

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

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Contents

[AT A BURIAL \(i\)](#)

[VICTORY](#)

[A SCRIBE](#)

[MOURNING](#)

[AT A BURIAL \(ii\)](#)

[THE LOVE OF JESUS](#)

[WAGES](#)

[SUSTAINING THE TESTIMONY](#)

[AT A MARRIAGE \(i\)](#)

[GLORY](#)

[THE PATH](#)

[NOT EVIL SPOKEN OF](#)

[AT A MARRIAGE \(ii\)](#)

[HOUSEHOLDS](#)

[THE STANDARD](#)

[ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS](#)

[THE CHILDREN'S COUNTING](#)

AT A BURIAL (i) VICTORY

G.W.Brown

1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18; 2 Timothy 2: 3; 4: 7

How often we need, beloved brethren, to encourage one another with these words Paul gives us, and again today. They refer to the victory day. Our brother prayed that we might have a sense of victory. This is the victory day supremely we have before us even today in the presence of death and in the miss that we all have of our beloved brother. It is not the only victory day, of course. What a victory day was the resurrection day! What is here today could not be but for the victory over death. What a contemplation that is! - the victories of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no Victor like Him; He, the Victor, comes into an occasion like this and lifts our hearts above the sorrow. How should we be but for Him? How should they be that mourn, particularly in the family, but for the service of the great Victor? So again today we encourage one another in the light of the victory day, the great victory of the Lord Jesus. What joy He will have in it, to descend to meet His saints in the air! - those who have fallen asleep, including our brother, those who are living at the time, and it may be some of us. We are encouraging one another in the light of that day which we feel is near more and more we are feeling how near it is. What a joy it gives, even in the presence of death! It brings desolation to nature, yet what hope, what joy, the prospect soon coming, the great victory!

Our brother answered, I think, to that which Paul enjoins on Timothy; he was one who took his share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. We recall that he was a soldier of the king and, in addition to the suffering that the populace generally endured in those war days, our brother suffered as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, he suffered the reproach of taking up non-combatant service and he went through. Our beloved brother was not an aggressive soldier, as we know well; a meek and lowly man, but a good soldier of Jesus Christ who took his share in suffering and has been an

example to many in that respect. But now the time has come when, having combated the good combat, he has finished the race, he has kept the faith. We thank God for our brother, we can thank God for the grace that has kept him to the end of his life and which formed him so as to be serviceable in his own sphere and a comfort to God's people and an example to us all.

We think of our beloved sister and the family with affection; the Lord thinks of them more than we do and He is more able than we are to sustain and sol ace them at this time. May the example of their beloved one now with Christ stimulate them all and ourselves that there may be that character of testimony with us while we wait for the Lord.

A SCRIBE

C.R.Byng

Matthew 13: 52

The Lord Jesus would use this occasion to strengthen with each of us the desire to be marked increasingly by the features of Christ which shone in our beloved brother, a man whose quiet and steady influence will have results that the Lord alone knows. It would be in keeping with the prayers of our beloved brother that there might be fruit today with all of us, especially comfort for our beloved sister and for the sons, and some fresh sense of the love of Christ for every one of the beloved grandchildren.

The scribe who is "discipled to the kingdom of the heavens" is one who above all things has learned to love. Our beloved brother was an example as one who had learned to love God and God's King. A scribe is also one who has learned to listen. The prophetic word always affects us as it points forward to Christ in His infinite perfection: "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed", Isa 50: 4. Our beloved sister, we are assured, will prove the faithfulness of Jesus in a special way morning by morning as she receives some fresh impression as to what the Lord has in mind for her, because she has a sphere in which she can still exercise influence as one who is discipled to the kingdom of the heavens. Besides, a disciple is one who has learned to follow. May we be strengthened, beloved, to be those who follow like John. What a word that was of Jesus! "Follow thou me", John 21: 22. That is how influence is acquired, because a scribe who is discipled to the kingdom of the heavens becomes a householder, that is, a man with a sphere of influence. Our beloved brother peculiarly shone as one who in his own quiet way had a sphere of influence in which the Lord maintained him; in spite of physical limitations the influence remained, not becoming greater through assembly crises, but its effect becoming more noticeable as a result of them. How thankful we are for men and women of God who remain steady in their influence for good! May all our influence be increasingly for good. A

scribe is a good man. Ezra, in the time of recovery, is referred to as "a ready scribe" and "an accomplished scribe" Ezra 7: 6,12. Let us be those who are accurate because we love the truth and have a right influence in relation to the maintenance of the truth amongst the beloved saints who know the truth of the assembly.

But then, too, this householder has treasure - "who brings out of his treasure things new and old". What a vast scope there is! In the very presence of death we are reminded of a great sphere of life to which we belong. Those who have fallen asleep in Jesus are already with Christ which is very much better, but all of us are soon to be found in this great sphere of life where there is no death, no limitation, no hindrance. It is a sphere in which these treasures are to be displayed eternally, but at the present time it is our portion to enter into them increasingly. A scribe in this gospel would be one who has been up all the mountains of Matthew, every mountain conveying some distinctive impression of the glory of divine Persons. There are many mountains through the whole of Scripture, but they all characteristically speak of the glory of divine Persons. As we get up the mountains we find increasingly that there are new treasures coming to light. Each day brings out what is new. Let us be persons that have treasures, things new and old, which the Lord can call upon by way of comfort or edification or worship.

We are here as those who are waiting for our Master from heaven, and we wait in hope. We wait as those who desire to be following Jesus until He calls us all away. What a comfort that is! Our sorrow is real, but our hope is greater than the sorrow. We joy in the completion of the work of God in our beloved brother and we look forward to seeing our glorious Master so soon: "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is", 1 John 3: 2. May our hearts be encouraged, for His Name's sake.

MOURNING

E.C.Burr

Deuteronomy 26: 12-15

Mourning, beloved brethren, has its place in Scripture. It comes in in the first book of the Bible, explicitly in relation to the death of Jacob: "The Egyptians mourned for him seventy days" (Gen 50: 3) and when the family took Jacob up and buried him it says that there was "a great and very grievous lamentation", Gen 50: 10. There is also mourning which is right in its place and has to cease. "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?", 1 Sam 16: 1. "How long"? There is mourning which is called for on account of assembly sorrows: "ye have not rather mourned", 1 Cor 5: 2. But there is mourning in the sphere of natural relationships of which God takes account. We are certainly here this morning as those that mourn. There are those who mourn in specific relationships; we all mourn in relation to a brother in Christ. Our beloved sister mourns a husband and sons mourn a father, daughters-in-law mourn a father-in-law and grandchildren mourn a grandfather, sisters mourn a brother; other relationships are here and mourning enters into them. We count on the truth of what the Lord Jesus Himself said: "Blessed they that mourn" (Matt 5: 4), no doubt having in view particularly in its setting those who sigh and cry on account of the state of Israel, but bearing also on the conditions in which we are; and we would draw from the Lord Jesus Himself the comfort which He adds: "for they shall be comforted" .

