

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 56

November 1977

Contents

CONFIDENCE IN THE SPIRIT

THE SPIRIT WITH THE SAINTS

SECURITY WITHOUT ANXIETY

THE CHILDREN'S FEATHERED FRIENDS

CONFIDENCE IN THE SPIRIT

Romans 8: 1-15; 1 Corinthians 12: 7-13; Ephesians 3: 14-19

R.T. I wondered if we could be helped together to have our confidence in the Spirit of God strengthened. I think it is something we constantly need, that we might be helped to be expanded in our appreciation of the Spirit of God. Being a divine Person that must be so. The scripture in Romans, as we know, is individual. I think the experiences that we have individually would strengthen our confidence in Him, so that the area He has in our hearts may be increased. It should not always be that there is conflict of a severe kind. There will always be these conflicting things, the flesh and the Spirit, but it would be normal that the Spirit is gaining ascendancy, that we do not always have to be feeling we have grieved Him, but that more settled peace may come into our lives and we may reach some sense of being led by Him. There is "the mind of the flesh", but there is also in the chapter "the things of the Spirit" and "the mind of the Spirit". I would like help to get to know those things better. In this chapter the Spirit gives us power for deliverance, power for life, power for sonship. There is a great realm that is in Him. There are many states of soul among us and I think we always need to be reminded that we are not debtors to live after the flesh. We do not need always to be sinning, but as we have confidence in the blessed Spirit we may be helped to trust Him and deny the flesh, that the experience of what is spiritual may be more real and more blessedly enjoyed by us. To be "led by the Spirit of God" suggests an undisturbed area where He has dominance. Many types will come into our conversation together: the widow in 2 Kings 4 would be one that would relate to this chapter. She did not appreciate what she had, typically the Spirit, as she should; but I would like help to come to what the prophet says to her: "live... on the rest" (v 7).

Corinthians is collective. I just thought particularly of what it says: "we have all been baptised into one body... and have all been given to drink of one Spirit". As we come together may we have faith and learn to have confidence in the Spirit that what He has in mind

may come into every occasion. For myself I would like help about the Spirit's place in the service of God. I think there is room, as we know Him better, to be expanded in our response to Him. I feel the need of expansion in what we say to the Spirit and how we worship Him and think of Him. These things will expand as we trust the Spirit for this reading.

E.C.B. Is what you have in mind vital to us in the light of the fact that nothing we have in Christianity is made good to us without the Spirit?

R.T. I am sure that is right; and I do not know that we always remember that as we should. The kind of conditions we are in, the bodies we are in and the circumstances around us, cause us very often to fall back on some other influence or power. Christendom itself has in a sense shut the door to the Spirit, but I think in our experiences we should come to trust Him and to open that door more and more.

E.C.B. If we consider, as Mr Raven taught, that we do not even substantially know that we have the forgiveness of sins without the Spirit, it would make us see the necessity of confidence in the Spirit in relation to everything that is ours; otherwise we are weak all over, are we not?

R.T. We are indeed. Romans is very experimental, and we often speak of the experience of Romans 7 which is very essential; but equally essential, I think is this chapter: "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus". We would all desire that there may be in us increasingly an area where the Spirit is free, and that the flesh is not dominant so that when things come into our lives we do not turn to ourselves or our own strength but to the Spirit; we have confidence in Him that He will see us through. He came for that very thing; He came at Pentecost and will be with us, as the Lord says, for ever. The Lord's words in John 14 to 16 would come into our time; He would impart to the disciples, as He was departing, confidence in another divine Person. He says He will be "with you for ever" (John 14: 16) and "he shall guide you", John 16: 13. He is

to be trusted; the Lord imparted that to those disciples, that they were to trust the Spirit for everything.

A.J.E.W. The Lord refers to Him as "another Comforter" (John 14: 16); the meaning of the word 'Comforter' involves at once that He is perfectly to be trusted. It is significant that John should introduce the Spirit in such a setting as that, involving on our side the trust that you speak of.

R.T. I think that is very beautiful. What a void there would be in their affections as the Lord left them, but it was to be filled by another divine Person. I think we should remember that, having come so near us as to be in us, yet He is a divine Person and He has all the power with Him that we need. So as these disciples were to be left in a wicked world that had rejected the Saviour, they were to find a Comforter, One who was to bring all that was needed into every circumstance.

