

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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REST

J.Lovie

Numbers 10: 33-36; Matthew 11: 25-30.

I believe that one great feature of the present time is that God intends that we should come to conditions of rest. God Himself rested as His labour was complete; He rested and was refreshed.

Then God rested in a man like Noah. It must have been very precious to God to find in Noah a condition of things in which He could repose, because Noah's name means repose. I think it indicates that God found a condition of things in Noah in which He could delight and in which He could rest. Supremely of course God found His rest in Christ. How heaven was complacent in relation to all that came out in the manhood of Jesus; in every day of that life so pleasurable to God heaven rested. You think of the hidden years of the life of Jesus, and day by day in that life heaven found its delight: "I do always the things that are pleasing to him", John 8: 29, the Father signalling His approval from heaven and the Spirit coming down of His own volition and resting complacently on Christ as in manhood here. But then what is supremely so is the rest that God has in Christ where He is. Heaven rested fully on Christ in manhood; there was everything for the divine delight in that blessed humanity, in His committal to the path of the Father's will; and Jesus loved every day of that life in doing the will of God; so much so that He said prophetically, "Take me not away in the midst of my days!", Ps 102: 24. He felt the fact that His days were shortened, because He so delighted to fill out every day in such a way that heaven could rest in it. Then as He is, heaven delighting in Him, 'Received in glory bright up there' (Hymn 350). The Spirit justified everything that Jesus did, He was justified in Spirit, received up in glory (see 1 Tim 3: 16). God finds His rest supremely in Christ.

But then God found that in Noah in which He could rest: He was a preacher of righteousness. Think how Noah must have felt the condition of things in the days before the flood when they

mocked at his preaching! Yet he went on in patience, he walked with God. It is a very fine suggestion that God is walking. I know Scripture says He can run and He can fly, but His pace is generally a walk. God walks - "The voice of Jehovah Elohim, walking in the garden in the cool of the day", Gen 3: 8. Noah walked with God; I believe God found companionship. Enoch too walked with God.

There were features in those dear men, in the midst of the generation in which they were, in which heaven delighted. With Noah it was but a few, eight souls coming on to the renewed earth and God finding delight in that burnt-offering. Noah took of every clean animal and offered it up, a burnt-offering to Jehovah. Think, dear brethren, of what God had secured on the renewed earth. I believe there was a moment, it may have been a brief moment, when sin was not working, when there was what was pleasurable to God secured as the fruit of the burnt offering that Noah offered up to God.

Well then subjectively you and I would be exercised as to whether there is that about us in which heaven can rest. You bring it down to the present moment and the present testimony and find it is possible that, as thus committed to the will of God, there would be a state of things in the saints in which heaven delights - the life of Jesus continued in testimony. What the Lord Jesus said to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road indicated that the 'Me' was here, that Christ was here in testimony "Why dost thou persecute me?", Acts 9: 4. I think the Lord rested in that, He found delight in that, that His body was here. The more we look into that the more we find that the Head is described in the body here. It is wonderful that we should be concerned as we continue in the will of God that there is what is representing Christ, and that involves the present testimony. I think in relation to that that the Lord is in control and He is in charge of everything in relation to the testimony. He is not letting things get out of His hand; "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35. Think of the administration of everything in the hand of the Son! There is no breakdown in relation

to that administration, things are carried through in an inviolate, wonderful way in the hand of Christ.

I think that in these verses in Numbers 10 you get the suggestion that you can find rest in wilderness surroundings; not final conditions of rest, but in a provisional way, when in wilderness life and in wilderness circumstances we should touch something of a restful condition of things as proving the Lord's faithful love and leading and intervention for His people. We have come through much, we know that, but all that has been in divine ways and the Lord has been in charge of His testimony. What has been done has not been without His control. I think the time we are in is a time when the Lord is giving us to prove in local meetings that even in wilderness circumstances we are reaching a state and condition of rest. I think this is very precious. Mr Darby shows how he enjoyed this; even in times of the greatest conflict his soul is at rest, his soul is confidently in the enjoyment of his relation with Christ, and as belonging to the assembly he finds himself restful in the midst of all the adversity and conflict linked with the wilderness position. While here, you might say, Moses is not really giving the lead he should give - leadership is failing and weak and broken down in measure - the ark which generally was in the centre of the camp is coming out of its position and coming into the lead, the Lord Himself going before. Oh, the sense of divine faithfulness and care! The Lord has not left us to find our own way; in His faithful love He is proving that He is our Guide and Leader, and our Guardian in wilderness circumstances. The ark comes out from its accustomed place in the centre of the camp - "The ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them". I think this, dear brethren, is what we should come to: the experience of restful conditions in wilderness life. It is not the final thought of rest, we are in wilderness surroundings; we come together in wilderness circumstances, we come to the Supper as in the wilderness and we break bread in the wilderness. I think as we experience the Lord's gracious care and solicitation, His faithful love as the ark of the covenant of Jehovah that went before them (I think

