

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

[THE PRESENT ACTIVITIES OF JESUS](#)

[HOLY BOLDNESS IN DAYS OF DIFFICULTY](#)

[ROOM FOR THE SPIRIT](#)

[NO DAY LIKE IT](#)

[SOME FUNDAMENTALS - THE CREATOR AND THE CREATION](#)

[THE CHILDREN'S GEMS](#)

THE PRESENT ACTIVITIES OF JESUS

E.M.Walkinshaw

Luke 24: 45-49; Acts 2: 32-36; 9: 17; Revelation 22: 16, 17, 20 ,21

I want to speak about the wonderful activities of Jesus after He was raised from among the dead. I think we should understand that, as raised from among the dead, Jesus has been active, He is not quiescent. He is sitting on the Father's throne, and in the book of the Acts a man sees Him standing; and all these passages of scripture give us an impression that Jesus is intensely interested in men, and His interest of course reflects the interest of God in men. So God is interested in men, all men, because He is still God our Saviour "who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth", 1 Tim 2: 4. How great God is! and His desire is expressed and made known to us. The passage from which I quote speaks of "the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all". How wonderful that is! What a work was accomplished by Jesus!

He "gave himself a ransom for all", that is that the purchase price was sufficient. Of course we could never say that all would come into the gain of it. Nevertheless, in the wonderful expression of the attitude of God towards men and His interest in them, it says that "the man Christ Jesus... gave himself a ransom for all". We can rejoice in that because we can therefore preach the gospel to all.

One has often felt that we do not have to put persons into categories and wonder if they come within the class to whom we could preach, or whether when we meet any particular person we could speak to him about the gospel. We can fall back on the wonderful interest of God in men and His desire that all men should be saved; therefore we can preach to all.

So the gospel is still being preached; it is for sinners but also for the saints, because I am sure that we all need to get a deepened impression of the interest of God in men and that in turn will make us more evangelical day by day. We may not feel that we can preach, and of course sisters do not preach, but where Jesus and His present activities are cherished in the heart I think we can speak to

persons, and I find I often fail to take advantage of opportunities to speak with individuals that I meet day by day. So you could have the spirit of an evangelist. The more we understand the present interest of God in men and the wonderful present living activities of Jesus, the more we shall reflect them here in the testimony. So God would help us in this. The Lord Jesus here in this first passage says "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations beginning at Jerusalem"; this is after He has been raised from among the dead. How wonderful is the preaching of repentance! not, as another has said, that repentance in itself is exactly a part of the glad tidings, but apart from it you could never come into the gain of the good news. It is very touching, and we can always be reminded of it, that it began at Jerusalem, the very city that had rejected Him, outside of whose gates He had been crucified, and yet the preaching was to begin there. Elsewhere it says, "God... enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent" (Acts 17: 30), change their mind through self-judgment. It is more than a mere change of mind, or just that I change my opinion (because I might change my opinion from one philosophy to another) but it is an acknowledgement through self-judgment and condemnation of myself and the justifying of God - repentance, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. So repentance is to be preached, and the remission of sins. I wonder if it has come home to us how great that is, dear friends! I think at times we do not value sufficiently that our sins have been forgiven for His Name's sake. I wonder if we here appreciate Him sufficiently. The preaching has reached us, and I doubt not that all of us here have repented towards God and put our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and therefore can appreciate the forgiveness of sins; but what is so delightful is that that preaching is still going on through persons who themselves have repented and who know the forgiveness of sins through the precious work of Jesus.

Then the Lord Jesus says "I send the promise of my Father upon you". Now this is something else He is going to do. I have often thought of the Lord Jesus as active. I must confess that at one

time I had almost thought of Him as sitting upon the Father's throne quiescent, but He is not like that. So here He says that He was going to send the promise of the Father, that was the Holy Spirit, and when He went on high He did it. We have these two great blessings and I trust we all have them; and if we have, we still need to be increased in our appreciation of them - the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It has been said that they are the two things that we actually have substantially at the moment. How great they are! So when Jesus went on high, as Peter says, "Having therefore been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which ye behold and hear". How wealthy God is! What a giving God! Think of that woman to whom Jesus said "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water", John 4: 10. It says that He "poured out"; the word 'pour' always impresses me with the wealth and greatness of what God has given, and I think we could say that the desire of the Lord Jesus is that every believer should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and be in the gain of His presence. That becomes a great exercise. I might claim, as some do, that I received the Holy Spirit twenty, thirty, forty years ago, but am I in the living freshness of His movements which are all in concert with the present movements of Jesus? Am I listening to what He is saying? Do I understand that by His power the Lord Jesus is bringing living communications of His word to His people? These are the present activities of the Lord Jesus. It is a very solemn thing to miss them. You look back in the history of the recovery, and we meet brethren who are attached to those who I suppose have not really been in touch with the living communications of Jesus for many, many years. You get an impression of what has been missed and it makes you feel that you want to be in touch with the Lord in what He is doing at the present moment; and part of what He is doing, if I might say part of it, is bringing before men this great preaching of the gospel, having in mind that they should come into the Christian circle, into the assembly, into the knowledge of the truth, and the knowledge of the

assembly and the experience of it, because it is "the pillar and base of the truth", 1 Tim 3: 15. Well when Jesus received the Holy Spirit, the promise of His Father, Peter says "he has poured out this which ye behold and hear", and I think of the many who came into blessing through that activity of the Lord Jesus. We can look into history and see what He has done, and the question might be raised as to what the Lord is doing today. I think His work is very extensive, and anything that is His work is His work. We can thank God for any person that is converted because, if a person is converted, the Lord has done it; it is not that we do it, it is the Lord that has done it, and the wonderful extent of the present work of this blessed Man impresses us.