Mourning enters into this section that I have read. Its introduction is remarkable. God is giving commandment to Israel in relation to what they will be in the land and He gives instruction in relation to what is called here "the year of tithing"; that is to say, as we discover from the Scriptures, that there is a year when things are specially gathered up for God, when what is for God is the prime interest of all. I suppose we would seek that that might be true of us in every year. But the person who is speaking here is evidently looking back over a year, in which the crops have been reaped, in which the fulness and blessedness of the land that God had given

them had been cultivated and its fruit drawn out. He reviews what the year has been, a year in which there would be things especially for God and for the divine system, the Levite, the fatherless, the widow, the stranger, all getting their portion; and he says, They have all had it, and "I have not eaten thereof in my mourning". He looks back over a year and says, Not on account of any personal sorrow that I have had has the divine system lost anything. Beloved brethren, we can look back over a year already in which there has been mourning amongst us, the Lord having taken different ones to Himself as He has taken our beloved brother. We can look back two years and think of others that the Lord has taken in two years, and we could look back over three years, as the scripture contemplates, and think of those that the Lord has taken to be with Himself; but as we look back can we say that we have not eaten the tithes in our mourning? that is to say, that what is for God and for the divine system has been fully yielded by us.

Our beloved brother has reminded us again of that great time of victory when Jesus will come for His own, but if He does not come we shall look back over another year from today in a year's time and the question will be whether we have eaten the tithes in our mourning or whether they have been fully yielded to God and to the divine system. I use the word 'system'; God has a system, a blessed system down here, a system that works amongst those who walk in the truth, that extends out to the stranger. It embraces the fatherless and the widow, but He has a whole system of divine operations here; and what the man is saying in this scripture is that on account of my mourning and my sorrow the divine system has lost nothing. Beloved, if the Lord leaves us here for another year, may that be so with us that we shall be able to look back, as many as the Lord does leave here because we only have to take account of one another, in the affection in which we hold one another, to see that according to nature another year might see less of us here and more with Christ), will we have eaten the tithes or will we have given everything to God that is due to God? The man here says, and it is divine instruction that he should say it, "I have not eaten thereof in my mourning".

But then he goes on and seeks a blessing. He has had to do with mourning and with death, he has even had to do with uncleanness during the year; he has evidently kept himself in relation to all those things. Beloved, so may we keep ourselves, especially from in any way contaminating what is for God by what is unclean. But in the process God has lost nothing, the divine system has lost nothing. So he says "I have hearkened to the voice of Jehovah my God; I have done according to all that thou hast commanded me". Then he says "Look down from thy holy habitation, from the heavens". How it reminds us of the way Solomon knew God! (cf 1 Kings 8: 30 etc). In anticipation it touches prophetically the highest point that Israel would reach under Solomon. The man had had to do with mourning during the year, perhaps during three years, but what is primarily in his mind is that God might bless His people. I do not think, beloved, that any of us would doubt that the desire of our beloved brother now with the Lord would be that God would do this - look down and bless His people and the land which He had given them, as it says here, "as thou didst swear unto our fathers". That is, the desire is that, in spite of the sorrow through which we go, God will extend His blessing to His people as He always intended it. Beloved, let that be our prayer. Let us not leave aside the mourning; we will carry it with us - for the time being in outward expression we shall speak of the way we sorrow over our brother, we shall move from that into the more silent kind of mourning in which Abraham rose up from before his dead, and in which Jacob says - with such pathos, "Rachel died by me" (Gen 48: 7); you can feel the mourning in an expression like that. But, beloved, as we carry the mourning on, let us pray that God will bless His people and the land according to His own thoughts. Let us not be diverted by our mourning from entering more fully into divine thoughts. The thought goes back to God's original suggestion, "a land flowing with milk and honey". In fact it flowed with far more than milk and honey. In Deuteronomy 8 there were vines and fig trees and olive-trees and wheat and barley and pomegranates, copper and iron, waterbrooks and springs; it was a land like that. But if you go back in simplicity to God's original promise, you will find that what

He has brought you into is far more than He originally promised; He is able to do exceedingly abundantly "above all which we ask or think", Eph 3: 20. And our mourning, beloved, only turns us back to the God who gives us all things richly to enjoy and, as we learn from Him in this time of sorrow, we shall find that amongst the things new and old are the variety of things in the land that God has prepared for His people and with which He will bless them.

LONDON

31 March 1976

AT A BURIAL (ii)

THE LOVE OF JESUS

G.W.Brown

John 11: 1-5

"Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus"; it is equally sure that Jesus loved our brother, and that He loves his wife, our sister, and her children. They are loved by Him. Thank God, many of us here are conscious that the Lord loves us. He has His own way of assuring our hearts of His present and eternal love. There is no doubt that He is conveying to our dear sister and her daughters His love at this present time in more ways than one; in one way at least, that her brethren have gathered to be with her on this occasion. At the time of which we have read, the love of Jesus for this household was demonstrated in that it says in the chapter that He wept (v 35). He entered into their grief. He enters fully into the grief of our sisters and of the rest of the family, and of our dear brethren in this place. No one else can, but Jesus can and does. But the Lord says, and the Spirit of God has recorded it, that the end of what happened here was not death but the glory of God and that the Son of God may be glorified by it. In our poor, feeble apprehension of things we would say, What a way to choose for the glory of God! What a way to choose for the glory of the Son of God! But divine love and divine wisdom know better than we do. The crowds said "Behold how he loved him!" (v 36). Some among them said, "Could not this man, who has opened the eyes of the blind,

have caused that this man also should not have died?" (v 37). Maybe we are baffled by God's ways in His wisdom and His love. Faith would bow to Him in them and trust Him in them. May it be the portion of our dear sister and of her daughters to bow to His ways and to trust Him in them. But the Lord had said that this is for the glory of God and that the Son of God may be glorified thereby. It meant much for Him (truly He went that day and waked Lazarus out of sleep) but, more than that, it meant for Him that He should go into death Himself that Lazarus might be raised, that the penalty might be lifted from all His own.

Our brother referred in his prayer to the sacrifice of Jesus and to the value in the sight of God of His precious blood, and the value of that precious blood in the sight of those that believe on Him. What glory eternally! How great it is! It shines already, the glory that He has brought to God in His going into death. What glory He Himself has as the only One who could effect redemption by His death! How He has been glorified by His saints, and will be glorified in His saints, the One who gave Himself! But He was glorified that day; He was glorified without doubt in the hearts of these sisters and of others present. Maybe they were onlookers, but He was glorified in their hearts that very day.