this may be the first allusion to the ark of the covenant of Jehovah), it is God in His faithfulness, Christ in His faithfulness; it is the faithfulness of divine committal in relation to the current position in the testimony, to come in and show the way. The Lord has Himself gone before; He has marked out the path that we tread (Hymn 139). I think that is the ark coming into this position in that three days' journey. It involves death and resurrection, proving that divine love has entered into the position in relation to signally giving a lead in protection and care so that the people of God and what is for God in testimony are carried through in wilderness life according to the divine thought. From this viewpoint every enemy is laid low because it says, "the cloud of Jehovah was over them by day", that is the divine presence. That is a great matter, the sense of the presence of God. But in addition to that, in this section, there is the great element of divine faithfulness. And so at Corinth God is faithful. You fall back on God's faithfulness: "God is faithful, by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord", 1 Cor 1: 9. You cling to that and you prove it, divine faithfulness in the way that divine Persons have acted to establish for Themselves in testimony here an order of things in which They can rest.

So it is, "it came to pass when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered". It is a great triumph. The force of this comes into your soul, that there is nothing which can stand athwart the intervention of divine power, the movement in the wilderness when externally leadership has broken down. God asserts the initiative and Christ in faithful love shows the way in view of rest. It says, "when it rested, he said, Return Jehovah, unto the myriads of the thousands of Israel". This is very precious. Dear brethren, we should be able to cling to this, that the ground we occupy is the ground that every true believer should be on. It says, "Return, Jehovah, unto the myriads of the thousands of Israel". You think of what that return is! Is it then that the ground we are occupying is the ground that you can rightly say every true believer should be on? Let us look at this subjectively in ourselves and our own exercise and look at it in relation to our local meeting -

the ground we are occupying is the ground that God would have every believer to be on. Therefore we are not apologetic as to that position, we are not apologetic as to the weakness that marks the public position. The sense of divine resource, the sense of divine faithfulness, the sense of divine care and protection guards and keeps His own testimony so that there is what is answering in some way to what God is resting in. It exists by reason of the presence of the Spirit; the truth is maintained in all its fulness in the Spirit, for the Spirit is the truth. The Lord is the truth objectively there above, everything established in a Man in the presence of God; and it is maintained subjectively here in the Spirit. So that in the faith of your soul, as travelling on this road that Christ has marked out before, you come to it through experience, through faith and by the Spirit, that the ground we are on is the ground that God would have every true believer to be on. Let us not shrink from that. That is not assuming anything, that is not boasting. We reach this order of things linked with wilderness life where we know conditions of rest in the local assembly. I think that is a very attractive matter at the present time. We have come through much and we need not go into that - not at the present time anyway - but to find that in the local meeting a state and condition of rest under the leadership of Christ is being experienced. I think heaven is delighted with that.

I read the passage in Matthew 11 because, while it is really the servants' chapter, it would have a certain bearing on every one of us because we can all be servants. Every brother and sister here can serve in some way. And I would say every brother and sister here can take a lead. Romans contemplates that every one of us can be a leader when it says, each taking the lead in paying honour to the other (see chap 12: 10). That is very fine. Young people should think of that; they honour their father and mother, then they honour the element of experience and elderhood in the local meeting, they honour the experience and solidity in aged sisters who have stood in the truth, have come through crisis after crisis and are in restful circumstances. While Matthew 11 then is the servants' chapter it is also Christ in relation to the will of God and in the yoke of the

Father's will. While His ministry is rejected and He Himself is rejected, He turns in the confidence of His links with His Father: "Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth". Oh, what a model is that blessed, glorious Saviour, what a model is Jesus in the path of service here! Though outwardly rejected, the cities in which His mighty works were done rejecting Him, the Lord is going on in the confidence of that yoke in the Father's will, and He wants you and me to be in it. So we should be restful in whatever feature of service the Lord would have any of us carry out. As I said already, He would give us each something to do.

So He says, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest". Oh, the rest in that yoke of the Father's will; it is the kind of yoke that we want to be in, the yoke of the Father's will: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me". Let us, dear brethren, as occupied with Christ find that in Him the example is so fully set out that we take on this yoke in committal in relation to the Father's will and find rest in so doing. How the Lord found rest in that path of devotion and service here in relation to the Father's will!