Now in chapter 9 we find that He is ordering and directing. He has already met Saul, appeared to him in the way in which he was going in his murderous mission, and a light shone round about him out of heaven and Saul heard a voice "saying to him, Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest". It is the same Person, not speaking of the glory or the power or might that had been given to Him, not drawing Saul's attention to the fact that He had been exalted, but just speaking of Himself as Jesus, still active in grace towards such a man. In another place it is so touching, as I expect you have noticed; Paul says that He said "I am Jesus the Nazarean", Acts 22: 8. What marvellous grace to appear to such a man on such a course and bring him into blessing! Many others since, of course, but this person, the first of sinners, was brought into blessing through the personal activities of Jesus. Then Jesus gets in touch with one of His servants, Ananias, who evidently was close to Him and could be directed to go to this man. You may say that Jesus is going to very great pains for one soul; this is what He does, and I think He has been active in bringing persons into blessing ever since. So Ananias accepts the direction. First of all he is not too sure; I suppose his heart was not quite fully in concert with the heart of the Lord Jesus, but Jesus says "Go", and he comes and says "Saul, brother". That must have meant a lot to Saul, "Saul, brother,

the Lord has sent me". Saul said to Jesus "Who art thou Lord?"; and now Ananias says "the Lord has sent me, Jesus that appeared to thee in the way in which thou camest, that thou mightest see, and be filled with the Holy Spirit". Now I think that in the announcing of the glad tidings God has in mind that persons should be filled with the Holy Spirit. We have often been told, and it is very testing, that to be filled with the Holy Spirit is normal Christianity. I think God would help us that we might be exercised to give increasing place to the Holy Spirit so that we might touch what might be called normal Christianity and be filled with the Holy Spirit. What a wonderful thing that is! It is so customary for us to hear the gospel, the terms of it are so usual that we hardly grasp its significance and its glory and its greatness. Its centre is Jesus and He Himself is active in it, but I feel that sometimes it becomes almost commonplace in its terms. It certainly does to men, and men have turned away from it; but does that alter the attitude of God? Has it altered the present activities of Jesus? Never! His activities are still going on in blessing despite the hardness; and whatever man's reaction to the preaching and to the grace of God, the testimony of His grace still goes on, and I think that is reflected in the present activities of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit through his people.

Now I read in the last passage because again we have a reference to the activities of the Lord Jesus, I suppose we could say towards the end. He says "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star". Very soon there is going to be the activity of the Lord when He comes to take up all His rights. For the moment I could hardly say it is postponed but it is held while the wonderful dispensation of grace proceeds. How wonderful to have that Star in the heart, the harbinger of the coming day! In spite of all the darkness that exists, the apostasy, the ruin, the turning away, He is the Root of David and the Offspring of David, the bright and morning Star. How wonderful to think of Jesus like that! This brightness is to be in our souls; the Lord would bring it to pass in our souls. Then "the Spirit and the bride say, Come", as though almost

at the end there will be an emphasis on it. I do not doubt there has been an appeal to the Lord Jesus, Come, for a long time. Whenever you may read it or listen to it - "The Spirit and the bride say, Come" - they say "Come" to Jesus; they are looking, we might almost say, for His next movement; the next vibration of the power of God I think will be when Jesus comes to take us to be for ever with Him. We can tell men about the coming of Jesus. What we could say about the rapture would be another matter, but we can speak to them about the second coming of Jesus. In fact we were reminded only last evening in our conversation that many believers are being stirred up, they are thinking about this, about the coming of the Lord and the conditions which indicate the nearness of His coming; and think of our being able to be in concert with the Holy Spirit! We have often been reminded that it is not the Spirit in the bride, it is the Spirit and the bride; in other words the bride is in concert with the Holy Spirit in saying "Come", they say it together. We know not how near the coming of the Lord is but we are looking for it; but before His coming is referred to His Person is referring to "I Jesus"; and "I Jesus" is resting I believe in the affections of those that love Him. How near we are to the event itself we have to leave with Him, but there are indications not only publicly in the world but in the sensibilities of the saints. Then it says "And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; he that will, let him take the water of life freely".

It is as though this wonderful invitation does not cease, so to speak, until the last moment. God's gospel preached, the Person of Jesus preached, the blessings of God for men, the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit available to men until the last moment when the dispensation of grace closes. It will close, it must close. It has often been said that God has lengthened it out. I think we can understand using that term; Peter speaks of God's longsuffering, "not willing that any should perish", 2 Pet 3: 9. He desires that all should come to repentance and live, but the dispensation will finish and the judgment must come; as one man of God said, judgment is His strange work but it is His work nevertheless, and in due time that must come. So in the glad tidings there is a warning. If there is the greatness of the privilege of listening to the gospel and receiving the

forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ, there is also the solemn responsibility of refusing it. Then Jesus testifies Himself: "He that testifies these things says, Yea, I come quickly". It has been noticed before that He does not say 'I will come' but "I come", almost, speaking reverently, as though He is on the way; "I come quickly", and the answer is "Amen; come, Lord Jesus". Now it is very clear to me that persons who do not enjoy the forgiveness of sins and who have not received the Holy Spirit would hardly say "Amen; come, Lord Jesus". Thank God I think we are all among those who have received the forgiveness of sins and have received the Holy Spirit, and therefore in answer to what He says we say "Amen; come, Lord Jesus". Are we all saying that? May we all be more in the brightness of it, listening to what He is saying, taking note of what He is doing, so that in concert with the Holy Spirit we may say to Him "Come", and yet almost simultaneously be saying to men, "Come... he that will, let him take the water of life freely".

Then finally, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints". Now that is active, grace is operating. You notice how Paul frequently says "Grace and peace to you, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ", as though there is a constant active flow of grace continually from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is all known I am sure in the power of the Holy Spirit.