F.C.M. The word 'confidence' you have used would come very close, would it not, to the word 'law' in verse 2? Is it that a new governing principle has come into view, replacing the principle of "the law of sin and of death", this principle that relates us to the Holy Spirit Himself?

R.T. Yes, that is right. I think there is a need for teaching as to the Spirit. You remember that the disciples in Ephesus said they had not heard that He had come (see Acts 19: 2). There is a great deal of that abroad, a lack of distinct teaching as to the Spirit and the need for faith that we may apprehend Him, who He is and what He is here for. It is right that we should come into an area where the Spirit has liberty; it is not right that the flesh should always be winning and gaining the ground. It may be true early in our lives and oftentimes later on, but I think we need faith, and we need teaching to see that that should not continue but that the Spirit of God, because of who He is and the near place He has come into, should gain the ascendancy with us.

F.C.M. Does not this second verse give the impression of a divinely-ordered sphere of control and life, which is established and subsists,

and in which each of us is consciously to have part?

R.T. And the death of Jesus, the forgiveness of our sins, has brought us into that. "There is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus". That is something that should come into our lives and settle us however young we are. How many have been disturbed! They are in Christ Jesus, but the light and the joy of it has not permeated their lives.

C.R.B. What would you say as to the way in which the Lord Jesus did things by the Spirit?

R.T. It brings out the beauty of His manhood; but you could say more.

C.R.B. There was infinite complacency in Jesus as He did things by the Spirit both in His life here and in the forty days. That was how the disciples began to know the Spirit, was it not?

R.T. Yes, I think it is very beautiful to look at it in Jesus. The Spirit was there in complacency. There was nothing of the struggle that we experience, but we see in Jesus a Man who did everything in power. The elements of darkness receded, not only because of who He was, but because of the way He did things; they marvelled at the way He did things. It is striking in the gospels, the words of grace and power and the way that He did things. That would emphasise the Spirit and the right of way He had with Jesus.

E.P. So it is moving to understand that He was a sacrifice for sin so that it might be condemned. Do you think it is very instructive that it says "in order that" in verse 4? "in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to spirit". What has been involved to set us free to take this up!

R.T. Yes, the activities of the Lord and His death. As we know in the types the water flowed from the smitten rock. He ended in His death a condition, and the Spirit has come that I may come into the joy of another condition. That would be the exercise here, that we may be in faith and be helped to trust the Spirit, that the dominance of the

flesh may recede in our lives and the dominance of the Spirit be more blessedly known.

C.C.I. Is it of interest that following the smitten rock we get the conflict with Amalek? .

R.T. Yes, and the prophecies of Balaam. That is a very interesting section of scripture. As you say, there is the conflict, and they win it. Like the conflict in this chapter, there is power to deal with things, so that the things of the Spirit become very real. Then there are the prophecies of Balaam; you may think they were a picture but they were not; they were true of persons who were in the power and triumph of the Spirit of God.

V.H.B. Is it not a great need among us, to have faith? You cannot divorce faith from the Spirit, can you? Do you not think that we need to be as free to speak to the Spirit as we would to the Lord or the Father?

R.T. Yes, I am sure that is right. The importance of faith is who it is in - it is in a divine Person. So here we are helped to get on our feet; it says "who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit". That means that there is some triumph coming into our lives as we know a divine Person, the Spirit of God.

J.C.E. Will you say more about the things of the Spirit and the mind of the Spirit.

R.T. I think there is something infinite about them. The mind of the flesh always seems to be going one way and it finishes in death, but the mind of the Spirit and the things of the Spirit is an area that would attract our affections. There is what He has under His hand, as we learn from Genesis 24; the things of the Spirit include response to Christ and response to the Father; they include the service of God, but they include, too, that we are here in joy, we are here as triumphant persons. I think there is room for the spread of these features, the things of the Spirit, among us.

D.J.H. You cannot limit it in the light of what He says in John, can you? "All things that the Father has are mine", John 16: 15. Then,

"He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you" (v 14).

R.T. Yes, and "shall guide you into all the truth" (v 13). What a thing to have a guide, is it not? We may feel very lost in the world, and in the condition we are in, and through the activities of the flesh. So what a thing it is to have One who guides "you into all the truth"! The things of Christ are things that the natural man is shut out from; we are guided into them and they are revealed to us by the Spirit.