He was really the ram caught in the thicket by its horns. It was the power of love that held Jesus in that unswerving path of devotion to the Father's will. This is the path of true happiness, this is the path of committal to the Father's will. May we know it more as we commit ourselves to it, for His Name's sake.

BROOKLYN NY

28 September 1973

PAUL'S CHILDREN

S.McCallum

Philemon 8-11; Titus 1: 1-4; 2 Timothy 1: 1, 2

It is very interesting that there should be these three references of Paul's to individuals as his children. I want to refer to three particular qualities that come out in these three children of Paul. They are remarkable persons, and each brings out a very distinct quality. It is a wonderful thing to be in Paul's company. The Spirit of God in the Book of the Acts speaks of Paul's company (see chap 13: 13). It is a wonderful thing to be in it and to learn from being in the company of a man like Paul. What an embodiment of Christ he was, how like Christ he was! He could say in regard to certain, "Be my imitators, even as I also am of Christ", 1 Cor 11: 1.

Now the first child of Paul's I wish to speak of is a very interesting one, and it is a very interesting letter that is written about him. What I want to bring out briefly is how this child, of Paul brings out the feature of love. He is a little like David in the Old Testament. One thing that David brings out in quality is love, and if there is one thing that all our assemblies need, dear brethren, it is the bringing out of the feature of love. We can always do with more and more love in relation to divine Persons and in relation to one another, and in relation to the truth. Mr Taylor Sr made an astounding statement, if I remember rightly (as getting older the memory does not serve so well, but you learn to rely more on the Spirit than on your memory, although I am not saying anything about memories, it is a good thing if you can remember things, but we need the Spirit); he said that the love of the truth is morally greater than the love of the brethren. I would have thought a few times and maybe would not have made a statement like that; but he said that, and we need always to remember it. I do not mean by saying that to detract from the love of one another, the love of the brethren, because oftentimes difficulties arise - and where is the locality where difficulties have not arisen? - but love never fails: many things may fail but love never fails. So

what can we do in our relations with one another? Can we promote the idea of love? Or, would we promote something else? Now Paul says of Onesimus that he beseeches, he enjoins Philemon "for love's sake ... being such a one as Paul the aged ... I exhort thee for my child, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus". So this letter is what you might call a love letter, it is a letter that is steeped in love; it exudes love nearly all through in Paul's desire to see a person who was converted, affected under his influence and his service, reinstated in the affections of Philemon. He was a runaway slave, but Paul had affected him spiritually. Can we affect one another spiritually? Sometimes we affect one another naturally, but can we affect one another spiritually? And can we be of such character and quality that we can set love in motion. That is what happens here, love set in motion in Paul, and love is set in motion, we might say, in this local assembly by the way that Paul writes in regard to Onesimus; and this is what we want, dear brethren. We have little time left and we want to love one another, and promote love. I know it is a test at times, our personalities naturally are so different, but it is a great thing to draw out love and to work on the principle of love, because love never fails.

Now I want to say a word about Titus. Titus is quite different from Onesimus, and he is quite different from Timothy, and yet the three of them - and it is a three-fold cord that is not easily broken - are all children of Paul. The quality I would bring out in Titus is boldness; he was a bold person, bold as a lion. This epistle as you go through it - and it is quite an epistle, how Titus was left to set certain things in order and particularly stressing the matter of eldership and the like - brings out the feature of Isaiah. Do you remember how the Spirit of God says through one writer in the New Testament, "But Esaias is very bold". Rom 10: 20? It is a remarkable statement in regard to Isaiah. Titus brings out that feature. He does not appear in 1 Corinthians, but he appears in 2 Corinthians. Paul speaks of him in connection with the preaching and in connection with walking in the same Spirit and in the same steps. How bold Paul was! How bold he was on Mars hill, how bold

he was in relation to Corinth, his is not the boldness of natural effrontery; what I am referring to is spiritual boldness in relation to issues, in relation to the testimony, as we have had it in this excellent epistle our brother has before him, in Timothy. We have not received the "spirit of cowardice"; that surely can be said of Titus.

