

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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LEADERSHIP

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J.A.McL. I was thinking of leadership, a matter which affects all of us, brothers and sisters alike, both of whom may be leaders, and, of course, should be leadable. I was not thinking of that feature of leadership which has been seen in an outstanding way at certain stages of the testimony, in the Lord's ordering, in one person. In Moses' day, for instance, Moses would be a test, although there were other leaders - Miriam was one. But directly there was an attempt made to question the special place that Moses had, Jehovah showed his displeasure. Similarly in Paul's day, I think the brethren would agree that he would be the test. Then we have seen in the last century and in this, persons whom God used outstandingly as leaders. There were many, but the thing was seen in a particular way in one person. Who of us would question the Lord's right to operate thus if He chose? But I did not have a mind to develop that side because we are not tested just in that way at the moment. What I was thinking of was leadership, seen in the first two scriptures in Christ personally. These two scriptures in Micah and Matthew are, I believe, complementary to one another, not contradictory as some might think. Then we see in Hebrews that it is in Christ, but its bearing there is specially on ourselves as having in mind the effect produced in us, we to be looking steadfastly on Him. Then thirdly to see it in Romans where it might come to light anywhere, not as a rarity; you might find it up and down the country in any local meeting or in any circumstance.

H.McF. Would you say how this affects the sisters?

J.A.McL. There have been certain outstanding instances in scripture where sisters led, Miriam for instance and Deborah. I only mentioned the sisters to show that they should not feel out of it, because we often think, when we speak of leadership, of brothers who can take three-day meetings. That is right of course and I would not belittle the importance of leadership in a prominent way. Gift in scripture is seen spread widely among the saints sometimes, and in

other instances you might see it in a particular way in one person. I am thinking rather of the way God has liberally distributed the gifts, and leadership is a feature which might come to light in a most unexpected way.

M.G.W. Why does it say in Micah "out of thee shall he come forth unto me"?

J.A.McL. I think that is distinctive to Christ. Some Old Testament scriptures, you would have to say, refer primarily to David but the Spirit of God has in mind the Lord Jesus. That is not so here. This was written hundreds of years after David's death and it can only refer to Christ. The point in this passage in Micah is that He shall come forth unto me - God's side of the matter.

A.A.B. Why do you think the place is in Micah and Matthew, Bethlehem Ephratah?

J.A.McL. It is part of God's wisdom. He is not going to choose a place of prominence in men's eyes and work from there. In His wisdom He may work in an insignificant place. In Micah it is the littleness of the place that is in mind, and that would remain true, but in Matthew it is rather that the place is dignified because of who came out of it. I suppose Bethlehem Ephratah would speak to us first of all of David and the service of song: "We heard of it at Ephratah", Psalm 132: 6. The place itself is linked early in scripture with suffering, maternal suffering in Rachel, in view of Christ being produced. In one way that is incidental; the main thing in the scripture is that God is calling attention to Christ, the One "whose goings forth are from of old, from the days of eternity". It is that Person. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus 'who he is' (see note to Luke 19: 3).

A.A.B. It is like a background to the greatness of the Person as He comes forth.

J.A.McL. Going forth would link with leadership. Psalm 19 speaks about going forth in connection with the sun, and the Old Testament speaks of the time when kings go forth. It is the idea of the Lord in power accomplishing things for God.

A.A.B. "Whose goings forth are from of old". Does that speak of the glory of this One? God had this in mind.

J.A.McL. Like the doxologies in the New Testament, this is prompted by what precedes. I think it would be right to say that this aside (or parenthesis) is prompted by the word "they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek". The Lord was smitten upon the cheek. What lowliness was there! - but then what moral power in the ascendancy above those who sought to judge Him! In contemplation of that in an anticipative way the prophet bursts out in this parenthesis.

J.M. Is this feature of leadership essential in localities even in days of breakdown?

J.A.McL. I think so. I hope we may get the help of the dear brethren on that, specially when we come to speak about the verse in Romans.

R.T. Is not the word in the singular applied to Christ, but in the plural applied to men?

J.A.McL. "Obey your leaders, and be submissive", Heb 13: 17.

R.T. Leadership in men flows from *the* Leader, the Leader of our salvation. He is unique. His distinction is preserved in that way.

D.L.S. Had you any impression why the word "Ruler" in Micah is changed to "leader" in Matthew?

J.A.McL. I think in Micah we get a long-range view of the greatness of the Lord personally. It is against a background of what God is going to accomplish in power for Israel, and the context seems to lead on to the public vindication of things and the dealing with things in power in Israel. In Matthew I thought it was peculiarly the introduction of the Lord personally in His lowly pathway here; hence mention is made of "shepherd". The function of shepherd in Matthew is peculiarly suited to the Lord's first coming. Do you agree with that?

D.L.S. I wondered if it was a pointer to what you had in mind, that there were going to be those who follow. The Lord sets things on in

view of there being followers, does He not? The word in Hebrews (chap 2: 10) means that, the one who sets things on.

J.S-n. The Ruler would establish a subject condition amongst the people that would be amenable to leading.

A.F. The word of the angel at the end of Matthew is "Behold, he goes before you into Galilee" (chap 28: 7), as if He would establish Himself a centre in a place of reproach, a place that was little in the eyes of the religious leaders of that day.

J.A.McL. That is exactly what is in mind. A leader is one who has the assurance of what God's mind is, has confidence as to what he is doing, and that he is on the right path, and has the courage to go right forward before others and show the way; into a place of reproach as you say.

W.D. Was not that one of the commendations of David, that he led out and led in the people?

J.A.McL. And the Lord in John's gospel puts forth His own sheep and goes before them (see chap 10: 4).

J.R. Does who the Lord is as to His Person come in? "Whose goings forth are from old, from the days of eternity". It is the greatness of the One who is Ruler. The circumstances into which He came, and the locality, could not add anything to Him.

J.A.McL. *The Lord* is specially in mind here. We know that God created the universe, but scripture makes clear that the One who was especially concerned in that was the Lord Jesus - "by whom also he made the worlds", Heb 1: 2. That is what is in mind here, that if things are to be accomplished for God, this is the One who is to do it.

J.R. This would involve His coming into manhood; One so great, by whom God made the worlds, came into manhood.

M.G.W. The expression is "Ruler in", not 'of' or 'over'. Have you any impression as to that particular character of leadership?

J.A.McL. "Ruler in Israel" would be God's people, His favoured people, those in whom He was working. I know that David says "The ruler among men shall be just" (2 Sam 23: 3), but Ruler in Israel is in God's people. We can extend that to our day.

M.G.W. The expression is 'Israel', not 'Jacob'. In a day like that the full dignity of the title ' Israel' would be a comfort to the saints, and to us in our day.

J.A.McL. Yes, we would be impressed by the glory of this One. When we consider leadership in Him nothing can fail. "What he has promised, he is able also to do", Rom 4: 21.

H.F. "Whose goings forth are from of old, from the days of eternity". Would it add tremendous interest to what such a One was doing at any time in any place?

J.A.McL. In a sense you feel that something of the character of the days of eternity found a reflection in His operations in time.

J.M. Do you mean that it really implies the working out of divine purpose in His coming in?

J.A.McL. I think that is right.