E.C.M. "The mind of the Spirit is life and peace", it says. Is it linked with the priesthood? I was thinking of Levi: "My covenant with him was of life and peace" (Mal.2: 5), as though Jehovah would commit Himself to those that are walking in the Spirit.

R.T. Yes; that would substantiate what we said, that there is a need of teaching as to the Spirit, that the way He would go would be life and peace. He will never lead us in any other direction. So as to other things that come into our lives, we can quickly discern that they are not of the Spirit, they are of the flesh. Then we get power to turn to Him, and to come into these things - life and peace - so that there is some stability and formation. There was some formation with Levi, was there not? He was able to do things in the power of the Spirit.

S.D.K.R. You referred to Genesis 24. I was thinking of that committal, "I will go" with this man (v 58). Earlier she had said "There is... room to lodge" (v 25). Is that important?

R.T. Yes. I think that typically she was possibly a bit ahead of much of this chapter. She did not seem to have the hesitation that I so often have, "I will go" was a very ready response. There were very strong natural appeals in that chapter, but typically she had confidence in the Spirit, she was attracted to the heavenly Man, because she said "I will go". I think that is what the Spirit would do, always attracting us to the heavenly Man. But I think in this chapter He brings something into us that triumphs over the flesh. We cannot say often enough, and we need to grasp it in our youth, that the flesh should not always be gaining ground. I often think of the conflict

between Saul and David. It says "the house of Saul became continually weaker" (2 Sam 3: 1); "David became continually stronger". That would be like the Spirit having ascendancy, that David becomes increasingly stronger.

G.W.B. We learn things from Christ, and the Spirit would always bring Christ before us.

R.T. Yes, Christ is the objective; I think we learn things from the Spirit in an experimental way. These things are very experimental; the flesh brings grief, even causes us to wonder if we are on Christian ground; but then the Spirit brings life and peace. The Spirit is power for deliverance in the earlier part of the chapter; then He is power for more than that He is power for life. Life would mean that the normal things of God are finding expression and I am finding my delight in them.

J.M. Is that all in view of finding a settled state of things in our souls, a subject state, in which we can be led into the purpose side?

R.T. Yes. I think we learn how to do things the next time. Maybe one time we have failed and we have felt the grief; the next time we learn it is worth while to suffer so that the Spirit should bring to us life and peace. We feel the suffering as having to refuse the flesh, that is always a test, but I think experimentally we learn the joy of the things of the Spirit, so that it is less burden to suffer; we have experienced the liberty of the Spirit and would jealously guard that; so we are prepared to suffer in the flesh.

A.A.B. In chapter 5 of this epistle we have the reference to the Holy Spirit shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts. Is that to help us to have confidence in the Spirit, in the One who loves us?

R.T. It is interesting to look into scripture and see how much love is connected with the Spirit. As you say, He has shed the love of God abroad in our hearts. I think He has made us lovers. It speaks in 1 Corinthians 2: 9 of "them that love him"; it is connected there with the Spirit. He would develop suitable affections for Christ, and that would be specially seen in Genesis 24.

A.A.B. We experience, too, the Father's love and the love of Christ, but there is the love of the Spirit. It would all be embraced in the love of God "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us".

R.T. Would that be an early experience?

A.A.B. Yes, in order to engender confidence; is that your thought?

R.T. So lovers are brought on to other ground: "no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus". What a lever to expand our affections that is!

R.L. So we would love the Spirit, and that would help us; you would not grieve One you love. He is a real Person. The Lord said "ye know him", John 14: 17. It helps us to appreciate the Person, does it not?

R.T. Yes, I think there is room for our affections towards Him to be expanded. So it comes to a point; it says "ye are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit dwell in you". How near He has come! As Mr Bellamy said, He has come shedding the love of God abroad in our hearts; but here He has come to dwell in us. There never has been a dispensation when divine Persons have come so near, and we need to be exercised to appreciate what we have come to. It refers in Hebrews 12 to certain things we have come to, and this is one of the things we have come to, God's Spirit dwelling in us.

D.E.R. Unless we have known a little of the soul experience of the preceding chapter, the Spirit will only be a doctrine to us, will He not?