He was very bold, Paul says of the Cretans, quoting one of their own prophets, that they are "lazy gluttons", Titus 1: 12. He even speaks in this letter of a lawyer. You may say there is no room for lawyers in Christianity, but Paul says in this letter, "Zenas the lawyer and Apollos set forward diligently on their way, that nothing may be lacking to them", chap 3: 13. In the Acts of the Apostles the Spirit of God emphasises boldness, speaking "the word of God with boldness", chap 4: 31. Isaiah certainly spoke with boldness, and we want this quality of spiritual boldness. In a world of men such as we are in we do not need to be timid and apologetic, we want to be bold in the confession of Christ. You young brothers and sisters, be bold in the confession of Christ, in the workshop, in the office, and at school! Also in matters related to the assembly, when issues are at stake, have spiritual boldness. I do not mean fleshly boldness - there is such a thing referred to in the New Testament in relation to that side of things - but I am referring to spiritual boldness that appears in Titus, a child of Paul, and I am sure he learned it from Paul who would never turn his back in the conflict in relation to the maintenance of the testimony and the maintenance of the truth. So let us not be afraid, dear brethren. Have we not the Spirit? Think of having the Spirit and of having the support of the Lord. Paul refers to it: "The Lord stood with me", 2 Tim 4: 17. What boldness that man had before the authorities as well as in the assembly!

Now I just want to refer to Timothy. If the epistle to Philemon and the child of Paul in Onesimus makes way for the love side as in David, and if in Titus the child of Paul, Titus, brings out the idea of spiritual boldness, what does Timothy bring out? I think Timothy brings out the spirit of Jeremiah. What a man Jeremiah was! He was bold too, of course, but what marks Jeremiah is tears, feelings. What a man he was! Are we feeling, dear brethren? Are we true

sons of Paul, children of Paul in our feelings, in the way we care for one another and relate ourselves to one another? You think of the feelings of Paul in regard even to his ancient brethren, how he speaks of them in that dispensational section, Romans 9, 10 and 11! How his feelings come out in regard to Israel, but how his feelings come out in regard to the assembly at Corinth and the recovery of a man that had gone wrong, and how he exhorted the brethren to see that the man was fully restored! What a spirit of Christ there was in Paul, and how it is in Timothy. He may be timid but Paul speaks of him to the Corinthians as putting "you in mind of my ways as they are in Christ", 1 Cor 4: 17. How Timothy set out the feelings of Paul, the feelings of Christ! You think of Paul's tears in Acts 20 in watching over the flock! Reference was made today to tears in the last few years. If only we could see the record of heaven as to the tears in families, the tears in local assemblies because of persons lost; how we feel in regard to these things, and how we can shed tears! Think of the Lord weeping over Jerusalem because they had not accepted the gain of His patient service and ministry. Think of how He wept, his feelings in His Spirit antagonistic to death invading the human family - "Jesus wept", John 11: 35.

Well, that is the children of Paul, dear brethren. Think how the Spirit of God in three epistles is making so much of the sons or the children of Paul! Let us be in that company, and a strength and a support to the testimony in our local positions, for His Name's sake.

TORONTO

1 June 1973

BEING RIGHT, OUTWARDLY AND INWARDLY

A.B.Parker

Luke 5: 35-39

We need encouragement, dear brethren, and I think we are getting it. We do not want to be overoccupied with how much we need encouragement, but to be more ready to seize upon the encouragement which the Lord is giving. Having had some little experience in the testimony in America, it is very interesting for some of us to see the way the Lord's hand is operating today, particularly in arranging for servants who are ministering the pure word abroad to come to this side of the Atlantic to serve. We can see the Lord's consideration for us and we should take full advantage of it. If we believe that the Lord's hand is in it, let us be concerned about what the Lord is saying to us, for it will give us a clue as to His mind for us and how we should proceed in matters.

I have been affected by what the Lord says in the verses read - He speaks of externals and of what is internal. He speaks of something new coming in. In the book of Amos, reference is made to the new growth after the king's mowings. It would seem, in that book, that the testimony was about finished. The latter growth was in danger of being eaten up by the locusts. Amos appealed to Jehovah, "O Lord Jehovah, forgive, I beseech thee! How shall Jacob arise? for he is small", chap 7: 2. The latter growth represents something fresh and new at the end of the dispensation, I believe. It is fresh and new, but it is no different from what was initial; it is from the same roots. There should be nothing introduced today that is different from what was introduced by Paul and others; it is to be from the same roots that have carried the testimony through. We are having, in a sense, a revival of the 'good teaching'. It is fresh and new. The Lord speaks about what is new in the verses read, and we want to be alert to catch what the Lord is saying to us now that is distinctive to the present moment in church history.

The Lord said, "No one puts a piece of a new garment upon an old garment". I fear that there are some who are trying to do that. They may say that the new will mend the old, but the Lord did not say that. He said that the new piece will be rent. If what the Lord is arriving at amongst us now were to be associated with something old, it will be spoiled. Some may say that there are myriads of believers in the world, many of whom are more devoted than we are, and this may be very true, but are they walking in the vital truth of the recovery? Are they having part in the distinctive character of what the Lord is seeking to produce through the sorrows and pressures of the present moment? This, dear brethren, is like the fresh, new growth in Amos - it is the new garment, in character.