J.R. As ruler or leader in Israel He was rejected, but He is available for those who become disciples. Would that apply to our own day?

J.A.McL. Yes. In the New Testament the apostle bursts into a doxology when he thinks of the wisdom of God's ways, that in the very setting aside of Israel the gentiles are brought in too. It is reflexive.

J.R. I was thinking too of Matthew 11: "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (v 28). He becomes a ruler and leader and a gathering centre, does He not? I think it would apply to the day in which we are.

R.T. Is not one of the distinctive features of the Lord the way He did things; not only what He did but the way they were done? There are many right things done, but leadership would shine in the way they are done. They "wondered at the words of grace which were

coming out of his mouth", Luke 4: 22. Leadership would leave an impression of God in the way the thing is done.

J.A.McL. Often the Lord Jesus led in a way that we would not have thought of. His going down in itself was leading.

H-h.F. Is there the idea in leadership of influence and attractiveness? I am thinking of the word 'shepherding' coming in in Matthew. It has been said that God has put leadership where it is most attractive.

J.A.McL. Who would not be attracted by the way the Lord has led?

W.L. Is the glory of His manhood seen in the fact that He Himself was led: "led by the Spirit in the wilderness", Luke 4: 1? He knew leadership from that angle too.

J.A.McL. He did not need to learn things the way we have to, but in the perfection of His manhood it is recorded that he was led by the Spirit. Two of the most prominent leaders in the New Testament, Peter and Paul, each had an outstanding experience at the beginning of their history; they were both led. Peter was not secured first in his house; his brother led him to Jesus. Paul was struck down by the Lord personally and was led by the hand. I suppose they had to go through that experience to be leaders themselves.

A.A.B. Would it mean for us just being subject to Him as Lord, coming under His sway, allowing Him to have His way with us?

J.A.McL. However the Lord may lead, even though it may be strange to us, it is always for our good and, as our brother says, attractive.

J.M. In chapters 18 and 19 of John we get an impression of the dignity of the Lord's Person. When He went forth He says "I am he" (chap 18: 5), and when Pilate says "Behold the man!" (chap 19: 5) He is brought out distinctively.

J.A.McL. What glory was there! Elsewhere in the gospel we have Jesus going on before and the disciples followed. Of course there was a point beyond which they could not go, as we rightly sing:

'None could follow there, blest Saviour, When Thou didst for sins atone' (Hymn 298). But apart from that, leadership in such perfection was seen in Him and we are to follow.

J.R. At the end of John's gospel the Lord's last word to Peter was "Follow thou me", chap 21: 22. That would come home to every one of us. It is a very personal matter as to whether we are prepared to follow such a glorious One.

J.A.McL. And that is linked with 'shepherding'. Shepherding and teaching are closely linked, as are other things although distinct in themselves; for example, eldership, teaching, leading are combined in one sentence, one flows into the other (see 1 Tim 5: 17).

J.R. Peter was concerned about John, but it was Peter's own links with the Lord Jesus ("Follow thou me") that the Lord stressed; and so with each one of us.

W.S. Peter had a lesson to learn. The Lord had to say to him "Where I go thou canst not follow me now": John 13 :36. There was a lesson to learn between that and what Mr Renton is now saying.

J.A.McL. Yes, Peter was somewhat impetuous. He liked to think he could do things.

J.R. It would be as he submitted to that exhortation "Follow thou me" that he became the leader early in the book of the Acts.

P.G. Nothing fails from God's side; He provides such a leader as is mentioned in Micah and Matthew.

J.A.McL. That would give us courage to follow, an assurance that the thing will not fail. Some persons would hesitate to follow certain ones, but there is no need for hesitation here.

J.G. In Matthew's gospel, Herod and all Jerusalem are troubled at the fulfilment of Scripture, but there are other persons who are attracted by it. We want to be among those who are enquiring and attracted by what has come in.

J.A.McL. It is striking how, when things happen, there is such a wide variety of reaction. In Esther's day, several times the same

occasion means joy in one place and consternation in another. It is similar here. Right persons were affected rightly, but the city was in consternation.

J-n.M. The persons who quote this scripture to Herod are the very persons who rejected the Lord.

J.A.McL. It meant their displacement. We know what that means ourselves. We see it also in King Saul.

W.L. It says of Peter and Andrew, when the Lord said "Come after me" (Mark 1: 17) "straightway... they followed him". There is very often hesitation with us.

J.A.McL. Most gain comes from that ready responsive action you speak of.

J.R. When the Lord was here the disciples must have followed Him because they found Him lovable and attractive. Even the matter of their sins did not seem to come up - it was not that side so much; and they did not seem to realise how great and glorious He was as to His Person; but the kind of Man He was in His attractiveness seemed to hold them. Do we need to grow in that, finding the Lord Jesus attractive?

J.A.McL. Yes. Now as to Hebrews 12 we have to understand the passage contextually, that is, it comes at the conclusion of a long list of persons who overcame by faith in the most difficult circumstances. In other words we are attracted to Jesus and our attention is drawn to Him. Leadership here in Hebrews is not the kind of leadership which involves getting on horseback with banners flying and swords gleaming.

D.S. Obviously those persons in the previous chapter had come through, their faith had brought them through. It would therefore be for us to act in that way.

J.A.McL. The first name mentioned in the list is Abel. I know it is not his death that is referred to here, it is his offering, but Abel went out by way of death, an example of what James speaks of: "ye have condemned, ye have killed the just; he does not resist you", chap 5:

6. Abel overcame in trying circumstances. Throughout this chapter there is that spirit. I know that here and there we get the idea of conflict and warfare and overcoming enemies and kingdoms, but the general bearing of the chapter is that the persons concerned are in the midst of most difficult circumstances and overcome by faith in a way which men would not readily think of. Following upon that we are called upon to look on Jesus "the leader and completer of faith".

J.S-n. We have all these examples of faith in chapter 11, but at the beginning of chapter 12 we are exhorted to look "stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith". Why is that?

J.A.McL. They took character from Him. They come first historically but is He not the originator of it all?

J.S-n. It seems that all these persons would afford us help and encouragement, persons like ourselves going through difficult circumstances. But there is One who has set on the whole path of faith Himself uniquely. You are attracted to Him; your gaze is held in relation to Him.

J.A.McL. He is leader and completer of faith. The thing is going through in triumph finally although it may take time and there is no public vindication for the time being. The Lord Jesus is presented here particularly for our encouragement. This is not something which He does Himself, completely unrelated to us; it is very relevant to us.

R.S.R. Stephen fixed his eyes on heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus, and that sustained him.

H.McF. It has been said that the Jews could not understand the Messiah coming as a sufferer, but He really is the leader in suffering, is He not? Suffering has a great place in the whole path of faith. The next time the Lord comes it will not be as a sufferer. But the first coming was marked very much by suffering.

J.A.McL. Quite so. Revelation 19 speaks of a white horse and one sitting on it, and the armies in heaven following Him. His name is called 'The Word of God'. That is the Lord. He can deal effectively

with every contrary element and will do so in a day to come, but that is not here. We are to be looking at Him as having been in a contrary scene.

J.R. These persons in chapter 11 did not have the advantage that we have. We have Jesus, the leader and completer of faith, as our object. They did not have that. They are a stimulation to us as we read the chapter but we have an object, a personal object they did not have.