R.T. Well if He is only a doctrine we will never come into the joy that He brings. I think this chapter is just as experimental as the previous one; we need them both. If we are in the tunnel all the time what despair it brings. But as in the tunnel we have the light of this, that the Spirit is power to get us through; there is no condemnation and there is a divine Person dwelling in us so that the flesh does not have the ascendancy but we are walking and living and being led in the power of a divine Person.

D.E.R. As we prove the inability of the flesh to please God, we find that God has provided us a new power which is the Spirit Himself.

R.T. Yes, so the flesh never gives up and it will be with us all the time we are here, the same flesh; but we grow to trust a divine Person, and He has the dominance, the ascendancy, in our lives. That is not doctrine, that is experience.

D.E.R. So everything in our lives is determined then by whether it is pleasing the flesh or pleasing the Spirit.

R.T. As things test us we need help to have confidence, that supposing we do not see the way through an exercise, we have confidence in the Spirit of God and can trust Him to bring us through in triumph and joy.

E.C.M. Is that confirmed by verse 13; "if, by the Spirit, ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live"?

R.T. That is a very fine verse; it means that you learn something; you not only trust Him and have confidence in Him but you can always speak to Him and can appeal to Him. I think that would come into "if, by the Spirit"; it would mean that you appeal to Him in an exercise, and He gives you power to put to death the deeds of the body. It means that in that exercise you come through triumphant because of your confidence in the Spirit.

W.J.R.B. The woman touched the hem of His garment and was healed. That is perhaps an illustration; power came out of the Lord to heal her.

R.T. The hem of the garment would be what is nearest the earth, and that would be true of the Spirit. He has not come to the earth exactly but He has come to dwell in the saints that they may be here in triumph, that what has governed us before need not always govern us, what has reigned in my life up to now need not always reign. But maybe at this time we would be encouraged to have confidence in the Spirit that He may have right of way.

C.R.B. Would you say something as to the Spirit life on account of righteousness"?

R.T. I thought that brings us into an area where we can be in life. "The Spirit life on account of righteousness" would involve on the

one hand what was met in Christ. But then it would also involve that there is righteousness pursued in my pathway that gives the Spirit room and liberty.

C.R.B. Would it be the working out of verse 4: "the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us"? It is a wonderful matter that the Spirit can help us to do what is right, and as we make way for that help we shall be preserved in a sphere of life. But it can only be that way.

R.T. Yes, I think so. It brings home to us the sensitiveness of the Spirit of God; that is something we should think about, how sensitive He is! If I am overwhelmed, or engaged in things that are not right, I am shutting out the wealth and power of His service. That is where the need of teaching comes in, that I need to attend to practical things. I think there are illustrations about it in the Old Testament; in the wilderness they had commandments, and the law of Moses ruled. But then at the end of the wilderness the Spirit takes over. Would it be like that in our lives? There is commandment, there is regulation as to practical matters, there is what is right and What is wrong. As we do what is right we make room for an area where the Spirit can be free and can lead us into the things of God.

C.R.B. It brings us into an area of life where He gives us the instincts and the feelings to know what is pleasing to God.

R.T. Very good; that is something that we should covet. We would grow in those instincts and feelings.

F.M.K. Is that necessary to get a right appreciation of the Lord's supper - the Spirit's leading in the service?

R.T. Yes; maybe that would bear on the collective setting: "when ye come together in assembly", 1 Cor 11: 18. I do not think we do that without the Spirit having ascendancy. If the Spirit has ascendancy in our lives we come together to remember Christ.

J.C.E. Do you think that one great feature of the service of the Spirit with us is that He always gives us an objective? He may have to lead us from one to another, but I was thinking of this matter of

righteousness, that He would engage us with that; and then God leads many sons to glory, that would be by the leading of the Spirit here, I suppose, that the things of the Spirit would be brought before us largely by way of objectives that He enables us to reach.

R.T. Yes, I am sure that is right. Genesis 24 shows us how insistent and anxious He is to bring us to the objective. So these things would encourage us to attend to righteousness, to attend to things that would hinder the Spirit, that we may have greater liberty.

J.C.E. And to proceed with that illustration, if His service to us should take a time, then that time is occupied with impressions of Christ Himself, as no doubt it was there; the servant on the journey had spoken to Rebecca as to Isaac to whom she was going.