Think of the blind man who rose up, cast away his garment and came to Jesus! Someone may have said, 'Here is your garment; do not cast it away'. He would have said, 'I have something new'. He did not want his old garment any more; he was in fresh, new circumstances; he had come into personal contact with Jesus; his eyes were opened and he was following Jesus in the way. That was his new garment. And we want to be in that way, following Jesus in the way He is taking today.

Issue has been taken in the matter of associations. I believe that the Lord is calling our attention to the fact that, while we may have made due allowance for the efficacy of His blood, we may not be making proper allowance for the meaning of the water that came from the side of Jesus. The water has to do with our associations; in effect, our garments. Are they new or old? And if new, are they becoming spotted? Are we attaching them to something old? In Numbers 19 the intensity of the burning of the red heifer and the cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop is, in a sense, equal to the burning of the beasts whose carcasses were burned without the camp on the day of atonement. The Lord Jesus suffered and died to put away sin; He shed His blood to make atonement, but He also suffered and died to provide a means of cleansing. In our approach to God we must recognise the need for the blood and the water: "sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience" (that is the blood) "and

washed as to our body with pure water", Heb 10: 22. Water, as well as blood, came from the side of Jesus. That is stressed by John as having to do, particularly, with a day of breakdown when we are most liable to touch a dead body. In such a case the water is needed, and failure to use it causes one to defile the tabernacle of Jehovah and he must be cut off from Israel, Num 19: 13. We need to see the importance of being right circumstantially and that the sufferings of Christ have provided a means of cleansing.

The Lord Jesus also referred to what is inward - the new wine. It is to be put into new skins. Wine is said to cheer God and man (see Jud 9: 13). It reminds me of the oblation in Leviticus 2 which was offered to Jehovah but was also partaken of by the priest. It speaks of the precious life of Jesus; the absolute perfection, in detail, of His pathway here in which pressure only brought out the fragrance of that life, lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. God delights in it and He delights to share it with us. Reference is made in Daniel 9 to the evening oblation, and it must have been the evening oblation referred to in 1 Kings 18: 36-39, when Elijah offered the bullock, and fire came down from heaven and consumed the offering. What an encouragement to think that in the 'evening' of the dispensation God is delighting to share His thoughts about Christ with those who make room for the new wine. There is the outward side - the new garment - but there is what is inward. We need to have our joy in things in which God is finding His joy - that which gladdens the heart of God and men.

There is power in new wine; old skins cannot contain it. They can hold old wine but not the new. If I may be simple, the fermentation of new wine requires new skins to contain the power.

Power comes in - "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah", Zech 4: 6. This is the power by which we are to carry on in days of small things, and the Lord is preparing vessels that can hold it. Can we hold the new wine? It is new in the sense of freshness; it is being vintaged - in circumstances of pressure and trial, the trials of the last days.

In Matthew, as the Lord Jesus neared the end of His pathway and was drawing near to Jerusalem, He referred several times to the vineyard. He spoke of persons who were hired to work in the vineyard and the eleventh hour servants were spoken of in a distinctive way. Then there were the sons who were told to labour in their father's vineyard. One said he would not go but later he repented and went. We may know something of these circumstances. How difficult it has been to face the circumstances of the way. It may be that at times something in us rebelled against the circumstances and sorrows, but through grace supplied we went, knowing that the area of our toil would produce something to gladden the heart of God and men. Then, finally, the Lord spoke about the vineyard that was taken away from certain and given to others. All this has a bearing on the present time. We want to be in it rightly. We want to have this new wine and we want to have it in new skins the work of God in us that is able to contain the new wine.

Rock bottom has been referred to in these meetings. I trust that we have reached it. We can talk about reaching rock bottom but we may not realise how much we were impregnated by things which were not according to truth. Let us not feel that we have reached rock bottom and that the matter is settled; let us keep reaching it; let us see that every part of us is attached to the Rock. The Lord Jesus said, "On this rock I will build my assembly", Matt 16: 18.

May the Lord help us to be right inwardly - indeed, may He help us in relation to both what is outward and what is inward, that we may be fully in what the Lord is doing in this outstanding period of the testimony, for His Name's sake.

TORONTO

1 June 1973

PERFECT AND COMPLETE

W.F.Flowerdew

Colossians 4: 12.