May the Lord encourage us all, dear brethren, that the truth of the Lord's present activities may lay hold of us so that we may be more with Him in them and become more evangelical in knowing what it is to speak to souls about the Lord. I know it is hard when people are so indifferent. At one time you could speak to persons and maybe find an interest, and at times of course many years ago if you preached on the street you would soon have a crowd; nowadays people are apathetic. It has been well said that it is the age of the atom, and it is also the age of apathy. How to put those two things together is very difficult to understand, but there it is. When all these things surround men, the dangers, the rising of corruption and violence increasing in the earth, yet there is apathy towards God's gospel. Let us not be apathetic but let us cherish it, dear brethren,

and let us carry Christ and carry the glad tidings more in our hearts day by day. May it be so for His glory.

BARNET

28 April 1974

HOLY BOLDNESS IN DAYS OF DIFFICULTY

A.B.Parker

Exodus 33: 12-23; 2 Samuel 15: 30-33

I have selected these two passages to speak, as the Lord may help, about holy boldness in days of difficulty. Moses and David are possibly the greatest men of the Old Testament. We would not assume to reach the distinction, individually, that these men had. On the other hand we must not underestimate the greatness of the dispensation in which we are, nor the possibility of spiritual development which is possible through having the indwelling Spirit.

The Spirit of God has recorded the Scriptures for us and we are told that they bear particularly on those of us upon whom the ends of the ages are come. We are at the end of the present dispensation; our hope of the glory is brightening I believe. In the few moments that are left to us we want to be in power; to be contributors to a state and condition of things collectively in which the service of God is filled out in fulness, equal to what was reached at the beginning. We do not have much in the Scriptures to show how the service of praise was conducted at the beginning. We do get a little insight into the power of prayer engaged in by the apostles, and we get examples of their preaching. But it would seem that the service of praise, as we know it, has developed through the knowledge of God, and sensitiveness to divine leading. Scriptures, such as Ephesians 3, have helped us, but it is a very great matter when a corporate entity moves in sensitive response to the leadership of Christ in the power of the Spirit into the blessed experience of knowing the current feelings of the Father and rendering glory to God. This is what makes the service of praise so vital in its character and creates in us such earnest longings to be in it more fully.

The scriptures read refer to times of great stress, and there can be no question but that such times deepen the work of God in us.

The breakdown in certain persons has been used of God, when thoroughly judged, to deepen His work in them. Take David, for instance; having reached such a height of glory in overcoming all his

enemies, then failing grievously, but having repented, accepting God's hand in government, he could say "The Spirit of Jehovah spoke by me", 2 Sam 23: 2. He was marked by humility, bowed under God's government, yet even in that state he failed in numbering the people. That breakdown led to tremendous sorrow, too, calling out his shepherd feelings: "these sheep, what have they done? let thy hand, I pray thee, be on me, and on my father's house!" 2 Sam 24: 17. But through that exercise he apprehended the place where the altar of burnt offering for Israel should be erected and where the house of God was to be built. Breakdown has certainly been experienced by us but, if rightly felt and judged before God, He will help us to know, with absolute certainty, where the presence of God can be known. It is a very great matter to have the conviction in our souls that we are where the Lord would have us. In that sphere we can put our spiritual energies into the development of depth and feeling in the service of God.

Then there was the depth of exercise Abraham went through in offering up Isaac. It was a test to the tenderest of feelings in natural relationship. All of us have gone through this in varying measures, but facing it before God, with right feelings, recognising His will and His government, we can learn the great basic principle that underlies the service of God, that "On the mount of Jehovah will be provided", Gen 22: 14. Could there be any question of the substantiality of the work of faith in the soul of Abraham as he went to mount Moriah, to offer up Isaac, in whom the promise of God centred? He offered a sheep (God will provide Himself with a sheep); this was the offering that he had (Isaac) but in the mount of Jehovah was provided a ram. When he offered, without reserve, at the sacrifice of the choicest of natural relationships, his eyes were opened to see a ram caught in the thicket. It suggests the maturity of apprehension there was in Abraham; he was capable of offering a ram; it was what he got as the meeting proceeded. What an occasion it was! The substantial part of what went up to God was what was arrived at in the mount of Jehovah. So it is, dear brethren, at the service of praise that what we get as we are together, as sensitive in spirit to the current

feelings of divine Persons, is what flows in greatest power and fulness for the satisfaction of the heart of God.

The experiences of Moses and David, of which we have read, may contribute, I trust, to our understanding of what we can arrive at out of intense pressure. Reference already has been made to festival conditions, but what greater festival conditions can there be than being consciously in the presence of the Father, hearing His voice to us and feeling His embrace as those who are accepted in the Beloved? In the midst of terrible crisis conditions Moses speaks to God about an experience he had in His presence. God had said to Moses, "I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in mine eyes". What that must have meant to Moses! Now he is faced with what seems to be a critical impasse. The people had sinned, having turned to idolatry, and Moses had gone up to Jehovah to see what could be done. He was prepared to be blotted out of Jehovah's book that the people might be preserved and kept as God's people. What depth of feeling there was with Moses! He asks Jehovah, "Make me now to know thy way, that I may know thee... and consider that this nation is thy people". There is a way, dear brethren. The Lord Jesus said that "hades' gates shall not prevail against it", Matt 16: 18. There is a way and there will be persons in that way and we want to be numbered amongst them. But then Moses said, also, "Let me, I pray thee, see thy glory". What holy boldness! The glory is attached to God's Name. Jehovah came down and stood beside Moses on the rock and proclaimed the name of Jehovah: "Jehovah, Jehovah God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy unto thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but by no means clearing the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and fourth generation". That, dear brethren, as I understand it, is Jehovah's Name. We do well to know it in detail, to understand God's uncompromising righteousness, His holiness, yet the mercy and the grace that there is with Him. And if we know the way He will take in any matter we can relate it to that part of the Name which is being

exercised, so to speak, in the issue that is at hand. Think of the impression Moses must have received when Jehovah said "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy". There is no word of judgment, the attitude of God in this crisis is that He is going to be merciful and gracious. What a wonderful comfort that must have been to the heart of Moses.