R.T. Yes. There is a verse in that chapter that struck me; it says "Rebecca arose" (v 61). That would be like coming to the end of these exercises, that we rise up; we are empowered to leave these other elements. She arose, it says; that is where the journey towards Isaac commences. So these exercises here would help us to rise, help us to trust Him. She had nothing else to lean on; she had, as it were, cut off everything else and she goes forward in dependence and confidence in the servant, and how quickly she reaches Isaac!

J.C.E. I feel the importance of it for all of us because we do tend to go on in an easy way. And where there is no vision the people perish. It is important for us to have objectives brought before us.

R.T. I do not think there would be any meeting without the Spirit bringing objectives to us; but He also brings with it the power to reach those objectives, and we learn that it is not in the flesh but it is in Him and in Him alone.

C.C.I. Is an objective view of the Spirit a very important point that beloved Mr Taylor brought before us in view of addressing Him and worshipping Him? I believe he used the scripture in John 14: 17: "but ye know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you". The word 'know' is objective knowledge. Do you think all this means that

we are learning to rely more objectively on the Spirit's great work alongside of us?

R.T. Yes, and His work in us, that He works something in us that has power. We always, as you say, regard Him as a divine Person; but how near He has come and how we should love Him because of that nearness and the power He has brought with Him so that we should be here as persons who are in life and who are led by Him.

E.C.B. I was thinking of your reference to the types in the wilderness. In Isaiah 63: 10 it refers to their grieving the Holy Spirit. Then it says "Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him, his glorious arm leading them by the right hand of Moses?" But then it says, "As cattle go down into the valley, the Spirit of Jehovah gave them rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name". Do you think all that bears on what you are saying, that there is the power of the Spirit that leads us out, but with no intervening history. "The Spirit of Jehovah gave them rest" in order that God might be magnified.

R.T. Yes; that reference, going down into the valley, may be a guide for us. The going down into the valley would be a different way from the flesh. It would mean that the man that is always aspiring is not in the ascendancy there, but there is another Man in the ascendancy. "Go down into the valley" would bring us into an area where the Spirit of God can give us rest.

E.C.B. Do you think that, not only in regard to having confidence in looking forward, we need to be able to look back with a positive view of what the Spirit has been to us?

R.T. That is what Pisgah was. It looked back over the surface of the waste (see Num 21: 20), but I do not think it looked back on the murmurings but on positive divine direction. Numbers 33 is a very beautiful chapter; it says that "they removed... and encamped". You get the impression there that there was a great daily movement; and this chapter is like that; there should be a daily movement in confidence in the Spirit so we come to be. persons who are led by Him.

E.C.B. Does Galatians 6 also bear on what you have in mind? "He that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life: but let us not lose heart in doing good" (vv 8, 9).

R.T. Yes, we might have read that scripture as to sowing to the Spirit. It is a deliberate, definite action, is it not?

E.C.B. So it says "let us not lose heart".

R.T. I think the experience of it would encourage your heart. Sowing to the Spirit brings us to reap a wonderful fruit, and as we taste it day by day it encourages us and strengthens our hearts so that the next time we are encouraged to sow more to Him and rely on Him, would you say?

E.C.B. Yes. I do not want to go on more quickly than you do, but I wondered if you could expand your thoughts about the worshipping of the Spirit. It might help to point us to the resource we have in Him during the service of God, so that we are more fully furnished for the remainder of the week.

R.T. Well, say some more.

E.C.B. I share your exercise as to expansion in response to the Spirit. And considering that the Spirit comes in the first chapter of the Scriptures and the last, we have immense scope in relation to Him, have we not?

R.T. Yes, and maybe the Lord would help us. We normally have one hymn and a thanksgiving, sometimes two hymns, but I feel there is need for expansion in what we say to Him. We so often think of His lowly service, right as that is, because we would not touch anything without Him, but as you said, from the whole of Scripture we can be expanded in what we say to Him and how we think about Him.

E.C.B. We tend to proceed in the service of God from reflecting on the Spirit's service and then acknowledging that He is God, but I think if we began with the sense that He is God and then came to His service we might be enlarged. It is rather on the line of Mr Raven's remarks as to Christ, that He could not be the Man He is if

He was not God. Similarly the Spirit could not be the servant He is if He were not God.

R.T. That is something we need always to bear in mind in thinking of any divine Person, that They are never limited to the condition into which They have come. So even if the Spirit has come to dwell in me He is never limited to that area. As Mr Raven again said so blessedly as to Christ: He never ceased to be who He was in what He became. That is true too of the Spirit. Though He has come into lowly surroundings what wealth He has brought into those surroundings, yet He remains ever who He is.