The hymn with which we commenced, and our brother's prayer following, have confirmed me to bring forward this verse because a great end to have in mind for the saints is that they should stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. I think that would relate to the inheritance of which we have been reminded in prayer, indeed it would relate to the whole scope of the truth viewed in an all-round way. So that to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God would be a complete thought; not just to repeat the word, but it would preserve us from being specialist in any particular line. We should have the whole scope of the truth, the whole thought of the inheritance in our minds and stand in relation to it. The epistle to the Romans refers to the mystery and relates the glad tidings to it, and it brings us to the great point of our standing in Christ: it sets our feet, as it were, upon solid rock so that we have an outlook before us. Chapter 16 would indicate that there is a great range of things lying ahead and we are brought into a position of stability from which we can view it. I think Epaphras would have in mind that we should not be diverted from it. Maybe we have been diverted, but divine thoughts stand; they centre in the Man of God's purpose and they can never be divorced from Him.

Our prayers should be in this relation: To cling to God's original thoughts for the saints and the Man in whom they centre and that we should stand in them in a complete way, with our outlook enlarged, our understanding increasing. What God has in mind for us in purpose is a glorious matter and the object is that we should arrive at what is perfect in the mind of God and what is complete in all the will of God. I think it would involve for us the liberty of sonship.

It says earlier in the epistle that "ye are complete in him", chap 2: 10. As we know, that means that there is no need to go outside of Him for anything. The truth is complete in Jesus, and we are

complete in Him. What we need, therefore, is to have our minds more centred on what there is in Him and all that He is for God and for us, and all that He would bring us into. We need to stand in these things, as it says at the end of Ephesians, where the scope of God's thoughts is opened up to us particularly, "having accomplished all things, to stand", chap 6:13.

It was just this thought which came to mind that we should cling to this great matter and that our prayers should be in this relation, both as to our own enjoyment and for our brethren, that we should move into the extent and enjoyment of the inheritance and stand together in it. This would involve the working out of the mystery, the enjoyment of our links together. There is a great range of thoughts in mind, and the apostle's desire, and that of Epaphras too - and we might say the prayers of many are on this line - is that the saints should cling to these complete thoughts and that they should enter into the completeness of what God has in mind, stand in it and not let it go, not slip away from it but stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Much would enter into that, and there is much good teaching that we can follow up and enjoy; it may be some studying in this connection would be profitable in order to get a more real understanding of it ourselves. We should have completion before us and see that God wants us to arrive at nothing less. He has arrived at completion in Christ; how blessed that is! The Spirit is helping and I think the prayers of the saints enter into it too: it is for us to cling to these thoughts and to take our stand in a definite way so that what relates to the purpose of God may find its answer now among the saints, find its answer in the service of God, find its answer testimonially too. All this would enter into the matter so that God's thoughts as to Christ and the assembly, what He has in mind in purpose, would find representation in the way in which the truth works out and that locally too. It is for each one of us, the youngest, all of us, to hold to these great thoughts. According to our measure, as we allow the Spirit to open up more to us and we cling to Christ as the Man of God's purpose in whom all centres, I think we would find that there is an answer as we come together, so that assembly

thoughts come into expression and some expression of what is in the mind of God, the scope of His will for us, is more and more enjoyed.

Well, one just presents this to the brethren as freshly impressed with this verse of scripture and the objective it would give us in our prayers and our exercises in our everyday walk, that we should stand in relation to these great things so that there may be, as it is in the mind of God, a complete answer now in the assembly to what is so perfectly found in Christ. Of course, it involves much on our side to move into, but it is a glorious objective and nothing less is in the mind of God for us, that we should enter into these things and come into the enjoyment of them and that they should find expression among us at the present time.

LONDON

18 September 1973

WORKING TOGETHER

C.R.Byng

1 Corinthians 3: 4-10.

As Paul writes to the brethren at Corinth as a local assembly, the instruction that was needed by the saints there would, no doubt, be needed by the saints in every locality. Whilst Paul refers to Apollos and himself, the point that he makes is that God is the One from whom all true increase comes, as he leads up to this remarkable expression "we are God's fellow-workmen". Not that we are working with God but we are to be working together for God. It is not limited to ministering servants such as Paul and Apollos, because Paul goes on to say "let each see how he builds". He is not exactly exhorting that we should build, because we necessarily are building something, but the exhortation is as to how we build.