Moses had seen to it that judgment had been enforced; he had taken the golden calf and ground it to powder and had strewn it upon the water; he had armed the sons of Levi with swords and told them to go through the camp to slay every man his brother and his friend and his neighbour. That sounds like a wholesale slaughter but it was not so, it was discriminative judgment. The sons of Levi could be trusted with swords; they had been affected by the smiting of the rock in Exodus 17: "Whom thou didst prove at Massah, with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah", Deut 33: 8 - the type of the sufferings of Christ that the Spirit may be given to change person had affected hard-hearted Levi who had participated in the slaughter at Shechem; and now the sons of Levi, eight thousand of them with swords, went through the camp and only three thousand were slain.

What discriminating judgment, to slay only those who were unrepentant! Dear brethren, let us use discriminative judgment! Let us not lose a life needlessly but hold life dear, and save life whenever we can righteously do so. The Lord Jesus said "How much better then is a man than a sheep!", Matt 12: 12. May our sense of values in appreciation of the saints be such that our endeavour is to save life, not to lose it. And may we understand what part of the Name, so to speak, is being exercised in any issue.

Is it God's judgment, His mercy, or His grace? "Make me now to know thy way", Moses said. May we know clearly what the Lord's way is in critical conditions which develop amongst the saints, Moses was not content to have anything less than the divine presence. He said, "And now, if indeed I have found grace in thine eyes, make me now to know thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thine eyes; and consider that this nation is thy people! And he said, My presence shall go, and I will give thee rest. And he said to him, If thy presence do not go, bring us not up hence". There can be

nothing greater, dear brethren, than the consciousness that God is with us, God amongst us of a truth; and I believe that the service of praise is an index to this.

David, in the passage read, faced a very real crisis. Moses had acted for God in a crisis which was created by the breakdown of the people and the priesthood. The crisis which David faced was due to his own breakdown - the failure of the king, the corruption of authority. It gave a lawless element an opportunity to rise up in rebellion. These two elements - priesthood and authority - are necessary, dear brethren, and require to be kept in balance. The Lord's parable at the end of Matthew 18 is most helpful in this relation. In the administration of righteousness the man must pay what he owed or be cast into prison. When he prostrated himself, saying "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all", grace operated through priesthood. Righteousness had established a basis on which grace could operate and he was forgiven. Alas, he then demanded that his fellowbondman pay him a debt which was owing to him and, ignoring the plea for mercy, went the full length in his demand. He had not learned grace. When asked for patience he gave none. What disaster can occur when authority and priesthood are not held in balance! That parable, I believe, sums up the teaching of the chapter; a chapter garnished by a touch of Luke 15, which tells us of the activities and feelings of divine Persons in securing man in sonship. The "certain man" having a hundred sheep leaves the ninety and nine on the mountains to seek the one gone astray. And *if it should come to pass* that he find it: that phrase is the difference between Matthew 18 and Luke 15. But it is a touch of the glory of Luke 15 brought into assembly administration with right feelings that are not diverted but carry the savour of it not being the will of our Father who is in the heavens that one of these little ones should perish.

Administration is one of the things which has been our greatest test. We sorrowfully know something about breakdown in administration. David had repented of his great sin but he recognises the hand of God upon him in government. It is our

salvation, dear brethren, to recognise God's hand of government upon us. Zadok and the Levites brought the ark to accompany David as he fled. They considered that the testimony was identified with David. But David, conscious of God's government, would repudiate that thought. He would say, in effect, 'By wondrous grace I have been identified with the testimony; it is not identified with me; it must remain in its "habitation"; if I find favour with Jehovah He will bring me again and shew me it and its habitation'. David is held by the acceptance of God's government. Dear brethren, let us not forget it. Many of us must say, along with David, "Although my house be not so before God", 2 Sam 23: 5. But let us get the gain of the sorrow, as David did. But here the rod of God's government is closing in on David; he flees from Absalom; he goes up the mount of Olives weeping, the people weeping with him. What a sad sight it was! His head was covered and he went barefoot, praying as he went. The crushing word had come that Ahithophel was among the conspirators; Ahithophel, whose counsel was as the words of God in that day, was allied with Absalom. David prays; he hangs the matter, so to speak, on the "nail in his holy place". That was Ezra's expression in a day of great crisis - that God's favour had been such as "to give us a nail in his holy place", Ezra 9: 9. It is in the holy place, the sanctuary, not the holy of holies but the place where the golden altar is, where prayer is made, there the incense rises to the nostrils of God. David prayed; he left the matter with his God: "Jehovah, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness". Then he gets past the matter of prayer to worship.

Would you not love to hear David pray at the summit of Olivet?

What would his worship be? How do we worship, dear brethren?

Have we learned God in some way that may not have been known apart from current exercises? Can we worship with sorrows not yet adjusted? Would not David tell Jehovah that His way was perfect, even though Absalom had made it necessary for David to flee for his life? He was fleeing in disgrace, in humiliation, and yet in the presence of it all his heart goes out to God in worship and the whole outlook changes. Hushai, David's friend, appears. David recognises the hand of God in this. He is in control now though still he must

flee. But from this moment victory is assured. He begins to act administratively to ensure that victory will be accomplished. His worship, deepened by the acceptance of the humiliating conditions, underlies the revival of right administrative feelings. O, if we could only come to it; not only to tell God that His ways are perfect but to be worshipful when we tell Him! That, I believe, is the indication that we have reached the end God has in view for us in allowing breakdown to come in. It is only by our judging things fully and getting the gain of what has happened that we can participate in the service of God in vital and living power such as was at the beginning. In it there is an increased portion for our souls, too.