G.W.B. A divine Person at once produces worship.

R.T. Yes, that is something to bear in mind in all our conversations; we should speak worshipfully. We are not speaking about a doctrine, we are speaking about One who is worthy of our homage and adoration. So these things would regulate us in what we say and how we think. He has come so near us, but He never ceases to be One who could hover over the face of the deep and from a scene of confusion bring in life, and He is One who is going to present the assembly to Christ, glorious. The end of Revelation refers to it: "the Spirit and the bride say, Come" (v 17). What a product of the Spirit's activities that there is a vessel that will satisfy Christ eternally and there are sonship's affections produced that will rejoice the Father!

F.C.M. The very fact that in this chapter He is spoken of as "the Spirit of Christ", "God's Spirit" and "the Spirit of God", though this is a subjective chapter, would emphasise that though He so graciously serves us He is primarily serving in relation to glorious divine ends and objectives.

R.T. We need to bear that in mind, that the prime thing in the Spirit of God coming here was not to help us over the flesh, which was necessary, but to lead us to Christ. That is His mission, as Genesis 24 so beautifully shows. So in our meetings together we should make room for these kind of things to take shape.

E.P. I was thinking of the word at the end of the second letter to the Corinthians: "the communion of the Holy Spirit" (v 14). Would that

be to enjoy what Mr Mutton has referred to, the way the Spirit would have liberty to introduce us into what is ministering to the heart of God? Communion is something that bespeaks liberty, does it not?

R.T. A very beautiful verse that: "be with you all". You say, the Corinthians? Yes, Paul closes his remarks to them in that way: "the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all". We should gather in the light and faith of that. In 1 Corinthians 12 He is referred to as "the same Spirit"; and it says that you are "given to drink of one Spirit". We should come together in confidence in the Spirit as satisfied persons. The passage of scripture before us in a reading may seem difficult, we may sometimes be in depression, and we may think the brethren seem difficult, but let us come together in faith in the Spirit, satisfied, drinking into Him and counting on Him that the meeting may proceed in the way of leading us to Christ, developing sonship's affections in our hearts.

C.R.B. Do you think the Lord would help us to be expanded in our worship of the Spirit?

R.T. Well, that is what I feel. Say what your thoughts are about it.

C.R.B. If you think of our experience as following the Supper, it is as we are enjoying intimacy with Christ in nearness that we are conscious of our hearts being led out in worship to the Spirit. Are we not peculiarly shut up to the Lord as over the whole matter, that we get right, enlarged, fresh impressions of the greatness of the Person of the Spirit of God Himself?

R.T. The joy of union would cause us to be expanded to the One who has led us there, the One who has brought it all about. We did not arrive there, there was never anything wrought in us that Christ could embrace, save as a divine Person wrought out those things that the Lord is satisfied with. Think of the Lord saying "My dove, mine undefiled, is but one" (Song of Sol 6: 9); that is the product of the Spirit's work. The sense of that, as you say, would cause us to be expanded as to the One who has brought it all about.

C.R.B. It would flow also, do you think, out of some fresh impression as to the wonder of what is in the love of God as it finds expression

in the cup? The service of the Spirit must be involved in that; it is seen in its fulness in Jesus, and yet there is the love of the Spirit. So the joy of new covenant relations is all connected with the Spirit and His greatness, is it not?

R.T. That is a very interesting line of thought. As the Spirit has His way, other families are going to be brought in, but in the meantime He is occupied with the assembly, and He has brought divine feelings into the assembly, what is capable of response. Things are going to widen out, the new covenant is going to be made good with others, but in the meantime He has wrought out something in the saints that satisfies Christ.

R.L. John speaks in his first epistle of the Spirit bearing witness (see chap 5: 6), and there is in that chapter a wonderful blend of divine Persons. It confirms the objective before us, does it not?

R.T. Yes. He "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God", Rom 8: 16. It would strengthen us in our walk here; we are not lost, we are not orphans; the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we belong to a wonderful family.

E.C.B. The assembly being the custodian of what God will have from every dispensation would leave us free in the service of God to gather up in response to the Spirit what He has been in the past dispensation - that is in relation to individuals such as David and others - and in relation to what He will be in the millennium. So would you be free to bring all that in, if you could, in addressing the Spirit?