It is a concern, dear brethren and friends, as to whether God is glorified in us as a result of what is happening here this day. I believe He will be. He will be glorified in the hearts of many, including our sisters, and it may be in the hearts of some who have had but little part in this glory, glory for God, as bowed by His ways of love and wisdom, and in coming to appreciate the value of that great sacrifice by which God will secure His end, and have men for Himself eternally, and not only in the future but at the present time. May it be so.

WAGES

A.A.Bellamy

Isaiah 49: 3,4; John 4: 36-38; 2 John: 1-3, 8-11

These passages refer to wages, that is, reward for labour. It is affecting to our spirits to consider the labours of the Lord Jesus when He was here, and how apparently small were the results. The Spirit of Christ in this passage gives us light, and encouragement too, because labour is continuing, exhausting labour, the maintenance of what is due to God in testimony, and of what there has been in this very city, and of what our beloved brother, now with Christ, has had his part in. It involved exhausting labour. Nevertheless, it says, "my judgment is with Jehovah" - a great comfort that. The reproaches of those that reproached God fell upon Jesus in the course of His labours (see Ps 69: 9) only to bring out the infinite perfection of that manhood which sustained all for God. "My judgment is with Jehovah" (we can leave it there), "my work" (or my wages) "with my God". This is to help us - I speak to those who continue in relation to what has come in in the revival of the truth which is still current. It is to encourage us, beloved, in our labour. Paul says "knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord", 1 Cor 15: 58 . We are not to be weary in well-doing, for in due course we shall reap if we do not faint. There was no fainting with the Lord. He was not exhausted; the labour was exhausting.

So one thinks of what has preceded us, as the Lord refers to it in John 4. The labours of others in this city, as is known to us, involved conflict, and the enemy was met and defeated on his own ground over a hundred years ago. What labour entered into that conflict! The principle became clear, which Mr Darby said was indifference to Christ. Some years later he spoke of it as the coldest contempt of Christ that he ever came across. I refer to these things because the conflict continues and we stand in relation to what has gone before and continue in it. The Lord speaks of others having laboured. What of their labours? Something remains, continues up to this time in this city, albeit in such public weakness, but it is of the character of the Lord's own labour and He will support it. He will see it through until He comes. All is in the light of His quickly coming. "I come quickly" He says, "and my reward with me, to render to every one as his work shall be", Rev 22: 12. How encouraging that is!

Now the Lord says that He had sent His disciples to reap that on which they had not laboured. "Others have laboured". We think not only of the conflict; we think of the normal labour of ministry and of what has come out in this city. 'From Eternity to Eternity' (J.T. N.S. Vol 33, p.198) was in the labours of one who was personally known to many of us, beloved James Taylor; that dip into time that he referred to, from a past eternity, issuing in glory to God in the assembly in Christ Jesus. I refer to that, beloved brethren, and other matters covered in ministry in this city such as 'The Goodness and Severity of God' (Rom 11: 22, and J.T., N.S. Vol.60, p.171) and 'The Divine Way of Continuing the Testimony' (J.T. N.S. Vol 82, p.90). These things have a prophetic bearing upon every one of us here today .

Now John writes to this titled sister, the elect lady and her children. The children are not overlooked - "whom I love in truth". The subject of this epistle is love, but *love consistent with the truth*. The writer brings in these immense resources immediately. One would commend them to our beloved widowed sister here today. "Grace shall be with you, mercy, peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love". The deep sympathies of the brethren surround you, but these immense resources, John says, shall be with you. The incentive is to be faithful, for this elect lady was to be, and indeed was, a faithful person. It is worth considering the present necessity from that point of view, each one of us, for it is a time of apostasy. There are those who have gone back. I do not speak as critical of any, but there are those who have gone back, and there are those who go forward. There are also those who abide in the truth and in the doctrine. They have, John says, both the Father and the Son, but John's concern is that we should see to ourselves, that we may not lose what we have wrought, but may receive full wages. What those wages are is not stated. John had no greater joy than to see the brethren prospering and walking in the truth. They would be wages of love to John, but his concern was that they might receive full wages. It is put upon us, beloved brethren, in this momentous hour -

so short, for the Lord comes quickly - to commit ourselves afresh to the upholding and maintenance practically of the truth, in every feature of it, and love consistent with it, for His Name's sake.

SUSTAINING THE TESTIMONY

E.C.Burr

1 Kings 17: 8,9

Elijah, in this part of the Scriptures, in some distinctive way represents the present testimony of God. He was a prophet at a time when things publicly in the nation of Israel were in great unsettlement and decline, and the slope was downwards, we might say, in their history. These prophetic books in the Old Testament give us a prophetic insight into the history of things in our own day and in regard of the church publicly. In the midst of decline, in which there were periodic revivals, God from time to time has a man who represents His present testimony. Elijah was such in his day. Sometimes he was discouraged, and often he was tested, but he represents the testimony in his day. There is the testimony of God here still. Thank God there is! There is the testimony of God in the world, a testimony to the fact that God is, and a testimony to what God is. What God is has been implicit in what has been already said, that is, that He is a God who is merciful and gracious, tender and longsuffering. He does not desire the death of any; He commands all to repent; He desires that all might be saved.

Our beloved brother, now with Christ, in the ways of God became an object of that testimony, and then became part of that testimony. If now he is absent from the body and present with the Lord, the testimony is still here. Believers in the Lord Jesus who have the Spirit of God are called on to be here in the present testimony of God. Elijah, in this chapter, was tested. Things had become very small, very barren, with scarcely any food - difficult times, very much like the position of the church publicly at the present time. Not like its position inwardly, because God has never failed to visit His people in giving them food. But, at a moment like this, God intervenes in Elijah's history and tells him to go down to Zarephath where, He says, "I have commanded a widow woman there to maintain thee". In Zarephath God had a widow woman in whom He had complete confidence as to the present testimony. We

are not told anything about her husband. It would be speculative to think anything about him . She had a son, but as to her husband we know nothing. We know much as to our beloved brother now with Christ. We know how he has grown up, and how he has been part of the testimony of God; having been apprehended by it he has become part of it. The energy and devotedness that characterised him as a brother in the Lord we well know. It may be permissible, too, to speak of the energy and devotedness which have characterised him in his profession, which is known to many too.