The prosperity of the beloved brethren in any local assembly is bound up with the working out of this great matter as to whether we are fellow-workers under God. As God is the giver of the increase and we desire to be working together rightly under God, we would need to take account of the greatness of what God Himself is doing by way of work. One of those simple but profound expressions of the Lord Jesus in John is "My Father worketh hitherto and I work", John 5: 17. That could, no doubt, be taken back as covering the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, but it is wonderfully true even at the present time. It was true at Pentecost - what a building that was, built by Christ, into which the Spirit could come. The Lord Jesus is the great Builder of His assembly and He has gone on building right through all the Dark Ages, as men speak of them, or, as we would perhaps more rightly speak of them, the Middle Ages, through the times of revival to to-day. Christ is the great Builder and the Spirit of God is building in relation to Him, and surely we can take account, feelingly and reverently, of the Father Himself as working.

So we are related to what divine Persons are doing on a universal scale. Whilst we would need to work this out in this city,

we think of what divine Persons are doing universally, much of it hidden as far as we are concerned. Let us be in faith that God is working, perhaps far more extensively and deeply than at the moment we understand. If the fruit is to be rich and abiding for God, the roots have to be deep and God often takes much time and patience to cause the roots to go down deeply before we even understand He is working at all and before the fruit that is for His own pleasure comes to light. As we think of places where we used to be able to take account of a representation of the assembly according to God, do not let us regard them as deserts but as areas where divine Persons are working. The fruit of Their labours may be coming to light far more quickly than perhaps we at the moment think. Our direct responsibility is to be working together in this city as under God, and what a work there is to be done! Working together means that we need to be able to fit in with one another, everyone having his own particular part. There were not two Pauls and there were not two Apollos, there are not two of any of us; everyone of us is distinct from everyone else. Later in this epistle Paul, with, I think, a bearing back on this setting, speaks of star differing from star in glory (chap 15: 41). So everyone of us has some particular impression from the Spirit which is for profit. The Spirit gives to each. Sometimes we need a word of wisdom, sometimes a word of knowledge, sometimes faith, and normally it is not the same person who contributes the word of knowledge, or wisdom, or faith. There are at least nine different kinds of manifestations of the Spirit that come into 1 Corinthians 12.

So, beloved brethren, let us be freshly encouraged that God is expecting everyone of us to take our place more actively in working together as having in mind conditions where God can dwell. Do not let us forget the word of last Saturday on the tabernacle. If that is to be worked out in this city, it means we need to be working together, not working against one another and not occupied with petty issues which just militate against work. It was a prophetic word of beloved Mr Coates that ninety per cent of the differences amongst the people of God are personal 'things not worth five minutes' consideration'

(Deuteronomy, page 9). Let us have help to judge the personal issues that like little foxes militate against this great constructive work, the most glorious work that has ever been committed to the hand of man. Think of all the work that men commit their hands to as under the control of the enemy of souls; and what is going to happen to it? It is all going to come down flat. The great structures in this western Europe are all going to come under the condemnation of God as yielding nothing for Him. The great structure that we have the privilege and responsibility of being related to is going to be seen as the holy city "coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God", Rev 21: 10. That is to be found increasingly taking expression in every local assembly. Little matters need to be judged and taken out of the way so that this great work may proceed. It is to be for the glory of God eternally and yet it is committed for the moment to the hands of people like our selves. Let us understand humbly that we have failed like everyone to whom God has entrusted something. God sets things up in perfection and man, as putting his hand to it in responsibility, fails. Let us be persons who are in the spirit of having judged this, not occupied with it, but having judged it and thus able to go on together as those who have increasing impressions of the glory of the work of ensuring conditions where God can dwell and where God's praises and worship can be more fully secured.

May we be encouraged to understand the privilege of working together under God in relation to this great matter, so that God Himself can bless and give the increase, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

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"DO NOT WEEP"

E.C.Burr

Revelation 5: 4, 5.

The hymn we sang -

'Our hearts Thou dost console, O Lord' –

and some of the things that our beloved brother has just said to us, impressed me to refer to this scripture which has come to my notice in reading some other ministry. It seems to me that the powerful effectiveness of this simple word of the elders might be a word to us at the moment: "Do not weep". There is a time to weep, the wise man tells us that (Eccles 3: 4), and how much we have known it.