J.M. Moses "persevered, as seeing him who is invisible" (chap 11: 27); that is Christ.

R.S.R. Why does he speak of a "cloud of witnesses"?

J.A.McL. I think this is a bright cloud such as we read of in the gospels, not a black one.

M.G.W. Would it be the idea of what is heavenly?

J.A.McL. Yes, in character, here on earth is suffering.

A.A.B. In running with endurance we are to look aside from other things to that glorious One.

J.A.McL. What sufferings He endured! And He knew all things beforehand; we do not. But it is in view of the joy lying before Him. What a down-going it was for Jesus! We look to get through, but it may involve going down. Of course He did so in a special way.

H.F. Why should the "joy lying before him" be mentioned? We are reminded of the character, not just suffering but what comes out in suffering, the fragrance in Christ. Would the "joy lying before him" be the purpose in suffering? Also would the 'completer' show that there is an end to these things?

J.A.McL. And it is especially appropriate when we are speaking of faith: "the joy lying before him".

A.F. Would the 'cloud' indicate the thought of giving a lead? The cloud on the tabernacle moved and gave a lead to the whole camp,

as if the feature of giving a lead is found in these witnesses, a lead in faith.

J.A.McL. That is very good.

D.L.S. It is the shame that is connected with the cross here, not the suffering. It is really the reproach connected with the path of faith. Everything is in reproach outwardly, publicly, there is no glory connected with it.

R.S.R. Do you think enduring the cross would be the acacia wood in Christ, and running with endurance the acacia wood in the saints?

J.A.McL. I have no doubt that is true.

R.S. The two gospels which refer to Bethlehem are the two gospels which give us the Lord's birth. That is all against what man naturally would take pride in. Then the cross, the suffering side, is all to help us in our spirits.

H.McF. What does it mean to 'despise' the shame?

J.A.McL. It seems that it is of no account to Him. He is not overcome by it, He is not stumbled by it, He is not deterred by it.

J.R. Would you say He is superior to it in view of the joy lying before him?

J-n.M. "I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isa 50: 6) confirms what has been suggested.

W.D. Would you say a word as to how we get Him on to our view? He is in heaven and yet we are to look stedfastly.

J.A.McL. Although He is in heaven, do you think what is emphasised is His pathway of such perfection here?

W.D. Do you mean that, as we read the gospels, these features would come before us and in that way the Person would become an object to us as He is now?

J.A.McL. Yes, Mr Taylor sen says 'He has already finished the path of faith' (N.S. Vol 1, p. 354).

J.R. Would it not involve faith, linking us with Him where He is? He is spoken of in chapter 6 as "forerunner for us" (v 20). He has completed the course. He is the forerunner and we are runners. He is the leader and completer of faith.

J.A.McL. Yes, He has reached the goal.

P.G. The Lord despised the shame. In the testimony we might be discouraged by the shame, but the Lord would be an inspiration to us in how to regard it.

J.A.McL. What was mentioned earlier as to the Lord leading into Galilee affects us all.

P.G. In this chapter it is 'us'. In the previous chapter, it seemed to be more on individual lines.

J.A.McL. We can encourage one another; that is what is in the writer's mind, I think.

W.G. In 2 Timothy Paul says "I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me... also to all those who love his appearing", chap 4: 7,8. Would he be a leader, setting it on in that way?

J.A.McL. Yes, I think so.

J.R. This word for leader is quite unique. It is only used of our Lord, I understand. It is one who begins and sets a matter on.

J.S-n. Would the leader and completer of faith include the thought that the Lord exercised faith as a man down here? Psalm 16 says "Preserve me, O God: for I trust in thee" (v 1). In setting the thing on it is not just that it is objective but the thing has been there in the Lord's pathway down here, so that He is fully qualified through His own experience to set the whole thing on and be an object for us.

J.A.McL. There are some things which we would hesitate to attach to the Lord, but He set out in completeness and in perfection as Man what God required from man. If God requires faith, then the Lord's pathway is something that we take account of in that regard.

J.S-n. Yes. We can take account of the Lord setting on the whole matter of faith and completing a pathway in relation to this. Would it be an encouragement to us that we can complete the race on the same principle?

J.R. It was said in meetings in Buckie in 1972 that the Lord went into death in faith. It was based on Hebrews 5: "Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up both supplications and entreaties to him who was able to save him out of death" (v 7). It is touching to think of the Lord going into death in faith. There have been questions as to it, but the ministries we value stress that the Lord was a man of faith.

J.M. I think Mr Taylor sen linked it with the Man of the gospels. It was really what was set out here in the Lord as Man. The Psalm (16) finishes with that: "at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore" (v 11). That was really the objective.

W.L. Mr Taylor linked it too with "because of his piety". It is a remarkable reference to the reality and dependence of the Lord in manhood.

H.McF. Alongside of that we get the fact that the Lord learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

J.A.McL. Yes, when He was here, in the position in which He could experience in manhood what obedience meant, although He personally would be the One who would be obeyed. The scripture in Romans is another which must be read contextually. We get a list of seven gifts, and the one I was thinking of is "he that leads, with diligence". These seven gifts have a character that is worth noticing. There are four in Ephesians, not quite the same as the seven, and there are eight in Corinthians, again are not the same as these. It is very instructive to see what is excluded; also to see in the whole chapter that the apostle has in his mind a very wide range for the saints. He says "present your bodies a living sacrifice" (v 1). Would that be normal or abnormal? Would you expect to see that generally among the saints or a rarity?

J.R. It would be the normal thing.

J.A.McL. Then he says "to every one that is among you" (v 3), not some, but every one among you; then he says "as God has dealt to each a measure of faith". He has all the saints in mind. Then "as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; thus we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each one members one of the other". Note the expressions "all" and "each one". Then, after the section which we read, we get exhortations which would apply to all the saints. In the middle of that we get this remarkable list of gifts. It is true, of course, that you could hardly say that all the saints here have gifts, but the setting of this scripture, I believe, is of that general character, that is, the gifts are more general than you get elsewhere. There are no apostles here, and there are no 'spectacular' gifts - gifts of healing, miraculous powers, tongues. The gifts are those we might expect to find in any local meeting.

J.R. Do you think it would be something like what Paul says in Ephesians 4: "to each one of us has been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ" (v 7). That does not apply to specific gift but to what each saint has which is meant to function.

J.A.McL. That is helpful.

W D. Do you think, in view of the collective setting of the passage, that the apostle might be suggesting 'he that leads in going down'?

J.A.McL. A well-known brother many years ago related to us in Dundee an incident in his experience. He said he was visiting a meeting and his hostess said to him, My husband is the leading brother. He replied, And does he lead downwards? She answered, I am afraid I do not understand what you mean. The dear sisters here would have more sense than to say things like that! But it shows what may creep into our minds and then find expression. Leading downwards is a very important thing.

J.R. Mr Russell Besley has a short book of ministry, and among other things he says in that book, Leading brother, where do you lead?

W.L. Once, during a difficult time in our parts, the brothers in the meeting were maintaining an attitude which led to disaster. One day after a meeting a sister said informally, Look, brethren, we are all wrong. That led to the solution of the whole matter.