God does not commit Elijah, at this point, to anything that is pretentious or outwardly outstanding. What He says is that in Zarephath there is a widow woman who will maintain you. That is to say, I have one person there who I can trust to be devoted to the maintenance of the testimony of God as long as it is needed. If you go on through this paragraph you will find that Elijah was sustained in the house of this woman for a whole year (see v 15). Often in Scripture a period of a year represents a complete time, all that was needed. Right to the end of the time that it was needed Elijah was maintained in the widow's house. Externally there was little there. He met her when she went out to gather sticks, and when he talks to her she says she was going out to gather two sticks. Things were not on a very large level. There was no great pretentious circumstance or large company supporting her. It was not even like Paul in Acts 28 who could gather a bundle of sticks - two sticks, just what little there was. When Elijah speaks to her he says "a little water" (v 10), that is all - nothing that makes any public claim, nothing large. And "a morsel of bread" (v 11), just a little, but it was there and was enough. Then "a handful of meal" and "a little oil" (v 12). Externally you might have wondered how things would get through, but in the hands of and under the administration of this woman that God had confidence in, things were maintained and increased. Each day there was something fresh. You might have thought yesterday that things were exhausted by the evening, but tomorrow you find that the little water and the little bread and the little oil and the little meal are there again, and they are fresh for the

maintenance of the testimony of God in the hands of someone in whom God is able to have confidence and whom He is able to specify. When Elijah comes there he does not dwell on the smallness of things. He does not say that things are pathetic in these days. He does not say, I wonder how we are going to get through. He says "Make me ... a little cake first" (v 13). That is to say, Let us dwell on things, within our own apprehension on the scale of what is complete. Let us, we might say, not have the breakdown before us in this widow's house. Let us have the completeness of what God has in the assembly at the present time. Let us dwell on full thoughts. Let us not dwell on history of failure and of sorrow. Enough there has been. Let us dwell on the little cake and on what we may be nourished with as we go on with the full thoughts of God, because the God of Israel says that the meal will not waste and the oil will not fail until the day that God sends rain on the earth (v 14); that is to say, the day when the whole earth is filled with the glory of God and with His blessing. Then in that day, beloved, believers on the Lord Jesus will be with Him, when the earth flourishes in the millennium, as is, perhaps, prophesied of in this verse. They will come out with Him to reign in such a scene as that; but until then things will not waste because they are in good hands, hands that God has identified in a particular place - identified, known of, and spoken of. And He says, I have that there by which the testimony, or that which represents the testimony, will be sustained until that kind of sustaining is no longer needed. It says that she went and did it, and she and he and her house ate a whole year. "The meal ... did not waste, neither did the oil in the cruse fail, according to the word of Jehovah which He had spoken through Elijah" (v 16).

It would encourage us, it would encourage our beloved sister and her children to be such that the Lord has confidence in, those on whom He can rely for the protection and support of the testimony as long as that testimony is needed. It is a word to us all, beloved. An occasion like this is an occasion for all who are here. When the Lord speaks it is an occasion for all the saints, for all men. Maybe some,

as habituated to divine things, would be more familiar with the implications of what is said than others who, perhaps, have not heard of them, perhaps have been neglectful of them, perhaps have turned away from them. But if God speaks, it is for all.

Beloved, in this day God is counting those in whom He can have confidence. He says "Go to Zarephath, which is by Zidon ... I have commanded". Think of that! There is no escape from it . There is no alternative, no choice. God says "I have commanded widow woman there to maintain thee". May we all, as entering into the spirit of widowhood on a day like this, respond to such a command as that.

BRISTOL

14 May 1976

AT A MARRIAGE (i)

GLORY

C.R.Byng

Isaiah 4: 2,5,6

The reference in this section to "In that day" would be to the world to come. This part of Isaiah abounds with references to "in that day". The Spirit of God would give us a deepening impression of the glory that is connected with a marriage in the Lord. There is to be glory in display in the world to come, but what is to be in display then is entered into now in things that are 'in the Lord'. So something of the glory that is to be in display in the world to come enters into a marriage in the Lord at the present time. It is connected here with the Lord Jesus as a "sprout of Jehovah", one of those remarkable references to the Lord Jesus with which Isaiah abounds. "A sprout of Jehovah", or as it is put elsewhere, "the Branch" (Zech 3: 8), peculiarly connects with the thought of righteousness and glory, the glory of a Man who grew up here entirely for the pleasure of God. What life is conveyed by the very name the Spirit of God uses: "a sprout of Jehovah"! That is what is going to mark the world to come, life secured in fulness for God under the control of Christ. And that

is what is to mark a marriage in the Lord, life secured in glory for God.

So as the Spirit of God proceeds in this particular section as to the glory of the millennial time, it is with a view to "beauty and glory, and the fruit of the earth for excellency and for ornament for those that are escaped of Israel". What an increasing yield there is for God at the present time as we get enlarging impressions of the greatness of Jesus as a "sprout of Jehovah"!

Then as the Spirit goes on He refers to what Jehovah is going to create, which is a remarkable reference, that Jehovah shall create in relation to dwellingplaces. The household that is being established today is established on mount Zion, it is a "dwelling-place of mount Zion", that is where it belongs. A sense of mercy ran through the hymn we sang. How wonderful the care of the Lord Jesus in all the details of our pathway, but it is all related to mount Zion, a sense of mercy that keeps us dependent and yet restful. That would enter into the dwelling-place that is established today; may it remain as firmly founded on mount Zion. Convocations, too, are related to mount Zion. It is what "Jehovah will create over every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and over its convocations"; that is, something of the glory that marks the comings together of the saints in the light of the assembly is to be found related to every dwelling-place of the saints as they are firmly on mount Zion. We need to be preserved in a sense of the sovereignty of mercy. I think the beloved brethren in Philadelphia were preserved as dwelling in relation to mount Zion. That would be why the Lord Jesus refers to the "key of David" (Rev 3: 7), because David is peculiarly connected with the establishment of the kingdom. How easy it is to drift into complacency! May we be preserved from it as having a sense of what God is creating over every dwelling-place and over the convocations of mount Zion.

But then what power is connected with "a cloud by day and a smoke, and the brightness of a flame of fire by night". This is not exactly the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire of the wilderness (see Num 14: 14); these things are in mount Zion, but they stand related

to the wilderness pathway, so we prove that the guidance and direction of the blessed Spirit of God enters into our dwelling-places and our local assemblies, and our assemblings, too, in a wider way. Every gathering together is related to a locality and that locality is always mount Zion. What power there is in a dwelling-place of mount Zion as there is this cloud of smoke and a fire. Divine guidance is available in relation to every matter. How many matters arise that need guidance and direction. Those who are dwelling in mount Zion are constantly found as being preserved in that. And thus glory enters into every dwelling-place. There is glory, of course, connected with a woman in relation to a man. Scripture particularly connects the feature of glory with the long hair of a woman (see 1 Cor 11: 15); let us remember that. Scripture says it is given to her. But then this is to enter into the working out of things in a locality, for all this is connected with glory, it is "all the glory"; that is, the whole setting of power and guidance and direction connected with the Spirit and the Lord Jesus is related to dwelling-places and convocations, because the covering is over all the glory. We might sometimes read it as though over all these things the glory shall be a covering, but Mr Darby makes it abundantly clear that it is a covering in relation to "all the glory"; that is, all the glory that enters into these features of the cloud and the smoke and the fire. There is a covering in relation to it, a protective thought, a secluded thought. The Spirit of God, I think, only uses this word in two other places in Scripture, one in connection with a bridegroom and the other in connection with a bride, so it peculiarly bears on a marriage in the Lord. In Psalm 19: 5 it is rendered 'chamber' - "a bridegroom going forth from his chamber". It seems to carry a sense of the protective seclusion of love. The word in Joel (rendered 'closet') is that the bride is to go forth from her closet (see chap 2: 16). Again it is that kind of thought. And that is what is to provide a covering in relation to the preservation of these things in the glory that is proper to God. The love of Christ for the assembly and the love of the assembly for Christ are preservative. It is intended, I believe beloved, to enter into all our matters in a secluded, powerful, covering way. All that takes place in our dwellingplaces and in our convocations is to be in the

experience of the love of Christ for the assembly and the love of the assembly for Christ. This enters, too, into the dwelling house, for headship as worked out in the homes of the beloved brethren is patterned after Christ and the assembly.