It is on account of the recovered man in Luke 15 that the fatted calf is killed; it is reserved for the day of recovery, as well as the best robe, the ring and the sandals. May we take some intimation from this as to what God's attitude is now. Will not festival robes replace the filthy garments as in the case of Joshua the priest? Can we reach the sphere of the music and the *dancing*? If we do we are not far from the atmosphere of the eternal day when God will be all in all. Now that may sound somewhat extreme but I think that, when God is "all in all", everything will immediately respond to every prompting from God. The music seems to suggest what comes out from the heart of God, and the dancing is our response to it. It is not just singing; singing is one thing but dancing is a matter of the whole person in responsive motion. The elder brother, coming from the field, heard the music and the dancing. They must have been dancing with all their might. Dear brethren, may the Lord help us to get the full gain of what we have been through and that it may be evident in increase in the service of God. And may we not be lacking in holy boldness.

LONDON

18 May 1974

ROOM FOR THE SPIRIT

A.C.Craig

2 Kings 4: 1-7

We have already been speaking, dear brethren, (see Issue No.20) about the way we might have to do with the Lord and of His proposals that we might come into the wealth of divine things. It is now in mind to say a word on a very often repeated thing and that is making room for the Spirit. I feel that I am going to be greatly tested in what I say but I hear this at nearly every meeting: Make more room for the Spirit; and I am sometimes left with a query in my mind, how will we do it? So this is the other side of what we have been speaking about, that we might give greater place to Him. It seems to me that the solution now lies in that. A slight is on the Spirit at the present time, indeed it has been for centuries. You recall the parable in Luke 16 immediately after the unfolding of that remarkable chapter 15, the Lord's skilful presentation of the truth of how the Trinity operates and has operated in that wonderful appeal to us. Chapter 16 opens by Him giving a parable about a steward who got into trouble with his master, his books did not balance and he was called in for an interview and was told, 'Get your things in order because you are to be dismissed', and he says 'What am I going to do, I cannot dig and I am ashamed to beg'; and I say to us all, dear brethren, unless we are ready for the side of exercise, digging and begging, I doubt if we will come into any gain of the blessed Spirit's presence. So he sees he is in a difficulty and he calls in those who owed his master certain things and says to the first 'What do you owe?'; he answered "a hundred baths of oil". 'Oh' he says, "Take thy writing and sit down quickly and write fifty". Then he calls in somebody else, 'and what do you owe?'; he said "a hundred cors of wheat. And he says to him, Take thy writing and write eighty". Now notice that, he gave the greatest reduction to the man who owed the oil; the slight is on the Spirit. That steward was a clergyman; that has often been said; if you make way for the clerical principle you shut out the Spirit. So to keep himself in a job and to maintain a

clergyman he set aside the Spirit. That is a great sin of Christendom, against the Holy Spirit. So as I said, there was a slight on the wheat but the greater slight was on the oil: "Take thy writing and sit down quickly", get it over fast, "and write fifty". But what we want to know, beloved brethren, is how to make greater room for Him and to value His presence and service rightly.

So this is a very important subject; it brings up the whole question as to what the Spirit is with us, not in His prerogatives, but more I speak reverently) of His value in a trading sense. That is how we finished the reading, we are given talents with which to trade; as Luke has it: "Trade while I am coming", chap 19: 13. So we should know the value of things.. I do not want to use the word 'commercial value', but oil over against water as a type of the Spirit would give us that thought, His great trading value, what He can be to you in the way of increase, how you can increase your wealth by trading.

Therefore the importance of knowing how to make room for Him. Of course this is a wide subject and I could have taken up other scriptures to bring out the thought but I keep to the side of this commodity oil. I speak ever so carefully about what the Spirit can be, what He is for our getting through righteously and also for our entry upon the divine wealth and what lies in the purpose of God for us. I could have spoken, for instance, of Numbers 21 where room was made for the Spirit by the hollowing out at the word of the lawgiver; that is on another line. Or of Genesis 24: "Is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge?" (v 23). That is the great question: Is there room for the Spirit? He is ever so ready to fill any space that He might be given. Then also you remember as to Isaac digging the wells and the Philistines claiming them; there was one that they did not claim. That is a fine thing, that there can be exercise where you can outdo the Philistine - "Jehovah has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land", Gen 26: 22. It is a great thing to have a sense that there is room for the blessed Spirit.

There is the side of the Spirit 's prerogatives where He is in charge of things down here. The Lord in John 20 finishes that wonderful visitation with "Receive the Holy Spirit" (v 22); and then in

Revelation 22 the Spirit is the holy custodian of the assembly here, no one else; He is in charge and He has certain prerogatives: Other scriptures could be brought up to show that too: "Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them", Acts 13: 2. Immediately you admit that there are prerogatives that apply to the Spirit you admit His sovereignty, and if you admit His sovereignty you must admit His deity; therefore He is an object of worship. You wonder at people who deny this. I believe it lies in the fact that He had already been slighted, not only in the fact of His not being worshipped. So the need is to know how to make room for Him.

Now the ministry and service of Elisha are very interesting. It is not exactly the side of the prerogatives of the Spirit that are before us in the service of Elisha but a man in the gain of a risen and ascended Christ moving here in the power of the Spirit of God. So what ought to characterise us as already being in receipt of the gift of the Spirit is that we should be here in the full gain of moving in His power. Think of the grace of Elisha's service and the way that He would make way for the Spirit. Remember chapter 3 of this book when there were the three kings come together and there was no water for them to drink. When they came down to him to get some advice he says, I am not too sure about the associations here.

Although Elisha was a man of grace he was a man who stood by the truth, and Jehoshaphat had no business to be linked up with these two other kings. So you see the strain under which this prophet served when he said "Fetch me a minstrel"; he felt he could not proceed until the minstrel was introduced, a very important principle; but he says "make this valley full of ditches"; make great room. I did not want to get into that but to confine myself to this thought of the woman with the unknown quantity of oil that she had.