J.A.McL. That was a sister giving a good lead. We have all known situations in local gatherings where relations became strained as a result of something coming in between brethren, and what it needed was for someone to say, Well, brethren, I am largely to blame for this, I have been wrong. And the only right outcome following that would be for someone else to say, Well, I have been wrong too. And love begins to flow, and that is the key to the situation rather than someone coming in with authority, as Paul did not want to do, and saying, You must do this. Older brethren will remember many cases of that kind but I think it has a present bearing, the need to go down. I know we may say, I am standing for the truth. We can all say that, but can we go down? Can we say, I have been unwise? And often that is the key to the whole thing.

R.T. At a critical time in the north of England, the title of Mr Taylor sen's ministry was "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ".

H.F. Is not leadership more a moral matter?

J.A.McL. The one who goes down is morally greater than the one who remains on a pedestal.

M.G.W. Does that make way for the exercise of this other gift, that if someone is prepared to go down, there is often need on the part of others to show mercy? Let them do it with cheerfulness.

J.A.McL. Is it not so that we would expect to see the gifts mentioned here in any local meeting?

J.M. In a small locality, where there might be only two brothers, leadership is still a necessity.

J.R. As each one exercises his or her service, there would be no collision, no rivalry. In this chapter we have the truth of the body, one body in Christ, working out locally.

J.A.McL. Mr Stoney said that there is far more gift in the church than many of us imagine.

W.L. This is an active matter: he that does it; it is not only a question of the ability to do it.

J.A.McL. The instruction here is to get on with it and do it. It is 'having' the gifts here, and active engagement in the thing concerned. "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou has received in the Lord, the end that thou fulfil it", Col 4: 17. Archippus was in danger of thinking that what he had was not very important, so it did not matter and he would sit and listen to other people. Paul says, No, you have something, see that you minister it.

J.R. There would be a preservative and salvation in each one functioning in his own responsibility.

D.L.S. "Leading with diligence": the person would not be thinking he was exercising a gift, exactly. He would just be doing what was needed to be done, and doing it well, in his own way in his own locality. That is leadership.

J.A.McL. The word 'diligence' in the original means haste or speed. So he is in such a hurry that he is not thinking about the importance of his gift at all. Something has to be done and he does it.

A.A.B. How each gift is to be exercised is mentioned, and diligence is to mark one who leads. There would be no waning.

J.A.McL. It is an onerous job, and it requires courage too.

A.A.B. Is the suggestion of the body here in Romans to preserve us from independency? There would be a certain merging as each one is exercising whatever is given.

J.A.McL. Yes, I think so.

Grangemouth,

2 January 1975

KEY TO INITIALS

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THE WILL OF GOD

Hebrews 10: 5-10; Colossians 1: 9-13; Ephesians 1: 3-6

J.S. What is in mind in suggesting these scriptures is the references in them to the will of God, the Lord Jesus coming in to establish the will of God so that we should be sanctified by that will, as it says, "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". Then in Colossians there is the reference to being "filled with the full knowledge of his will", and in Ephesians how we are marked out for blessing, marked out for sonship "according to the good pleasure of his will". I wondered if we might get some help in enquiring into what is in mind in the will of God, relating to ourselves and to what God is going to secure for His pleasure.

J.M. I suppose that is why we are taken up - for the pleasure and will of God. Is that what you had in mind?

J.S. Yes. His will enters into it. It is not just something we cannot do for ourselves but His will is involved in it; how things are going to work out for His pleasure.

J.M. As in everything else, the Lord Jesus sets a pattern for us, does He not?

J.S. Yes. We see on one hand a Man who was here entirely devoted to the will of God. All that God looked for in a man, filling out His will on the earth here, He found in Christ. Then as you think of His work, of His death, through that death all the will of God is going to be secured and His pleasure reached in men.

A.A.B. Is there a contrast in all that had gone before, there being no pleasure in it? Does it bring into relief the One who comes on the line of doing His will? "Sacrifice and offering thou willedst not; but thou hast prepared me a body". Would it require the incoming of the Lord Jesus?

J.S. In a sense, I suppose, these sacrifices were ineffective because they had to be repeated over and over again; so there was no stable order of things through the sacrifices. But through the one

offering of Jesus Christ, God can secure His pleasure not only now but eternally, and it is stable.

A.A.B. Would that be emphasised in the "once for all"? We are brought into a stable order of things in contrast to the old economy of which the Hebrews would have a particular understanding.

J.S. I suppose every time they came up with a sacrifice they would be thinking of the next time. There was the calling to mind of sins yearly, for example. In Christianity what we have is the calling to mind of the Lord Jesus. As we experienced this morning, as we are engaged with that, we are in touch with an order of things that is stable. We are not having to call Him to mind to make the thing effective but so that the whole matter is kept fresh in the soul.

J.M. There is a very definite statement in verse 4: "For blood of bulls and goats is incapable of taking away sins". It is intended to set us free, is it not?

J.S. Quite so. So all these sacrifices were looking forward to Christ, to the One perfect sacrifice on which not only our blessing is secured but the will of God in relation to a universe of bliss will be secured eternally.

J.S-s. Is there a point of time stressed here? - Then he said. What went before really was the trial of man. This word "incapable" would cover the whole period - man's inability to answer to the will of God. The Lord Jesus was the one Man who established every thing for God.

J.S. There was plenty of opportunity given to man under different relations before Christ came in manhood. But it proved that things could not be secured that way. "He takes away the first that he may establish the second". Everything is secured in the second Man.

J.M-l. When the Lord was on the mount of Olives He knelt down and prayed, saying "Father, if thou wilt remove this cup from me: - but then, not my will, but thine be do ne", Luke 22: 42. It was the completion in Himself of all the Father's will.

J.S. Yes. What perfection in manhood, what submission, what obedience! - "not my will, but thine be done". Everything for God in His relations with men hinged on that offering, and He was equal to it.

J.M. Why do we have this double quotation from the psalm?

J.S. In Psalm 40 it says "Thy law is within my heart" (v 8). It was not only the externals but there was inwardly in Christ what was capable of carrying through the will of God. It reminds you of the tables that were put into the ark.

H.F. "To do thy good pleasure, my God, is my delight".

J.S. It was not just an obligation or a duty but His delight was in it. You can understand Ephesians in the light of that - "the good pleasure of his will"; the only Man who is capable of seeing things through in that way.

H.F. There could hardly be anything more important for a believer than the will of God. Why did God create the worlds? It was an area for His will to be expressed and for Himself to be enjoyed, and for Him to enjoy His creation.

J.S. That is the importance of that verse, "by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". How we have been set apart for the will of God! It is the greatest thing you could think of for man, that he should be here according to the will of God.

J.S-s. In other scriptures the stress is on the shed blood. Is there some significance in the offering of the body of Jesus Christ?

J.S. I think so. You think of a Man who came in here with a body, and that body was held for the will of God and He offered it. Now what is going to be the moral effect in me as I appreciate that that was for me? Is it not that I am going to hold my body here for the will of God?

J.S-s. The body is the vehicle for the will of God to be expressed. "Thou hast prepared me a body". In its application to us we have

our bodies and the capability by the Spirit to fulfil the will of God, as Romans shows.