Then there are reserves for all the difficulties and problems that may come in. We are not dealing with problems today, we are dealing with glory. It may be there will be no problems to be dealt with, because the Lord may have come before the day is out and there will never be any problems. Think of a marriage in the Lord that will never have any problems. It may mark this marriage if the Lord comes today. But if the Lord should choose to leave us here for a while, our beloved young brother and sister may have problems. They start off with a steady assurance in their hearts that they have a firm place in the affections of the beloved brethren. Let them be re-established in that today. We are here as those that love them. As could be said of Timothy of old (see Acts 16: 2), each of them has a good testimony. We would not say they have a reputation, we trust they have not, but they have a good testimony. A reputation can be built up on history and no longer be current, but a good testimony is what is current and, like Timothy, they have a good testimony, not only in this city but elsewhere - "in Lystra and Iconium". There may be problems, but divine power provides for that. If problems arise, there is "a tabernacle for shade ... and for a shelter and for a covert". There may be heat or storm or rain, things which in the world work on the flesh and bring in tension and quarrelling. Not so in a dwelling-place that is on mount Zion. These problems may come into our lives; as they are faced by our brother and sister together as those who are heirs together "of the grace of life" (1 Pet 3: 7), every problem leads to more prayer, it does not lead to difficulties; and the result is some fresh sense of the glory of a tabernacle for a shelter and a covert. How wonderful is the love and care of divine Persons! May our beloved brother and sister prove it, not only today, but each hour that the Lord may leave us here together, for His Name's sake.

THE PATH

J.C.Evershed

Genesis 2: 23,24; Psalm 119: 104,105

I cannot help saying, beloved brethren, how we rejoice wholeheartedly with our brother and sister in being united in marriage in the Lord. Theirs is an unalloyed joy, a joy of a bridegroom who is prepared even to leave his father and his mother so as to be united with his wife, and the joy of a bride who so identifies herself with her husband that she takes his name and considers for him in everything. That is what we would expect of those instructed in the truth because this word is perhaps the first prophetic utterance in the Scriptures. The Lord said that "from the beginning" (Matt 19: 4) it was ordained that a man should leave father and mother and be united to his wife and the two should be one flesh.

Marriage was instituted in the garden of Eden. The practical working out of it is outside the garden of Eden; nevertheless we have to hold to God's original thoughts. Not only do we find this word here as to husband and wife, but we find in Ephesians 5 the reason for it; and that in its turn takes our thoughts to the greatness of the love of Christ for the assembly. Not only was this verse brought forward in a corrective way by the Lord Jesus Himself as being what was from the beginning, but it was brought in by the apostle Paul in connection with the love and devotedness of Christ for the assembly and the suited fear of a wife for her husband. It is an interesting point that this scripture brought into Ephesians is not in the earlier part of the epistle, in connection with the doctrinal or official side of the place that the assembly has and will have with Christ, but it is quoted in connection with the exhortations to husband and wife. Paul, as we know, says more to the husband than to the wife, as distinct from Peter who speaks more to the wife than to the husband. But Paul evidently had very firmly and strongly in his mind the affection of Christ for the assembly, in that He "has delivered himself up for it", Eph 5: 25. Having done that He washes and cleanses it, making it entirely suitable to Him and He will present it to Himself; then the

scripture speaks of His nourishing and cherishing it. Well, this is the standard that our brother and our sister have to keep before them in their married life. I am not able to say much about verse 23 except that it brings before us again the wonderful truth that we are already members of the body of Christ, and scripture goes on to say "we are of his flesh, and of his bones Eph 5: 30.

I read in Psalm 119 because, as I said, the working out of this bond of marriage, practically, is outside the garden of Eden, where a path is needed. In a certain sense in Eden there was no path needed. God had said that a man should leave his father and his mother before there were a father and a mother to be left. It shows how original that thought was with God, that husband and wife should be one. And it is our desire that our brother and sister together might be able to take up and answer, as one, to what is in these two verses. This Psalm is exceedingly interesting and important. It sets out the experiences of one in whose heart the law of God was. We would not take it up now as being exactly a law placed within us to be kept as a law, but I believe we can say of both our brother and our sister that they have in their hearts a deep desire to be pleasing to the Lord, to maintain every divine principle in their conduct and home and to be a support to the testimony of God. So that whatever the future may be, they would now be able to say that "From thy precepts I get understanding". One cannot differentiate too well between the various features in the psalm, but I believe the 'precepts' would suggest the whole range of teaching, not only in word, but also by example of those who have gone before. This our brother and sister have richly enjoyed, both in their homes and in assembly life. The maintenance of those things which Paul, writing in the last days, spoke of as the "good teaching" and "my teaching" and the "faithful teaching" - things that had been seen in him in practice - would all come under this heading of precepts, and "From thy precepts I get understanding". Then the psalmist does not say 'therefore I avoid every false path'. I think this is an important point for all of us. That would be right, of course, and it must be right to avoid every false path, but he says 'I hate': "I hate every false

path". That is not only righteousness but the working out of holiness. So our brother and sister as taking this on in their pathway would say that they hate every false path.

But then there is a right path for them, and for all of us, and it is not dark or dismal. We may not be able to see ahead in it, but it is a path that has been ordered of God in which He directs us as we wait upon Him. Therefore it says "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path". I think the expression "Thy word" would embrace the whole of what we know of revealed truth concerning God Himself and His testimony, and His word in testimony, so that the whole of that becomes a lamp unto the feet. It is remarkable that attention is drawn to the feet before it is drawn to the path. I think it suggests that not only is the path viewed as important, but the readiness, cleanness and preparedness of the feet to walk in the path of the Lord are vital. Our brother and sister as married in the Lord will have a path together and therefore attention is then drawn to that. So he says, "and a light unto my path". And that word 'path' according to the Proverbs and other scriptures means a way which is not always apparent and may take unusual turns. Well, we are here to wish our brethren every blessing and fruitfulness in their married life; but then Paul says, and we would say with him, that there are such things as tribulations and wondering what the Lord's mind or direction is; but it says here that the word will be "a light unto my path". Of course, the believer has much more than this writer had, however upright his heart was, because the Lord Jesus has said to us that "I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life", John 8: 12. What we desire for our brethren in their pathway is that they should together have the light of life and the blessing of God in it. In the Lord's Name, Amen.