Oh! how insensible we are, dear brethren; we do not seem to value the oil, as obviously this woman did not. I wish to say something as to the process by which she found out what she had. That is a great matter, that we might become more aware of the value, the trading value of what we have in the Spirit so that we might be able to meet

our requirements and get along together and to be led, in a conscious sense, into the greatness of the truth. Let us therefore be alerted at this time to what we have in the gift of the Spirit. And so she has certain things to meet. She fully recognises that the creditor has rights but her difficulty is how to meet them. So the question comes up; What have you in the house? She says "Thy handmaid has not anything at all in the house but a pot of oil", a kind of depressed outlook, a sort of outlook that minimises what she had. I think the Lord is helping us in our day to have a proper outlook, have an upward outlook, a hopeful one. That is a great matter because the sort of curtailed sphere that we now move in publicly tends to get us on the line of minimising things. I think the Lord would uplift us and give us encouragement to value what we have that stays. That is a fine thing, it is not withdrawn; "The word that I covenanted with you... and my Spirit, remain among you", Hag 2: 5. That is the resource for realising that the latter glory is greater than the former. It is not that God is introducing anything further, the thing is already here. The prophet did not add anything to what the woman had, it is a question of what she had herself. Oh! the potential that lies in what we have - wonderful potential! Nothing can arise in the course of your pathway or testimony that the blessed Spirit is not able to meet. That is what is presented here. She did not question the right of the creditor; neither can you. There have been certain claims established and it is a question of how we are able to meet them. I mean that we were taken up initially to be here for God's will, and I hold that that is what is meant by the debt. I think we are indebted to the blessed God to be here for His will; and the way to be here for God's will is to know what you have in the gift of the Spirit, how He is able to meet every righteous requirement. As it says in Romans, "that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit", chap 8: 4. So how to make room for the Spirit is the question that comes up always. How are you going to do it? Well, that is what the prophet I think tells this woman, he instructs her what to do that she might come into the knowledge of how to make more room for what she has. She did not have sufficient vessels at home to contain what the

pot held. She had a pot of oil, although she said I have "not anything at all in the house but a pot of oil". Notice the language: "not anything at all", and yet she is going to come to know by a certain process the wonderful value of what the pot of oil meant. Think of the wisdom, think of the grace of the blessed God that He should have conceived of such a thing that we should be recipients of the Spirit in a way that everything might be met, being here for God's will and living on the rest. I will speak about that briefly but, first of all, there is this matter of the process by which she is brought to appreciate the wealth of what lies in the pot of oil. Oh! the potential. So he says to her "Go, borrow for thyself vessels abroad from all thy neighbours, empty vessels; let it not be few". Think of such instruction; how enlightening, how full of hope! I am sure the Lord is bringing in, amongst His people, ministry by way of the prophetic word that would give us to see the need for greater scope for the Spirit. So she is to bring in her neighbours. This, so to speak, cannot be confined to oneself, it is a question of getting as many vessels as possible. You can depend upon it there is more oil than vessels; that is what she learns. No matter how many she found, there was more oil. So she has to go in and shut the door. I want to say a word about the need for secret history, something that used to be much spoken about when I first came into fellowship. Three times in this chapter we have the shut door; and with all the rush and bustle of modern life let us not neglect our private intercourse with the Father: "go in, and shut the door". That is how we are instructed in Matthew 6 - go in and shut the door. I appeal to my younger brethren that they give time to these exercises, what may proceed in secret alone on your knees with the Scriptures before you. Do not be afraid, open your Bible on your knees, go over things in secret and they will open up to you. Shut the door. Then it says, "pour out into all those vessels". You think of what would come home to her as she is filling up vessel after vessel. She had this pot on the shelf, how long we do not know, without it being in use, and she is learning by a process, moment by moment behind the shut door, the wonderful, illimitable resource that lies in the oil she had. That is what I would like for myself, dear brethren, that I come to some

sense of what the blessed Spirit can be to me, that I need not rely on anyone else. I say again, I have the strong conviction that He is the solution to everything now. I believe that He has been slighted within the last year or so, tremendously slighted, and what used to be His portion from some has been given up. Everything is depending on Him; the Father and the Lord Jesus have every confidence in the Spirit that He is equal to seeing the saints through; and the great demand, dear brethren, is that we might be here in the pursuit of God's will in a world that is rampant with man's will, where we are so aware of the readiness to exercise our own will and pursue a path that suits ourselves instead of being ready for the righteous requirements of the will of God. Wonderful that, that there is such a thing in this world and in the midst of Christendom, a few people who stand out amongst the others and who are prepared for every feature and submit to every requirement that the truth would bring up. It is a snare at the present time that brethren who once went on with the truth are seeking paths that suit themselves, but I believe that the Lord's eye rests upon the few who would be ready to meet every obligation of the truth, that do not accept the fatal principle that things are optional in Christianity; they are not optional, the will of God comes into it and the answer to it lies in the Spirit.

Think of what this exercise of pouring out meant to the woman as she went from vessel to vessel, and it is coming home to her, typically, what wealth she has in the Spirit. In every meeting, in every day that we live, in every exercise that comes up, we should habitually revert to the Spirit. He is the answer to everything; I am sure of that. Every vessel, no matter their shape, their size, their capacity, He is equal to every vessel. The doctrine of it is in Romans 8 as you would be aware: "the righteous requirement of the law" is fulfilled in us. In that chapter there are fourteen different ways in which the Spirit serves us; seventeen references to the Spirit but fourteen different ways in which He applies Himself to vessel after vessel, and nothing can come up that He is not equal to. Oh! what wealth lies in Him. It is trading wealth too, wealth that can be had by circulation. She says to her son "Bring me yet a vessel"; she has to learn that she has more oil in the pot than any vessel they could