J.S. So each one of us has a body. It is not a question of what means or resources we may have, but we have a body, and God would appeal to us in regard to our bodies, as to whether they are held here for His will. The Supper becomes a fresh challenge to us as we take it. What is this week going to be in my relations with God? Am I going to be here in my body for the will of God?

A.G. Would David set out something of the will of God being carried through?

J.S. Yes, "a man after my heart, who shall do all my will", Acts 13: 22. That is a fine thing, to have that sense in your relations with God that He is satisfied with your life.

D.S. Is this matter of being sanctified an absolute idea?

J.S. God would set us apart for Himself. Think what our course would have been in this world as unbelievers; but God has intervened. Why has He intervened? It is to set us apart for Himself, now and eternally. What He does He does for ever.

D.S. The same will that has given us a place in glory has set us apart now. It is done absolutely.

J.S. We are to be set apart for the will of God down here. The Supper would help us in that regard. We take the Supper down here in the wilderness and the emblems before us are the evidence of a Man here who has been devoted to the will of God. It is a challenge as to whether I am going to be here during this week for the will of God.

J.M. If we get a sense that the love of God lies behind all this it would help us to commit ourselves.

J.S. Yes. The cup especially gives us a touch as to the love of God, the disposition of God. God wants us. It is not that God is being arbitrary. He is so disposed towards us that it is calculated to bring out a response.

A.A.B. In Romans 12 the beseeching is by the compassions of God; it is like the love of God; so that the body of the believer is secured. Would the Supper then be both a fresh committal on our part and also a strengthening for the week of the testimony?

J.S. Yes, committal and strengthening too. In the reference to the Lord in Gethsemane you get the thought of an angel strengthening Him. I think the Supper is to provide food for us, to give us strength to be here for the will of God.

D.S. What is involved in "He takes away the first that he may establish the second"?

J.S. There was what was ineffective connected with the first. Then He is establishing the second. What stability is connected with it! It is going through into eternity; there is no breakdown connected with it. Publicly you might say things are in a terrible state, but when you view things as they are before God there is no breakdown. There is a Man there who has laid a basis for the will of God to be brought in, and it is going through.

A.A.B. How much would be involved in that sentence "He takes away the first"! but it is in view of the second being established. The will of God would involve the taking away of the first. The Lord says "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work", John 4: 34. Taking away the first would be part of that work but establishing the second is in the work too. I am thinking of the immensity of what the will of God involved for Christ.

J.S. Quite so, divine counsels have entered into that - "Then I said... " We are initiated into something that took place between divine Persons. You cannot say a great deal about it but you get the sense that there was some conversation, speaking reverently, between divine Persons that bore on this very matter.

J.M. In Psalm 40 (v 6) it says "ears hast thou prepared me" (or digged - see note). There was an entrance there. There was not only what was external in a body but the Lord's feelings and affections were in the matter.

J.S. The Lord as a man down here started the day with that attitude: "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed", Isa 50: 4. I am challenged by that. Would I be ready to get my directions, and be ready to carry out the will of God during the day?

A.A.B. Is it all the more telling when we think of what the Lord's will was, as always being the will of the Father? The fact that this should be said - "Lo, I come to do thy will" - would have significance, would it not? The feelings of divine Persons would be engaged in this, that One came into manhood to express the will of God.

J.S. Quite so. We think of it in connection with ourselves; the will of God would set us apart. Then what scope it affords as you think of the whole scheme of divine purpose being in mind; how that would be secured. Everything depended on the Lord Jesus coming into manhood and on the offering of His body. I wondered if in Colossians we might get some help as to being filled with the full knowledge of His will. When we start off as believers we have a sense that God wants us to be here for His will; but then as we proceed I think we become intelligent as to what His will involves - "that ye may be filled with the full knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding". So that the prayers of the apostle, and others with him here, bear on this matter. They do not "cease praying and asking for you, to the end that ye may be filled with the full knowledge of his will".

J-n.M. Does that clearly imply that it is necessary to be in the assembly livingly to get the gain of this? The will of God is very wide, but to be in the full knowledge of it implies that I have to be in a certain sphere. You hear individual Christians saying, I should like to know God's will for me; but it is not a question of God's will for me, but of God's will; and the realisation of that is only known according to God as the saints are gathered in this way.

J.S. Quite so. What we might say is, What I want to know is God's will and how I fit into my place in it. You get the idea of sharing in this scripture. That immediately means that there are others

involved. For a believer just to remain on his own is not the normal divine idea; that is not God's will for believers. It is quite clear from this scripture that God means us to share things with others.

J.M. The scripture in Romans 12 involves that. As soon as you come into the gain of the gospel you are immediately linked with someone else.

J.S. That is the first reference, I suppose, to the body - "one body in Christ", Rom 12: 5. It is not exactly the body of Christ but "one body in Christ", showing the dignity of what the believer is brought into. So you could not be in any body which has greater dignity, in any human organisation or anything of that kind. The idea there is that each of us as set for the will of God has something, therefore we are capable of being in the body as contributors.

W.W. Would verse 10 be the result of "the full knowledge of his will", in walking worthily of the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work, and so on, so that what was found uniquely in the Lord here for the Father's will and delight would have its correspondence in the saints?

J.S. Yes. The idea of growth comes in. You are coming gradually to a greater understanding of what the will of God is. That depends on our state. Then, too, you are bearing fruit. In that sense the believer does not have to wait until he is fully mature to bear fruit. There is fruit-bearing going on and there is increase connected with it.

H.F. Does the idea of being filled suggest measure and capacity? Paul brings this idea into other epistles - filled full. It makes you wish for more capacity to understand the will of God. It is a wonderful thing that being fallen creatures we are accepted. It is possible to delight the One we had offended and to be here for His pleasure intelligently.

J.S. It is a very interesting thing that there is this reference of the apostle to his concern for the saints at Colosse; then at the end of the epistle there is a man called Epaphras "who is one of you, the bondman of Christ Jesus, always combating earnestly for you in

prayers, to the end that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God", chap 4: 12. That would be a fine thing to have in mind for everybody in our local meetings. There was what the apostle was ministering, and his own exercises and prayers, but you need persons in localities who have the same *character* of exercise as the apostle had.

J.S-s. Do you think that, as we are here committed to the will of God, we shall grow in the feelings and the knowledge of what God is and express some of God's feelings towards those with whom we walk?

J.S. Quite so. Colossians would help us to see that there is a circle of persons like that established down here.

A.A.B. The natural order is reversed. There is bearing fruit here before there is growing. The first has been taken away and the second established now, so that this can be made way for in one another. As you say, prayer is to be made for this to be developed in the local company. Where those feelings are in circulation in the locality, this is how it comes.

J.S. Colossians, as we have been taught, is a half-way epistle. The brethren have gone so far but there is room to go farther in Christianity. Someone has said that divine Persons will take us as far as we are prepared to go. In the light of that there is still Ephesians.

J.M-I. Here he begins to open up to them what the Father has done.

J.S. The true knowledge of God would involve the Father, and would involve the Son too.

J. M-I. It would involve the whole economy, but there is someone bringing us into it, the Father.

J.S. This is a striking reference to the Father "who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light" - what the Father has done.