NOT EVIL SPOKEN OF

D.E.Burr

Titus 2: 1-8

I have been impressed by these two references in this passage, that evil should not be spoken of, firstly as to the word of God and secondly as to us. Whoever the 'us' may be at any time would not quite be the point. We are not saying it applies to those present, those we are in fellowship with and not to others, but it certainly does apply to us, it applies to those with whom we walk. So that we can look at this scripture as giving us a word for the present time, that as far as we are concerned the word of God and the testimony as committed to us should not be evil spoken of. Now all the detail in the passage is to that end. There is much here that we could speak of, item by item, but the point is that we are to be maintained in it, that the word of God and ourselves may not be evil spoken of. Now in a sense that is negative. There is a sense in which it is happier to do things, to believe things, to behave in a way because it is right in itself, because of a love of doing what is right, what is characterised by righteousness and holiness, as has already been referred to. But if we cannot be maintained on that level, beloved brethren, we can be maintained, if we will bear the word, as to doing what is right in order that evil may not be spoken.

Now there are plenty of people about who would speak evil; who would speak evil of the word of God and who would speak evil of us; but Paul anticipates that in his word to Titus, that we are so to conduct ourselves that we should be in our manner of life and our testimony those that cannot be evil spoken of. The word of God is extensive; it includes mainly the Scriptures, but then what God may say at any time. The preaching going out week by week has that character and the word of God is thus amongst us; if it is there it is to be upheld and not evil spoken of. So that we each here are responsible, and our brother and sister as setting out on a new pathway take up this kind of responsibility. They may not have embarked on that path with this in view, but nevertheless, as having

embarked on it, by obligation this falls to their lot, to see that the word of God and the testimony are not evil spoken of.

Marriages sadly sometimes become occasions when what can be spoken evil of enters in; we have to acknowledge that. There are other marriages to take place, if the Lord will, during this year and we do not want them to be an occasion when what is evil can be spoken of. But as found in the truth and as setting out from this standpoint our brother and sister have added responsibility in asking for this type of meeting and in hearing the word of God for the occasion; they have the responsibility of bearing the word that is given and of maintaining it. God will bring us back to these things and we are thus entrusted with the maintenance of what is right and commendable in every way. So that as starting out in this way of life our brother and sister have it laid upon them that their way of life is to be such that the word of God and the testimony, as far as they are concerned, cannot be evil spoken of.

There is perhaps no need to go into the detail; my saying anything about it will not add to it. The passage does not deal with gift or relative abilities and standings, but we have elder men addressed, elder women, young women, younger men addressed. That would take us all in, everybody of responsible years, that there is a word here for you and you can read it, you can study it, find out what it is, and it is a word of direction into a path of sobriety, a path of separation from the world, a path of having regard to the word of God and of being related rightly at all times to the brethren. "That he who is opposed may be ashamed": persons may look for discrepancies, look for a difference between what we say and what we do, how we comport ourselves when we are together and at other times, what any may allow in their homes, and so forth. "He who is opposed", who is looking for these things, is not to find them. Maybe he will find what is right, what is commendable; and as looking round, even though he be looking for faults, for trouble, for difficulties, he will have to say that he can find no evil thing to say about us.

Well, beloved, this is practical. Each one of us is to see that this level of things is maintained and to realise the quality, the sacredness, the value, of what has been committed to us. It has been committed to us in view of preservation, in view of maintaining the truth at the highest level. If there is evil which can be spoken of it is because one of us has given occasion for it. I commend these thoughts to all, to our brother and sister before us in particular, that they may be devoted and addicted to what carries with it a divine commendation. For His Name's sake.

LONDON

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AT A MARRIAGE (ii)

HOUSEHOLDS

D.L.Stewart

Leviticus 23: 15-22; 1 Timothy 3: 4,5

It is understood that this section in Leviticus represents the present dispensation, the greatest of all dispensations. In the previous section we have the wavesheaf which relates to Christ personally in resurrection and all that is secured in Himself uniquely for the pleasure of God. That is followed by the fifty days which refers to Pentecost. What we have in the verses read is the suggestion of the greatest possible wealth that is for God's pleasure and service. The seven yearling lambs without blemish and the young bullock and the two rams for a burnt-offering, along with the sin offering and peace-offering, speak of what is connected with this day in which we have part. I do not want to dwell on the details but in verse 22 we have working out amongst the saints a time of mutual joy and happiness and wealth, the ability to bring in care when it is needed, the heart that would go out to the stranger; and these things are meant to be secured in a practical way in our day .

I think it would be right to say that what comes to light in this whole section, what comes out in this dispensation, is connected with the dwellings or households of the saints. The Acts of the Apostles would confirm the importance of households. The offerings that are to be waved before Jehovah are to be waved with the two wave-loaves of the firstfruits which come out of the dwellings of God's people. Much depends upon individual exercise, but so much depends upon the exercises of our households. It is a challenging word for us all. Our young brother and sister with us in this occasion indicate the start of a household, a new household. We might say they get a good start. The exercise is to maintain things in view of something for God coming out of this household. Divine Persons are interested, and also saints here and in the city and part of the city where the new household is to be; all are concerned about this matter.

Now it does not say whose household these loaves came out of; it is left for every one to take up this exercise. It does speak of

them being of two tenths of fine flour, like the meat offering which refers to Christ Himself, that kind of humanity which is marked by even conditions. This is the fine flour which is to be found in our households. What a challenge that is for any household because all of us would have to admit and confess that things in households tend at times to be somewhat uneven. The fine flour of the oblation was priestly food and that is the kind of food, speaking of Christ in manhood, that is to be found in an exercised household. It would be the result of discarding the features of every other kind of man and giving Christ His true place. So there needs also to be the action of the fire to nullify the working of the leaven of sin.

This brings home to us the need for knowing how to conduct one's house. This section in 1 Timothy 3, dealing with overseers and ministers, is a word to the head of the house. There is a double reference in this chapter to "conducting his own house well". The Lord is greatly interested in how our houses are conducted. It requires strength and manhood and grace and wisdom and patience, all this and more enters into it; but the great thing that the apostle is setting before us is to conduct one's house well. Our brother needs to take this on. There are young people here, and a time like this reminds us of taking on responsibility. It makes a tremendous difference in a young brother's life when he faces up to things and takes on responsibility, becomes a man, has "done with what belonged to the child" (1 Cor 13: 11) and begins to develop in manhood according to God, manhood that would conduct the house according to God's thought. What a thing it is to have such a house in this scene, with all the deterioration that marks things in this world. The apostle's concern here is about conducting one's house well, and knowing how to do it. The Lord as Head is ever available as the source of wisdom and help. This chapter speaks about the assembly of God, and about taking care of it down here, and the great concern of all our hearts would surely be to have part in this. The exercise of conducting one's own house and doing it well is indicated as the way of real progress in this. It was said of the Lord Jesus when He was here, "He does all things well" (Mark 7: 37); and

He would have us all, and He would have our young brethren start from to-day, to take on responsibility and have things done well in regard of the house, for His Name's sake.

