governing principle should never come before God again. But God raised Him, God exalted Him. It affected the spirits of many of us here this morning when we were impressed with the glorious fact that Jesus is risen. The first day of the week is in principle the great resurrection day, Jesus is risen.

So this scripture refers to circumstances which it is said were not yet, "the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified". Now what is opened up to us here is essential to all that I am saying to you, that Jesus is glorified. We are not speaking of a dead Christ as a present reality. It was a reality, three days and three nights, as the scripture reminds us, He was in the heart of the earth; but no longer. His death was a real death, but His resurrection was the working of power to raise Him from the dead; as the scripture says, "raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father", Rom 6: 4. He was seen of those that loved Him, He came to those who loved Him, He assembled with those that loved Him, He gave them experiences of the most remarkable kind - a

living Person. The Christ that is preached in glad tidings is not a dead Christ. Thank God He was dead; He presents Himself in one part of the Scripture to us in that way, speaking of Himself as living, the One who is living and was dead (Rev 1: 18), but He is not dead today, so that it is open to you to come to Him. It is no mere figurative expression that; it is a real experience of soul to come to Jesus, the living, glorified Christ. The efficacy of His work, the atoning value of His precious blood, the setting aside as before God of the order of man that could never please God, all these are accomplished things. The great work of redemption on which the forgiveness of your sins must stand, the great work of redemption on which your peace must be based, all is accomplished and the testimony as to it goes out to you, to me and to you. I do not know when I first heard it - it is a very, very long time ago - but whether you have heard it before or not the testimony of this goes out to you today. There is nothing more to be done in respect of your need as a sinner because God in Christ has done it all. There is something to be done on your side - a very affecting thing to be done - that you just yield yourself to the Person who has done all. He has a right to claim you because He has done all to meet your case. How could you thrust aside all that God has effected in Christ in redemption? Could you come to a meeting like this and go away and say, I do not want peace, I would like to stay thirsty? Who would say this? Do you want to keep your thirst and let it become a deeper thirst still? You may never again come under the force of this scripture; "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink". Drink into the love of Christ, drink into all that is effected in the work of Christ; see how immense it is, see how complete it is, see how absolutely it meets your case: drink into these things! Do not try to think of them from a distance, do not try to tell the Lord that you will come another day; the word is simple and pointed, and whilst it is full of blessing, it touches facts which are facts in themselves of the greatest seriousness. I may not have spoken much of that side but it is very true, the facts as to your sins and your need. The point today is that the Lord would just discover to you that deep set longing in your soul and give you His own touch in that unsearchable love of His, that touch that would

attach your heart to Him, to find the answer of that longing soul in the One, the only One in the universe, who is able to engage us - "come to me and drink". There is no one else that you can go to, as you may go in your need as you are and draw near to Jesus. No one, no other spring, no other resource, no other basis of peace than His work, reaching right on to His resurrection and God setting Him in His place of power on high; it is from there, that place of power, and yet that holy spot up there in the heavenly regions where divine grace is streaming towards men, that the word comes from this same Jesus, no longer here in Jerusalem on "the last, the great day of the feast", but in a place whence He shall soon come in the final assertion of His rights, when as the scripture says, Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Him Lord (see Phil 2: 10, 11), when everything in this dark scene shall be set right, when every wrong shall be met, when all that is of God in such a scene as this shall be established. But the word to you is not to think just of what is yet to happen; much is yet to happen, but much is very soon to happen.

Think of what is immediate even as we are here together in this hall, the word of the Lord Jesus, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink". The verse goes on to great things of which I do not purpose to speak at this time, very great things, the great scene of plenty, of satisfaction, of refreshing supply, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this he said concerning the Spirit, which they that believed on him were about to receive". Have you received the Spirit? The intent of that scripture is clear, blessedly plain; how simple and plain and definite the words of the Lord Jesus are; how often, alas, we put technical objections in the way of them, but how simple and precious it is here, "which they that believed on him were about to receive". It is no longer the case as I speak to you that Jesus "was not yet glorified"; that was the case as the Lord uttered these words, it is not so now; Jesus is glorified, but thank God the Spirit is come and there are those who have believed who have received the Spirit; and the scripture makes plain that it is normal that as a man or a woman or a young person puts their trust, their faith in Jesus, and submits in obedience to the Lord, the Lord Jesus, God delights to give them the Spirit.

Well, I leave that question with you, whether you know what it is to come to the glorious Person who utters a word so simple and so appealing, "let him come to me and drink". Did you ever do it? You know what need of soul is, you know what needs are which no man by any human means can meet. Here is the One who is perfectly able to meet them all, and not only able but perfectly willing to meet them all, and not only perfectly willing but bringing a word in testimony home to you that it is His intent that you come, that you find that He is able to meet your thirst, "let him come to me and drink". May you do so and find the abundance of supply in divine grace of the holy love that lies behind it all in the heart of God, in the heart of Christ towards you, or His Name's sake.

**Barnet**

**12th August 1973**

## **"AMEN; GOME, LORD JESUS". (Revelation. 22: 20)**

Come, Lord; Thy saints are longing for Thy coming,  
When Thy blest exaltation we'll behold,  
And every mark of shame that  
Thou didst suffer Is answered in the glories that unfold.

Come, Lord; Thy saints are longing to be with Thee  
And see their Lord and Saviour face to face:  
To know the precious nearness of Thy person  
And prove the glorious fulness of Thy grace.

Come, Lord, the groaning hear of Thy creation;  
From sin's intrusion it has suffered sore.  
Bring in Thine own most blessed liberation  
And light and life and liberty restore.

Come, Lord; our hearts are loving Thine appearing;  
When Thou, blest Son of God, shalt be adored;  
When every knee shall bow in subjugation;  
And every tongue confess that Thou art Lord.

Come, Lord; the Spirit and the bride are calling  
And with one heartfelt voice are saying 'Come'.  
Thy glory we await with earnest longing  
And our blest part, to be with Thee at home.

**John Gaskin**

**Aberdeen**

## **THE CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS**

I believe the first teenage question in the Bible was asked by a boy and the second by a girl. The boy enquired about the worship of God and the girl asked if she could help her brother.

The boy was Isaac and the sheep for an offering which he asked about represented the Lord Jesus who was in life and death fully pleasing to God. The girl, Miriam, was at the right place at the right time to be used of God. She asked to be of help to her little brother. We do not know what his earlier name was but he became called Moses and was later one of God's greatest servants.

God expects young people to be interested in His ways. He wanted the Hebrew children to ask about the Passover. For the Christian this is a sign of the shedding of the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish or spot. This has been done once for all and by it the believer is redeemed to God and sheltered from judgment.

After the Israelites crossed the Jordan into the land that God provided for them, they set up twelve great stones on the river bank. The children were expected to ask two separate questions. One was, 'what mean ye by these stones?' and the other was 'what mean these stones?'

The answer to the first question was that the water of the river was stopped a long way upstream whilst the Ark passed over Jordan. For the believing Christian this means that death had to yield when the Lord Jesus died and rose again. The answer to the second was that the people themselves had also crossed the Jordan on dry land. For us this means that the believer has been attracted after the Lord and is standing like one of the great stones in the new homeland of God's purpose.

Have you by faith followed the Lord Jesus?

**J.C.Evershed**

**London**