J.M. Sanctifying was referred to earlier. Would it be not only a question of praying for these things but, in a meeting like this, that ministry would come into it? Would John 17 bear on it? The Lord says "sanctify them by the truth: thy word is truth" (v 17). It is as if the word coming to us on an occasion like this ought to have a sanctifying effect so that we should be here for the will of God.

J.S. On the one hand the Lord is setting Himself apart on high for us to accomplish such service, and then as the word is brought in amongst us it is going to effect something. It would be on the line of growing.

J-n. M. Would the references to the body in Colossians and Ephesians show that it is really an extension of Christ here that is to display the will of God.

J.S. It is not only the individual body of the believer but that the will of God is going to be expressed in the body of Christ.

J.S-s. The new man is really a collective idea, and that is the vehicle in which the will of God is expressed in a collective way.

J.S. It is Christ in character. There is what came out in Christ personally; then the new man would be the expression of Christ in character in the saints.

J.S-s. The new man is for testimony.

T.M. In verse 11 the note to "strengthened with all power" is 'made powerful with all power'. Not only does God desire this but He provides the strength for it.

J.S. Yes. It is encouraging that we are not left to our own resources. In recent weeks the Lord has been calling our attention to divine resources. We want to get some sense of what these resources are. The Spirit is keeping Himself out of sight here but you cannot help feeling how He would be working.

A.A.B. I wondered as to that - "according to the might of his glory". It is no doubt the Spirit, but in the way it is referred to here there is something irresistible about it.

J.S. More is brought out on that line in Ephesians. You feel you are on the way there. There are references in Ephesians that show how God is strengthening the believer inwardly for great matters.

A.A.B. While "endurance and longsuffering with joy" would involve the testimony, it is not far off the strengthening by the Father's Spirit in the inner man mentioned in Ephesians 3.

J.S. This in a sense is on the way to it. "In all wisdom and spiritual understanding" involves our state and our relation to the Spirit.

A.A.B. "Spiritual understanding" would be a wholly spiritual matter. It would be further than obedience and subjection; it would be intelligence in the will of God.

J.S. Once you are obedient and submissive you are set for the will of God. Then you want to understand more about the will of God, what it involves, and you do not arrive at that by drawing up a code of rules but by means of this "wisdom and spiritual understanding". That involves our relations with the Spirit.

H.F. The "kingdom of the Son of his love" is a far better thing than a code of rules. There would be a feeling after God's will because of love. It makes me want to be subject to the "Son of his love".

J.S. So if He has translated us into this situation where we are made fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, for one thing you would want to know what "the portion of the saints in light" is, and you would want to know more about this kingdom that is dominated by "the Son of his love". I think the will of God is involved in that, so you want to understand more about it.

H.F. It is intended that "the portion of the saints in light" should be attractive.

J.S. So immediately he brings in this reference - "the kingdom of the Son of his love" - the apostle goes on to enlarge greatly on who this Person is, His varied glories; it is all to attract us into the "portion of the saints".

J-n.M. The authority of darkness would pervert our minds to think that subservience to the will of God would bring in bondage, but it is

not so. This is the way to complete liberty. The will of God is not some thing restrictive, it eliminates what is unlawful but brings into true liberty.

J.S. You are thankful to be translated from the authority of darkness, and you feel for dear brethren who are still held in it. "The kingdom of the Son of his love" is a kingdom that is dominated by this kind of Person.

J.M. As well as being called a 'half-way' epistle, this has been called a 'going-up' epistle. Ephesians is the full idea. Colossians is Hebron but Jerusalem is the full thing.

J.S. Yes. We might just look at Ephesians. It is what we are brought into - "for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself", God is thinking about securing persons for Himself in sonship "according to the good pleasure of his will". We think a lot about our blessings and enjoy them - "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies" - but the end of it is that God is going to have men in sonship for His pleasure.

A.A.B. The end in all these things is what is for God's own affections, and "the good pleasure of his will". Everything that has come in that stood in the way has been removed. It all serves to bring out what God had in His heart. Even being "chosen... in him before the world's foundation" is in view of what is for God's heart. It is a great blessing and privilege, but it is what is for God, is it not?

J.S. Yes. I think the point in blessing us would be that we are enriched and set up suited to God's presence, suited to the Father's thoughts. The son in Luke 15 would have a sense of that. He was not brought in bedraggled to the Father's presence. He was set up in the sense of what the Father gave him. He would have the sense of being suited to the Father's thoughts, the Father's presence, and be able to serve the Father suitably.

A.A.B. We are all clothed in Christ and before the Father. Do you think there should be the sense of the suitability and the response that becomes that?

J.S. I think the 'best robe' is how we are clothed with Christ according to God 's purpose.

A.A.B. It links with "Lo, I come", with the purpose of God. The 'best robe' is not exactly redemption. Redemption is necessary, as it says here "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences according to the riches of his grace", but it is what is suitable for the presence of God and that is only what is of Christ.

J.S. So the son in Luke 15, returning to his father, was feeling he needed things. He would get the food he needed there, but what would be conveyed to him, I think, would be the father's pleasure, as it says here "the good pleasure of his will". It was not only that he needed certain things but it was the good pleasure of the Father's will that he should be set up suitably.

J.M. That would no doubt relate to what we have in the next chapter - "has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together, in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (v 6). That is where He is now. "Taken into favour in the Beloved" would involve that.

J.S. Yes, the position we are brought into along with Christ - "raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies". It is a wonderful thing to get into our souls that that is the position we are brought into along with Christ, but that in itself is the present evidence of the Father's love.

J.M-I. Is that what is meant in verse 9 - "having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself"? We are brought into the knowledge of it through His grace.

J.S. Why should we not go in for the spiritual understanding of these things? God wants us to understand them. Paul speaks of "my intelligence in the mystery", Eph 3: 4. What God committed to a man who was on the one hand divinely selected, but on the other hand was prepared in the energy of love and committal to the will of God!

D.S. I wanted to ask about the different names used here of the Lord - "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", then "in Christ" and then "for adoption through Jesus Christ".

J.S. There is wonderful variety in these different names. "In Christ" would be the status we are given. Then "through Jesus Christ" - we think of the operations that are being carried on through that Man. I think it involves a connection with the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. How divine operations have proceeded through that Man!

J-n.M. Something of the scope of it would be seen in verses 9 and 10: "which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ". It really points on to the world to come, to the place the assembly will have intelligently at the side of Christ in the opening up of what God's will involves.

J.S. Yes. The range becomes very extensive. As you say, it means the heading up of everything in Christ, the whole millennial scene, the assembly brought in with Him, then the many families that will be brought in. Then the assembly is right at the centre of things with Christ and you can look out from that vantage point on the whole universe of bliss. There is a vessel in which there is glory to God in Christ Jesus. All that lies in this realm of the will of God.

H.F. Will you say a word about the expression "the Beloved" in verse 6.

J.S. I think it is to convey to us the greatness of the favour. Think of the Father speaking about "the Beloved". What He would be to the Father! Then He has taken us into favour in such a One. How much it must mean, the One who was here for the will of God, who established a basis for the will of God to be brought in, what He must mean to God - the Beloved!

J.M. It is a title that is exclusive to Christ, it belongs to no other.