THE STANDARD

L.A.Barlow

John 2: 1,2; 9,10; Ephesians 5: 28-33

An occasion like this would impress us with the detailed consideration that God has in relation to each of us. It reminds us of the second chapter of Genesis, God taking account of the man that He had made, assessing his need and setting Himself to meet it. May we have a deeper sense of the blessedness of the God with whom we have to do, able to assess our individual need even before we may understand it for ourselves; and in wonderful grace setting out to meet God desires to bless men abundantly, but He intends to do it as securing His rightful place amongst them. Our brother has spoken of the conditions around us. It is sobering to read the scriptures in Matthew's gospel that refer to marriage feasts because connected with each is a certain solemn touch. The Lord speaks about the king, a type of God, who invited persons to a marriage feast and they started to make excuses, their land and their commerce was more important than having part in the greatest things that he had to offer. One person who did go into that marriage feast went in on his own terms without having on the wedding garment provided. Later on in that gospel the Lord Jesus refers to the coming of the Son of man and likens it to the days of Noe when they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. What is common to each reference is that God is left out of men's calculations. What He has provided and what He offers in Christ on high and the power and presence of the Spirit here is despised and rejected; it is alas the days in which we live. What an encouragement it is therefore that John's gospel was written for our day too, and that our beloved young brother and sister have determined that the Lord should have a part in this day - a day that rightly is marked for them by natural joy. Our desires would surely be that as they have started is the way in which they may find grace to continue; that is to say, providing every opportunity for the Lord Jesus to come in. It is not that He has to come; the blessed part is

that He loves to come to His own. All through John's gospel you have these movements of this blessed Man; and whilst it is a book that is marked by what is immensely profound, yet it is full of beautiful touches of His love. The Lord never delays, though He may wait as He did on the occasion of the death of Lazarus, but that only brought out the glory and divine sympathy of the Person who was there: it says "Jesus wept". On another occasion as He was leaving His own, He looked round upon them and seeing their countenances were downcast at the thought of His leaving them He said "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe on God, believe also on me", John 14: 1. Oh that we might believe on Him beloved, that our hearts might be stirred to the glorious reality that there is a Person above on whom we can believe. There are many persons who believe in Jesus; oh that we might all be those who believe on Jesus, that is that He becomes the object of our hearts. He will take as much room as you or I are prepared to give Him, but when He comes in it is that He intends in a blessed way to dominate. The secret of abiding and lasting happiness is in simple faith that makes room for this glorious Person to come in in relation to every one of our circumstances, and allows Him to take full and complete control. He loves to do so He loves to bring in with His own touch what He alone can give. He comes in such a way that He leaves a fresh sense of the blessedness and the greatness of Himself. Oh that our hearts might be filled with Him! Whilst it is a happy occasion for our beloved brother and sister, may it also be for each one of us as we experience what it is to taste what is spiritual and is lasting and abiding.

That is really what came in on that occasion at Cana. He manifested His glory and His disciples believed on Him. One of the benefits of being a little bit older is that you were once younger, so you know something of the feelings that may enter into the hearts of young persons. With some of us there was a tendency to think that what is spiritual appeared to put a damper on other pleasant things. The truth is far otherwise for, in fact, it adds its own lustre to what is rightly natural which the latter of itself cannot possibly afford. Oh

that our brother and sister and all of us might be encouraged therefore to set ourselves for what is spiritual. Becoming spiritual is not all that difficult really, it is simply a matter of giving room to the Spirit and yielding to the rights of Christ. How quickly the woman in John 4 developed! What glorious disclosures the Lord Jesus was able to make to her! You might say, Is anybody ever likely to make anything out of her spiritually? I think the secret was that she allowed the Lord Jesus in His own greatness and glory to search her heart and to lay hold of it; and as we let Him do the same for us we will find that our life is in a sphere of things that is lasting and abiding.

That is what made me read Ephesians beloved. In the beginning of that epistle there are enumerated the things that God conceived for our blessing before the world had its existence. How wonderful that is! God was thinking about us not only in relation to what is for time but what is eternal. There is nothing more restful than to allow our souls to be bathed in the glorious purposes and thoughts of God. There is nothing more stable in a world which is marked by so much instability than having your heart sensible to the fact that you were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, chosen for the greatest possible blessing that the Creator could conceive, involving that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love. The secret of our blessing is that we are to be before God, indeed God Himself is going to be our portion eternally. In the light of these things Paul comes down and touches on every sphere of responsibility; there are more practical exhortations in this epistle in this regard than in any other. That is, as you are governed by what is spiritual you fill out to the full every natural obligation as down here in the scene of testimony. The standard for the believer is to be patterned after the glorious standard of Christ and the assembly. These great thoughts spring from the heart of the blessed God Himself, How great Christ is! In His own Person God and yet a real Man. "I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly", a creature vessel set alongside a blessed Man who in His glorious Person is God - how wonderful to contemplate! Think of the love of Christ for the assembly! What a love that is beloved, and we are called to

maintain such a standard in a world that is marked by the constant lowering of every standard. The standard for every believer in the sphere of marital relationship is Christ and the assembly. How elevating! As we keep these things before us we will find that we shall enjoy the natural sphere of things in a way that no person apart from the knowledge of God can possibly do. God intends us to enjoy all things but He has His own standard. What a test this is, that you love your wife with the character of love that Christ has shown for the assembly. His present activity is in washing it by the water of the word that He might present it to Himself without spot, wrinkle or any such thing. Love shows itself not only in great things but in the little practical details; it delights to render service to the object of its affections. May we understand increasingly what it is to pattern our relationships on the glorious standard that God sets before us. May we see the immense gain of giving room in our hearts to what is spiritual, allowing them to be regulated by that glorious Man. May our brother and sister prove what it is to make room for Him to allow Him to be before them as their glorious object and model. God would elevate and encourage our hearts and minds on this occasion, as assuring us of His interest in us. On our side may we learn to give more place to Him in our lives in a practical way, for by that means we shall find that He has left the good wine till now; for us eternity itself will be an everlasting now.

ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

E.C.Burr

Galatians 6: 2

Insofar as it bears on the outstanding doctrines and privileges of the Spirit's day this epistle is not about the body; it is about sonship and deliverance from law. But I think it likely that the impression of the body was so much in Paul that he could not keep it out of anything that he wrote. He would have gathered from the time when the Lord Jesus manifested Himself to him in Acts 9 that there was something here which Jesus could call by His own name – “Why persecutest thou me?” - which had its own characteristics and his initial impressions, I think, remained with him and come out in nearly everything he writes. It is something for us all to consider how far our initial impressions of the Lord Jesus, no doubt secured in our parents' homes or through the preaching of the gospel, had such an effect on us that they remain with us and that we cannot keep them out. It might be interesting for all of us to look back to our initial impressions of Christ and what He has here. “I think when Paul says “bear one another's burdens”, he is implying the truth of the body as existing here. I think he would convey this to us today in a practical sense. As we take up marriage, as our beloved brother has reminded us, we necessarily take up responsibility; it is inescapable. Things begin to be your own responsibility instead of that of your father, and responsibility will come quickly enough; responsibility too in regard to the affairs of the Lord Jesus here, if not already taken on, will come quickly enough. Often in meetings on the occasion of marriage we are reminded of the responsibility attached to what we are taking on. I myself have felt quite humbled by what is said to people on these occasions. I have checked myself as to whether I was up to what they were being exhorted to; and that would be right - you would never exhort anybody below the highest standard. But scripture like this would remind us that alongside responsibility there is a powerful system of support. There is a sense, as the end of this paragraph says, in which each shall bear his own burden and we

cannot escape that because our responsibility will bring us to it, but there is a great system of support available doctrinally and practically. It is available in the body. We do not think doctrinally every time we come across it or feel a need for it, but that system of support is here, and I encourage our beloved young brother and sister today, and our other beloved young brethren who have recently been married, with the sense that there is a great system of support in which burdens are not left to be carried in the responsibility of individuals, although that is there, but there is a bearing of one another's burdens. These things work out in the household; there are burdens that come on the wife, the mother, or on the husband or father, and marriage is an institution in which the mutual bearing of burdens is perhaps one of the most cementing factors. Therefore, we would encourage our beloved young brother and sister to take this up, that they will bear one another's burdens. There will be tests from day to day, problems, times of encouragement, times when they may be taxed with the unsmoothness of things; but they may bear one another's burdens.

Then, beloved, there is in the assembly the greatest system of support that there has ever been on the earth. It helps you to bear one another's burdens. It helps us to take up this exhortation that we are part of this great system in which there is mutual support in giving effect to responsibility. We find that in our local gatherings - the beloved brethren in Edinburgh find it, the brethren in London find it, in Bromley, very much reduced but the principles remaining - in the local assembly there is a great system of mutual support, and you will find it between local assemblies, a system of mutual support; not interference but mutual support. Local assemblies are given credit for acting for the Lord, and are believed in as acting for the Lord and caring for His interests in responsibility as they do so, and the great system of support operates in that. If there are burdens in local assemblies (this epistle is written to a district), the spirit of bearing one another's burdens comes into view so that there may be what glorifies Christ and glorifies God in support in working out responsibility. Paul says "and thus fulfil the law of the Christ". Mr

Darby's note brings out something of the man that he was; he says, 'The expression alludes to their fondness for law' - not quite the expression you would expect to find in a footnote to a scripture, but that is Mr Darby's characteristic coming out.

Beloved, we have been fond of law and become afraid of it, but we are to be governed by what our beloved young brother and sister will be governed by, what they will manifest, the law of the Christ. Now what was that? It was just to do the will of the Father. He had no meat except to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work. The law of the Christ was the Father's will. The Father says prophetically "I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee", Ps 32: 8. Beloved, that law is enough, that will is enough, there is no need for a law of commandments contained in ordinances; He has taken them out of the way nailing them to the cross. All that is taken out of the way that we may live by the Spirit, walk by the Spirit, and sow to the Spirit, and thus acquire the substance and equipment to fulfil the law of the Christ here. It is tender, affectionate; it will deal with evil wherever evil arises. If evil should be creeping into a house, the law of the Christ will see that it is dealt with, but it will be a matter of turning aside to deal with that. The law of the Christ is living on account of the Father, doing the Father's will, finding blessedness in the compassions which our beloved brother has just referred to, in the way in which the Lord Jesus would take up each case that came under His eye in order that He might manifest toward persons what was the will of the Father in relation to it. It may be said that this too is a high standard: as I have said there is no less, you cannot recommend people to fulfil the will of God about fifty per cent or anything like that; the law of the Christ is to live on account of the Father. It is simple; you keep the Lord Jesus before you all the time. I was impressed last Lord's day by the way the men in the beginning of Matthew say "for we have seen his star in the east, and have come to do him homage" (chap 2: 2) and I wondered whether that should not be characteristic of the Christian, that all the time his spirit is that he has come to do Christ homage: not just in the service of God, or at the end of the prayer meeting, but all the time, the

believer found as a worshipper. If he is found as a worshipper he will be fulfilling the law of the Christ.

I refer to this now in order to encourage our beloved young brother and sister that the responsibilities that they take on are sober and serious but there is a greater system of support than they have found yet and that they will go on exploring until the Lord comes for us all.

BROMLEY

12 June 1976

THE CHILDREN'S COUNTING

It seems that even a small creature such as a hen bird is able to tell when every one of her chicks is safely around her or under her wings. Therefore it is not surprising that as children we soon learn to count - perhaps first of all the days to the next birthday! Moses, the man of God, prayed that we should learn to number our days, which is more than just counting them. Each new day ought to teach us some distinct lesson about the God to whom we pray so that we become wise in heart as well as in knowledge.

An old hymn reminds us to 'count our many blessings'. At first we think of these as being the pleasant - and passing - things of life and these would surely take time to reckon up. To count a million pound notes, if we had them, would need several weeks of steady work. But to discover and enjoy "every spiritual blessing" that God our Father has given to His saints and faithful ones in Christ Jesus will take both time and eternity. More important even than this is the fact that we can thus bless Him by giving happy response.

In the Scriptures, counting means more than just telling by number. Paul, on account of his love for the Lord Jesus, counted as loss things that he had before thought of as gain. In receiving Christian baptism he had "put on Christ" which meant that he wanted henceforth to do only those things that pleased his Lord. Baptism really means a complete change. The water is a sign of

death but it leads to "newness of life" because Jesus has died and we know Him as a risen Man. Especially for a Jew baptism is a very solemn matter. One, whom I knew personally, was given a mock funeral and burial by his parents because he was baptised to the name of the Lord Jesus. But he learned to enjoy "pleasures for evermore" in his new pathway.

Even the little children going with their parents through the Red Sea were under the rule of Moses, although they could not know at that time what this meant. So now children are baptised in infancy through the faith of their parents to the name of the Lord Jesus and must learn as they grow up to come under His perfect rule. The name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit tells what blessing is in view for us. Do you think and ask about your baptism?

J.C.Evershed