bring along. Then she goes to the man of God and says, Well, it is wonderful what I have had. She "came and told the man of God"; think of what she would say. I do not know whether she counted the vessels or not, it makes no difference, they were all full. Now he says "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt". That is it is the answer to the debt and any requirement is that we trade with the oil. Oh how wonderful, what a commodity! I speak reverently of the blessed Spirit. As I said, it is not the side of His prerogatives, His rights, the side where He is viewed objectively; it is what He is as committed to you and me, as given to us to be in us, not exactly with us but in us, and in secret you work things out, you learn His value by a process; and too, as things arise, you find that the resource for meeting them lies in the Spirit. Oil is a very suggestive figure of the Spirit. It is not water. Much could be said about water as in John 4 and other scriptures, but it is oil, one of the three things that formed the blessing of God to Israel - corn, new wine and oil, something that gives you wealth. Water has no trading value, so to speak, that is not the idea in the figure. Oil has trading value, and we live here to trade while He is coming. So he says to her "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt". Think of the satisfaction the woman had in the way she was able to meet her debt. We should not be in debt, dear brethren, except to love one another. We are not debtors to the flesh, that is clear; that has been met by the death of Christ, that is terminated; but there are the requirements from day to day in our history here, and we have in the Spirit the divine provision to meet the requirements and to be here for God's will.

Well now, this is the matter, how to do it. Let us get behind this shut door and learn what the Spirit can be. I think God Himself would open up to us in a wonderful, attractive way what the Spirit can be to us, and also, in daily exercise, we can learn subjectively what the Spirit can be to us. The prophet says "Go, sell the oil and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy sons on the rest". There is the side of meeting the requirement but that is not all. "Live thou and thy sons on the rest" How do you live? Do you live well? You ought to live well. There ought to be no higher standard of living, and

amongst the saints we should have a high standard of living. How do you live? "Live thou and thy sons on the rest". You could never say that He is here only to help you to meet the requirement. Oh no, "live thou and thy sons on the rest". What is that? Eternal life and sonship; that is what is developed in this chapter. The wealthy woman said "I dwell among mine own people" (v 13). She did not want to be spoken for to the king; she lived well, you could not raise her socially. Oh dear brethren, think of what is proceeding amongst some whom we love, used to break bread with. We should live well, we should be a testimony to the refinement of the truth. How do you live? In eternal life in sonship. So she said "I dwell among mine own people". To be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the host would not add anything to her. She lived well and was in the enjoyment, so to speak, of eternal life; she had brought forward the wealth that lay in "the rest". It speaks somewhere in the prophets about the residue of His Spirit (see Mal 2: 15, A.V.). It is not just the left over. "The rest" gives you a tremendous feeling of wealth .

There is no end to that either, all we have been brought into, the blessedness of eternal life, wonderful blessing where you are content and happy, satisfied and having no longings for anything.

Your life cannot be improved on although you are still here. Eternal life is introduced to meet a certain need and you are in the enjoyment of that, going through here in the enjoyment of eternal life with your brethren and in sonship. That is what the woman comes to eventually sonship. This is a wonderful chapter and I would like to have gone into it more in detail; but I give you a thought, dear brethren, that in ministry you can make up a subject and get numbers of scriptures together and yet it may be that the Spirit of God is in just one of the scriptures. I have learned that, that He helps you specially just to convey the thought; and I felt today that I must confine myself to this scripture and to this point of how to make room for the Spirit. This is the vital thing, and to keep to it today would be the most beneficial. We can live not only righteously - "the righteous requirement of the law ... fulfilled" - but we live well. We have the wealth in Him to live up to our high calling and the estate into which we have been brought in sonship. I think Mr Taylor sen

has said in that connection that it would be a poor thing for someone to be brought into an estate and not have the capital to live according to it. But we have been granted the capital to live according to the estate, not in any mean or beggarly fashion but to live well; and we are comporting ourselves as persons who are not only for the divine will but for the divine pleasure. These two great lines of truth run through scripture - the divine will and the divine pleasure; and the answer to them both, dear brethren, lies in making room for the Spirit. May the Lord bless the word.

SUNBURY

27 July 1974

NO DAY LIKE IT

E.T.Maynard

Joshua 10; 12-1 5

I have a sense, dear brethren, that the Lord will help us to follow up what we had on the first day of the week as to the Person of Christ and His present position. This passage which I have read has been well enlarged on in "the good teaching", which Paul speaks of in 1 Timothy 4: 6, to which, through grace, we have been recovered. It typifies the present time when a Man sits in heaven in control of heaven and earth. The present time is unique, there never was a day like it.

I would desire for myself and for us all that the Lord would encourage us further in the touch we had as to the Originator of life.

Even though the Originator of life was slain by the princes of this world, God is not going to be hindered in what He has in mind as to life and the extension of it. He will continue what He set on in Christ regardless of what the enemy has done. The Originator of life was slain but He is now alive and sits in heaven in control of heaven and earth. The extension of that life, so pleasurable to God, is to be seen in the beloved saints; the Spirit of God would promote that in us. I am impressed with this.

You will remember that Paul spoke of himself as the first of sinners (see 1 Tim 1: 15). Also he said he was the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle because he persecuted the assembly. He had set out with all his pretension and man given power to destroy what was the extension of that character of life set on here by the Originator of life. Christ had risen in divine power and was seated on the throne at the right hand of God, in control of heaven and earth, but before He ascended He had said to His disciples "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations", Matt 28: 19. There was to be the extension of the life that had been set on by the Originator of life.

It says, in the passage read from Joshua, that there was no day like that one when the sun and moon stood still in their courses.

That anticipated our day, beloved brethren. Let us wake up! I speak restfully and respectfully and appreciatively of the work of God in the beloved brethren, but let us wake up to see that there is no day like our day. The Originator of life who was slain sits triumphantly in heaven making a way through for those who are maintained in life down here. Thank God for any measure in which you and I have part in this wonderful life that was so perfectly demonstrated in the manhood of Jesus. Let us be set to promote this kind of life amongst the saints for the pleasure of God.