Grangemouth

17 November 1974

K E Y TO INITIALS

A.A.B. A.A.Brown; H.F. H.Fentiman; A.G. A.Gillies; J.M. Jas.Munro;
J.M-I. Jas.Mitchell; J-n.M. John Munro; T.M. T.Munro; D.S. D.Spinks;
J.S. J.Strachan; J.S-s. J.Spinks; W.W. W.Wallace.

(All Grangemouth except J.S. - Dundee)

THE POWER BY WHICH THINGS ARE EFFECTED

E.M.Walkinshaw

Mark 1: 7,8; Acts 1: 6-9; 2: 1-4; 2 Timothy 2: 1,2

I want to draw attention to the power by which things are effected for God. No divine end can ever be reached by human means but by the power of God alone. When coming to Corinth with the testimony of God, Paul did not come with the persuasive words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Everything, therefore, is effected for God by a divine power and, if I may repeat it, nothing is effected for God by human means. Human vessels would be used but the power is of God. I think the Lord would help us about this, dear brethren, and as He helps us about it it would keep us restful as we understand that everything is in control as being in the hands of Christ. Whatever may happen in the history of the testimony He will see the testimony through until it finds its consummation in glory; that would help us to be restful. In the verses read in Mark, John calls attention to this Person. Elsewhere he says "A man comes after me who takes a place before me, because he *was* before me" (John 1:30); that is, he is drawing attention to the preeminence of Jesus, One who took precedence over him because, he says, "*he was before me*". In this gospel, however, he says "There comes he that is mightier than I after me, the thong of whose sandals I am not fit to stoop down and unloose". What an impression of Christ! - "*mightier than I*". John was effective in divine power in the fulfilment of his mission, but now he had before him One that was mightier than he. It is one thing to have a purpose, it is another thing to have the power to put that purpose into effect; but God has laid hold on One that is mighty, that is Jesus, and whatever may happen beneath the firmament in the history of man or of the testimony, God has placed things in the hands of One who has the power to put everything into effect. The government of this country had a good intention in its efforts to restrain inflation but the difficulty lay in the power to put that policy into effect. That is not so with Jesus; He has His economy, and presently that economy will be brought out

publicly. He will not simply have a policy or an administration but He is mighty enough to put it into effect, and nothing and no one will hinder Him. It is a great thing, dear brethren, to get an impression of Christ like that and it will help you to be steady in the testimony.

So John would relate himself to such, and we in our day can relate ourselves to One that is mightier than John, the great Servant-prophet as this gospel presents Him, who will not only make known the mind of God but will lay the moral basis for an economy of blessing and then put that economy into effect as a risen Man. How glorious Jesus is! And in this gospel, as we know, there are constant references to power, and I think it is the power of the Spirit because Jesus acted in the power of the Spirit. Of course He was who He was, over all God blessed for ever, but He accepted the limitations that manhood imposed upon Him and as here He acted in the power of the Holy Spirit. And He gave His disciples power; and I think if we need one thing above another in these days it is power as being dependent upon God so that things might be put into effect among us as we are with God. So John goes on to say, "I indeed have baptised you with water, but he shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit". How wonder full that is! One having accomplished the great work of redemption, equal to it and having accomplished it, baptises with the Holy Spirit. I think, dear brethren, it is intended that we should come into the effect of that. I wonder how far our younger people are alive to the fact that the Holy Spirit is here. We accept it as a teaching, we accept the Bible as the word of God professedly; but then I think the Lord would raise the simple challenge with us as to how far we are in the vitality of the presence of the Holy Spirit. That would apply to each of us. We have a good deal of teaching, we call it 'the good teaching' and it is, and the Lord would help us to look into it; but He would encourage us to be so with the Holy Spirit that that good teaching may not simply remain good teaching but that the spirit of it might find expression in us as we are committed to the progressive prophetic line that the Lord has followed in the last one hundred and fifty years. Has everything been haphazard, dear brethren? Is it that one man arose who was distinguished and he

helped certain persons who came out from the churches and chapels and the like? And is it that another man became distinguished subsequent to that and helped the brethren and encouraged them to go on, and after that another and those contemporary with them? I think not. It has been the progressive movement of the One that was mightier than John; He initiated the recovery and He is maintaining it, hence all is not lost. Our part, dear brethren, is to relate ourselves to Him in His movements and know what His strength and His power are, and to understand that without Him we can do nothing. But, as Paul said elsewhere, "I have strength for all things in him that gives me power", Phil 4: 13. So, weak as the day is publicly, we have Christ and we can rely upon Him. There is the "Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ"; that I suppose would link with Peter's ministry. He speaks a good deal of Jesus Christ, that order of Man that stood here for God, that went through rather like the acacia wood, enduring in the presence of the greatest opposition; but then Mark says "Son of God", that is like Paul's ministry - another world and another Man in another world, the Son of God. I would like to appeal to the younger men and younger women to commit themselves personally to Jesus Christ, Son of God, and you will be surprised what He will do for you in the way of personal experience which will become a wonderful contribution to God's assembly here on the earth. So the first passage brings before us Jesus in His uniqueness, the mightier than John, the baptiser with the Holy Spirit.

Now in the second passage the work of redemption has been accomplished, Jesus has died and rose again. I wonder how far we are in the faith of that, that Jesus is a risen Man. One has often reflected on this truth of Himself as risen; Christians generally accept it. If you speak to a Christian believer he will say that Jesus is risen, and accept that as the truth. Then surely I must ask myself the question, If Jesus is risen, where is He? And if I ask, Where is He? I could rightly ask, What is He doing? What is He doing? Is He quiescent? Is He sitting on the throne of God with no interest here? And if the Lord Jesus is living, where is He living? And then, where

am I living? Where are you living? If you say Jesus is risen, where are you living? Are you living where He lives? Are you living in His life? Or is it that you are nominally in the circle of the truth but the power of your life and enjoyment is elsewhere? It is very easy to be like that, and I think, dear brethren, that the crises that have come upon the brethren have proved that many were in the circle of the truth but the power and vitality of their lives was elsewhere. And then as beloved Mr Taylor sen told us, everything finds its own level and each goes to his own place. If a person is an open brother in his outlook and practices, when the crisis comes that is the direction in which he goes. If he is worldly minded, when the crisis comes that is the direction in which he goes. If he is a lover of the truth I think the Lord keeps him where the truth is and where the Lord is; and so when the crisis comes in the history of any one of us, as with water, everything finds its own level. Now in this second passage, as I said, Jesus had died and was risen again; He was living, they beheld Him and He assembled with them and spoke to them "of the things which concern the kingdom of God". They say "is it at this time that thou restorest the kingdom to Israel?", and Jesus says "It is not yours to know times or seasons, which the Father has placed in his own authority; but ye will receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you". Now, dear brethren, everything that transpires in the history of those in the testimony in the Acts is in the power of the Holy Spirit; He had come upon them, and the Holy Spirit is here. The word translated 'power' here is '*dunamis*', that is the power to effect things; and I think, dear brethren, it would help us if we were more with the Lord to appreciate the presence of the Spirit as effective power to put everything into operation for Himself. There is no power apart from Him. Men might act, and of course God might move sovereignly, as He does; but I think in the progress of the testimony we need to understand that our power lies in the Holy Spirit. So He says to them "ye will receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you"; that would seem to be power for the continuation of the testimony, as though the Lord would indicate that the immediate point is not the kingdom, at any rate in its public display, but the power that would come upon them so that they might be witnesses

for Him. There is very little distinction I judge between the testimony and witness in the scripture, unless the testimony be more specific. Here the Lord said "ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth". Then it says, "And having said these things he was taken up, they beholding him, and a cloud received him out of their sight". Now most of us would know that that implies that the period of faith begins. Jesus is out of sight. Christendom, of course, has said, as they said of Moses, "we do not know what has become of him" (Exod 32: 1); but the enlightened believer is intelligent as to where Jesus is and not only where He is but what He is doing.