There is a sense in which the time to weep is persistent. There are things that we know of things that have entered into our personal histories and that have entered into assembly history, things as to the state of the world; all of which things enter into the tears which God puts into His bottle. And we think of, and are moved by the tears of the woman which she used for the purpose of washing the feet of Jesus, and with Peter's tears, and Paul's tears, and Timothy's tears. There is a time to weep, we remember that, and as I say, in one sense it is persistent. But at this moment, which is perhaps one of the most critical moments in the history of western Europe (I suppose we are all familiar with the interpretation of Revelation which indicates that it unfolds the way God deals in judgment particularly with the area where the testimony has been, western Europe) "one of the elders says to me, Do not weep". That, beloved, in English, is three words of one syllable, one of the simplest expressions you could possibly get, "Do not weep". And the reason is given: "The lion which is of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, has overcome so as to open the book, and its seven seals". That is to say one Man has been identified who has the capacity to open this book and to solve every problem that is in it. If it were thought that at the moment there was one man who could solve a single one of the world's problems, he would be made everything of, people would

entrust him with everything and in confidence. If there were a man who could solve the problems of today - economic problems, currency questions, labour questions, industrial questions - the world would let him do almost anything. But, beloved, we know a Man who can solve every problem in the universe; not only every political problem, but every assembly problem and every personal problem; and it is because the elders are familiar with such a One that they say, "Do not weep". And I have the impression, especially being encouraged by what our beloved brother has said to us, that the Lord might say that to us at the moment, "Do not weep".

Well, you say, am I not to weep about the divisions of the past? There is a time to weep, but there is a time not to weep, "Do not weep". Why? Because we know One who has the remedy to each one of these problems in His own hand. When the seven seals are opened - and He has the power to open them - you might think that in some sense problems have been made more difficult, but actually the opening of the seal is only to bring out the reality of the issues with which this One, "the Lion which is of the tribe of Juda, the root of David", has to deal. But the injunction remains, "Do not weep".

And as we contemplate what we would regard perhaps, as slowness in judgments, slowness in recovery, slowness in repentance (for repentance will be needed), as we think of our own natural relatives and others who have turned out of the way, there is much of sorrow that enters into our hearts, but the Lion of the tribe of Juda has prevailed to open even those books. And the elders say to John, "Do not weep". Maybe we think, too, of localities where things are very small, where things look naturally as if they might get even smaller, as if possibly the breaking of bread might die out. Would you take this word, too, from one of the elders, "Do not weep".

Why? Because the same One has the remedy to every situation in His own hands. He has prevailed, "has overcome so as to open the book, and its seven seals". He does not open the book to create interesting reading or interesting subjects for conversation, let alone gossip; He opens the book with the intention of dealing with every issue that is recorded in it. "And its seven seals": they are opened

one by one. We have the account of it later in the book, we have the woes and the trumpets; the seals, He has overcome so as to open them. Maybe when they are opened, as I say, things for the moment look worse, but the elders still say, "Do not weep".

Have you, beloved brother and sister, such a link with the Lord that you can accept from Him the word in relation to the whole present situation of the testimony, "Do not weep"? I think it links with the way that we have been encouraged by what has come to us tonight, the standing perfect and complete in all God's will. You might say, We are so reduced, how could that be possible? But Epaphras did not give up praying for it, and God is working in ways that we know not how - the scripture uses that expression, "he does not know how", Mark 4: 27. And the elders say in that connection, "Do not weep". Well, beloved, the Lord Himself would say to us that exigencies and distresses may appear to be what they may, but one of the elders said, "Do not weep". And I think the Lord would encourage us tonight, so that we are not downcast by anxiety as to when the Lord may work or what He will do when He does work, but we would accept restfully from one of the elders - one of those who, as it has been said, is intelligent as to what he says, for when the elders worship they can say why they worship - who knows why he says what he says, "Do not weep". I think that the Lord would further encourage us tonight by turning our eyes from the sorrows and the burdens which necessarily remain and the tears which remain in relation to that, and He would say to us "Do not weep" because He has the remedy for everything in His own hands. Well, may He encourage us, for His Name's sake.

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THE CHILDREN'S PATHWAYS

The shortest Book of the Bible was written to a mother and her children and brought greetings from, it seems, their cousins.

However young or old the children were, the apostle John wrote that they were "walking in truth", that is living as true believers.

Firstly they were loved by many for the eternal truth's sake and could rely on the help of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is by being loved that we learn to love and then doing the will of the Lord becomes a ready thing.

Perhaps you feel you do not know the Lord, like the boy Samuel whose name was called several times before he answered to Jehovah. Looking back you may see that the Lord Jesus has called to you even more times in the gospel preaching, when reading the Scriptures or by things that have happened. This is because He needs you!

God has given us a conscience. Usually we think this means something that is bad, but it ought always to be a good one. If we confess our sins He forgives them. But walking in truth needs more than this - prayer, and God's word. Rhoda, quite young, was with those who were praying and she heard the voice of Peter, who speaks also to us in his epistles about all things that have to do with life and godliness.

As with older Christians, a believing child walking in truth should soon urgently wish to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread as He desired. This is called the Lord's supper. Have you thought and spoken about this yet?

J.C.Evershed

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