In Acts 9 it says that Saul drew near to Damascus. How wonderfully God acts! His thoughts are not our thoughts, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are ... my thoughts than your thoughts", Isa 55: 9. How far is that? We need not attempt to measure the distance for we cannot, but we get some idea from such an expression that God's thoughts are different from ours. So when Saul drew near to Damascus a light shone out of heaven.

From whom? Saul heard the voice of the Originator of life who had been slain but had risen triumphantly from among the dead. What did He say to Saul? "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest" (v 5). Is that not the proof that the extension of the life of Jesus here was being effected in persons? "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest".

That is the One, the Originator of life, and that life was extended in those whom Saul was persecuting. God is not diverted from His purpose; He will not be hindered in any thought of His.

Saul did not expect to have an experience like this. The Lord told him to rise up and enter into the city, and it would be told him what he must do. Where would he go in the city? To persons like you and me, not super persons but persons of like passions as ourselves in a city. It is the Lord's own thought about a city. He spoke to those hard-hearted, unbelieving Jews to swear not "by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King", Matt 5: 35. In Damascus there was what represented the thoughts of Christ about a city. This is the only reference in the chapter to Damascus as a

city; in other references it is called Damascus. But when the Lord spoke to Saul He said "Enter into the city". Saul was to be amongst persons who had been taken up sovereignly by God in infinite mercy and grace to extend, on this earth, the character of life that was seen in Jesus, the Originator of life, and it will be so until the Father is pleased to bring this wonderful day to a conclusion.

I just thought it might be well to follow up this wonderful thought that has come before us. God has spoken very pointedly to us about it and I believe that this is proof that He will support us if we set ourselves affectionately and feelingly to continue this character of life so pleasurable to Him. It is your privilege and mine to continue this stream of abundant life, by the Spirit, that was set on by the Lord Himself. May we be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

BROOKLYN NY

11 June 1974

SOME FUNDAMENTALS - THE CREATOR AND THE CREATION

No doubt every reader of this paper would gladly acknowledge the truth of the eternal existence and almighty power of God. "He that draws near to God must believe that He is" (exists) "and that He is a rewarder of them who seek Him out", Heb 11: 6. In His eternal Being He is absolute, the selfexisting One. As to the universe He is supreme, Head above all.

The first verse of the Bible tells us that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" and this is followed by a detailed setting out of what is called the six days of creation. Scientists who attempt to discredit the Scriptures overlook the possibility of a considerable period between verses one and two of the first chapter of Genesis. We know that the earth was not waste when God created it (see Isa 5: 18). The speculations of the human mind as to evolution bring no joy or peace to the soul. No, it is much easier to the simple and unbiased mind to accept the truth of Scripture that God is the originator of all. We begin with God in His infinite wisdom and power, and then by faith we apprehend that the worlds were framed by the word of God. All is simple to faith.

In the detailed working out of the creation the first thing brought in was light, then order and control, and the earth was set in relation to the sun and moon. The land was provided with plant and animal life, and the waters with living creatures of every kind. Finally, Man was distinctively formed by God in His own image and likeness and placed over the whole earth and all the creatures in it. Everything was wonderfully completed so that God pronounced it very good and rested from His work.

Very early in man's history Jehovah spoke to Job about the Pleiades, Orion and the Bear (see Job 38: 31,32) and no doubt the reminder of these constellations made Job feel how small he was in the presence of the Creator. Then about the same time God led Abraham forth and showed him the myriads of stars which He had made. We too can gaze at the stars in the heavens and wonder at the divine power which created and upholds them, all known and

named by Him. Correspondingly, we can observe the detailed wisdom and skill of the Creator's hand in the minute beauty of tiny creatures of the earth.

The contemplation of the glory of the Creator may well produce worship and praise, and the testimony in creation to the eternal power and divinity of God renders men inexcusable (see Rom 1: 20). The Psalmist wrote, "When I see thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou has established; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" , Ps 8: 3,4. Elsewhere he says "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully, wonderfully made", Ps 139: 14.

When we come to the New Testament we find that creation took place by the instrumentality of the Son. By Him were created all things. John tells us that "without him not one thing received being which has received being", chap 1: 3. This should fill our hearts with worship to Christ, who as Man has come so closely within our range.

W.E.Ellis

THE CHILDREN'S GEMS

The only place in the Bible where this little word for jewels is used, speaks of "a bag of gems". Over twenty various precious stones are mentioned in God's word so that if we had them all together it would be a very valuable possession. Yet this is just what we have in the Scriptures! Each stone reflects heavenly light in some distinct colour and they all appear even more beautiful when set in the right way.

That is why we speak of the 'setting' of a verse or passage of scripture.

For pearls and corals men have to dive deep into the sea; rubies, diamonds and other stones have to be won from the earth.

The miner, whose work is described in such detail in the book of Job chapter 28, must use light and energy before "his eye seeth every precious thing". It is like the obedient believer exploring the Scriptures with the help of the Holy Spirit, who searches the deep

things of God. Read the epistles of Peter and see how many things are described as "precious"!

The crown jewels of Jesus are to be seen at all times by the believer, without payment. They do not need to be guarded by human means and there is a perfect guide to them in the first two chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews.

The crown of Jesus is not now one of thorns but one of glory from God and honour from His own heavenly hosts. His sceptre, the symbol of rule, is one of uprightness. Nothing has been left unsubject to Him so that He rightly bears the orb of world dominion. Loving righteousness and hating lawlessness it rejoices His subjects that He is anointed with an oil of gladness.

The throne of Jesus is for ever and ever because in His person He is the Son and all God's angels worship Him, but He reigns as Man. You may remember reading that Solomon's throne had a footstool fastened to it. So with Jesus it must be that His enemies are made a footstool for His feet and nothing will disturb the peace of His reign.

It is a sign of loyalty to kiss the hand of an earthly ruler. The word of God says "Kiss the Son" and it is blessing to put our trust in Him. Have you owned the Lord Jesus as King now?

J.C.Evershed