So in chapter 2 the Holy Spirit comes; it says "there came suddenly a sound out of heaven". You notice the 'sound' fills the house and the fire 'sits' upon them all, and all spake "as the Holy Spirit gave to them to speak forth". What a company, dear brethren! We would have to acknowledge that since then the Holy Spirit has been set aside, man's mind has taken the place of God's mind in the profession, and the church publicly is in ruins; but is the Holy Spirit in ruins? Has the Holy Spirit withdrawn Himself? I believe He is available and is pursuing the simple mission as indicated in the type in Genesis 24, to bring the bride to Isaac; and the Holy Spirit is here patiently serving. Oh that we might relate ourselves to Him! Speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit is not only a possibility but it is necessary if the testimony is to be maintained in its true character until it finds its consummation in glory. That was the beginning, and what a testimony it was! How it affected the persons that heard it each in his own tongue! It says "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth". The Lord would help us to speak as the Spirit gives us to speak forth. I believe that should be characteristic, not simply when we are in the assembly. Mr Darby went so far as to say, 'you only speak when it is necessary to speak and you only eat when it is necessary to eat, and you eat with a view to nourishing your body with a view to the testimony of God, and you speak with a view to the expression of what is necessary for the testimony of God'. We

may say, We fall very far short of that. We would all acknowledge that; nevertheless the Lord would help us to accept the obligation to maintain things at their height even if we feel very weak in doing so.

Now the last passage is a day of breakdown and Paul is encouraging Timothy. He says "Thou therefore, my child, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus" - be strong in it. The source of strength is Christ Jesus, everything is set in Him; He is the One who when here was called a "mightier than I", and He did things, as we have said, by the Spirit. Now He is on high and everything is settled in Him. When you think of Christ Jesus you think of an anointed Man in heaven and everything in Him. So that purpose and grace, those things given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time, will never be lost; God has put them in a safe place. If He had put them in me today I would have lost them before tomorrow, and so would you; but He has given us these things in Christ Jesus, He has given them to us and put them in a safe place in that Person, and because of that we shall never lose them, and no believer will ever lose them; although he may lose, and any one of us may lose, our enjoyment of them. So here the grace is in Christ Jesus, and as we are brought into attachment to Him and maintained in Him I think we are maintained in the strength that is in Him which is necessary for the continuation of the testimony of God. This is an exhortation. It might be something like abiding in Him, and as abiding in Him the strength that is in Him is known; not exactly that it is communicated from time to time (I am not saying that that may not be so) but I think the idea of the passage is that you are strong in the grace that is in Him as you are abiding in Him in a day of weakness, and hence you are kept in power in God's precious testimony. So he says "And the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men". I feel, dear brethren (and no doubt many of us would share the feeling) that if I were more trustworthy the Lord would have entrusted more to me. The Lord does not give His precious things to anybody, He gives them to trustworthy persons. So Paul says, You entrust them to faithful men, not to anybody. Let us, dear brethren, seek grace from the Lord to be

faithful men - and women; I think it would include women too. Of course he says 'men' because what would be in mind would be responsibility in the maintenance of these things which Timothy had heard, but I think we could say there have been not only faithful men but faithful women who have been committed to the testimony of God. Can I be entrusted with anything? Can you be entrusted with anything in your locality? That is the question the Lord would raise with each of us, I think; and then, "such as shall be competent to instruct others also". It has often been said that we would come into the "others also", but I think the characteristic of faithfulness is one that will go through to the end. The Lord will see everything through as the mightier than John and the mightier than any other, and if I am not available I have no doubt that He will have others that are; but I would like to be available, would not you? You young men and women, would you not like to be available to the Lord for the honour of having part in the final phase of 'the testimony'? I would; I would like to be trustworthy. I like to be trustworthy in my job, not working when the boss is looking and dodging when he is not looking. I would like to be trustworthy, and the same is true as to our Lord who is looking after His Father's business - "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?", Luke 2: 49. I would like to be someone that is trustworthy; and I think the more we get to the Lord, the more we get to the Spirit, the more we shall be helped to be faithful and trustworthy in the testimony here. May the Lord help every one of us, and may especially the younger men and women commit themselves to Him so that they might have the honour of having part in this testimony in a dark day until He comes.

Sunbury

9 March 1974

NEIGHBOURS

In the worldly way descending,
Knowing only darkness, strife
Legal pride its help withholding –
Thou didst find us, give us life.

Gentle, gracious, condescending,
Thou in perfect righteousness
Bound the wounds in love transcending
Yielding rest, abounding peace.

Joying in the Holy Spirit,
Thus we love, and love like Thee,
Grace and mercy manifesting
In our "Year of Jubilee".

May we, poor, enriching many,
Having nought, possessing all
Serve by love as we are waiting
For Thy blessed heavenward call.

C.J.Stewart

Peterborough

May 1976

THE CHILDREN'S WELCOME

The happiest sign of a welcome to a child is to be taken into loving arms. Some of the young ones whom Jesus received in this way when going towards Jerusalem would be old enough to remember it. None, however, would ever be forgotten by Him! Scripture says that He not only blessed them but blessed them 'very much'. There is always something extra in Christianity - it is life but also life "abundantly" and our needs are supplied from God's "riches in glory in Christ Jesus".

We rejoice that the Lord Jesus as a babe was received into the arms of Simeon the very first time that He was brought amongst the people. Later, when so many older ones had refused Him, it was the children who gave Him a right royal welcome. They cried in the temple "Hosanna" which showed that they could tell that He was the Saviour. In this they knew more than the wise elders! It is possible that some of these children had been blessed by Jesus during His journey: in any case we learn that happiness depends not only on what we receive but in giving honour to the Blessor.

The Lord graciously called the temple 'God's house' and I am sure the children had a welcome there although the men who sold and bought things were chased out. Two of the greatest prophets had said hundreds of years before that God's house should not be a den of robbers but a place of prayer, and that people should be joyful there. Since the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in believers the house is no longer one made of stone or brick but is formed by believers themselves who are "living stones".

The only miracle recorded by all four gospel-writers is the feeding of over five thousand people by the Lord Jesus. He used

what a little boy had brought, which seemed to be the only food there. That child must have been one of the true followers of Jesus because the apostles and disciples said 'We have five loaves and two fishes'. Probably his feeling of welcome became one of alarm when all his food was taken away from him! But this feeling would soon be changed to joy that so many persons were satisfied through it. Have you some knowledge of Jesus that He can use to feed the souls of others?

J.C.Evershed