R.T. I think we could all grow as to what we can bring in. We tend to get narrowed, but I think there is a broad field to think of. In the beginning of Genesis He was there; He brought in something for God in Noah and in a renewed earth; He was active in Moses and Israel and David. But here in our time He is dwelling in us, He has taken up residence. How distinguished the assembly is, the Spirit having come! So, as you say, we can look back and see His operations, and we can look forward. Think of the Lord having

confidence that He would guide the saints! We can have confidence, too, that He will sustain us in the service of God.

D.J.H. He has the distinction of being personally identified and identifiable in the Old Testament, has He not, which would all bear on what Mr Burr says?

R.T. It was evident, was it not? Think of the times of the Judges, when men were doing what was right in their own eyes; it was evident at times that the Spirit acted in certain persons and brought in deliverance, brought in power, brought in something that was for God. We should always be thinking of that, that He is bringing in something for God. And He would enrich us in our response to Christ and to the Father. And as has been suggested, the Lord too would serve us that we are enriched in response to the Spirit.

D.J.H. I wondered as to bringing in something for God, if it is not referring back to Romans 8: "those who love God" (v 28). We often refer to that scripture but perhaps do not relate it enough to the references to the Spirit that are so closely connected with it. Loving God would include that, would it not?

R.T. I am sure it would.

J.W. Would you say that the variety in the assembly, brought out in the scripture in Corinthians, is what the Spirit has brought in for God?

R.T. Yes; I think it means that as we come together we are not altogether at our own charges; we do not come together in ignorance, each of us has something that has been imparted by the Spirit. So this would apply to our meetings, whatever meeting it is; as we come together each of us has been endowed with something. And we can count on the Spirit as we come together that things may proceed; we are set together as persons who have been baptised in the power of one Spirit and we "have been given to drink of one Spirit".

A.A.B. Is what you are saying the filling out of your reference earlier to the type in Kings, "live thou and thy sons on the rest"? I was

wondering if it does not bear on the local assembly and its personnel in their functioning Godward.

A.J.E.W. Do you think in fact that the whole service of Elisha brings out the force of the presence and activity of the Spirit, in the sense that there is no situation that cannot be met and cleared to the glory of God? Does not the whole ministry of Elisha quicken confidence in the Spirit in the widest sense?

R.T. That is very beautiful. He uses the most simple of household commodities; he is met with a crisis and brings in salt; he is met with another crisis and brings in meal; in another crisis he brings in oil; they are all things that are there: "What hast thou in the house?" Now as to the passage in Ephesians 3, I think "with power by his Spirit" would encourage us to lay ourselves open for the Spirit to have liberty with us that He might bring us, though creatures, into an area that creatures can never comprehend.

E.C.B. Do you think we learn what it is to be strengthened in this way as we begin to walk in newness of life? He was raised from "the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life", Rom 6: 4. It is the same glory, is it not, that raised Christ from the dead that according to chapter 1 of this epistle is towards us and now is in us? Is confidence in this strengthening by the power of the Spirit necessary to enable us to understand being filled to all God's fulness?

R.T. I am sure it is, because how could we stand in such an area? How could you locate yourself? Breadth and length and depth and height: how could you find your place in such an area? It is only as you are strengthened with power by His Spirit. We may feel lost in these things but I think we should give ourselves to the Spirit that we may be at home in them.

E.C.B. The expression "ye may be filled... to all the fulness of God" may baffle us somewhat, but if we are filled with the Spirit according to a later chapter of this epistle, and strengthened with His power, we would begin to understand it, would we not?

R.T. I am sure we would. Although we will never fully understand it we have all of us experienced something of it sometime. And experience should be to encourage us to make more room for it. We have experienced Romans 8, the triumph of the Spirit over the flesh; now we are come into this area; it is the same Spirit but He is at home, in normal surroundings you may say, strengthening us, the Father giving strengthening through His Spirit in the inner man. This is not the outward man, it is the inner man, something that is in us that is of God, that is pleasing to God, finding its home in an area that is creature but belongs to God.

J.C.E. Do you think we need to identify the inner man as something that is complete with us? I was thinking of Paul's desire that the "whole spirit, and soul, and body" should be preserved, 1 Thess 5: 23. I wondered whether we needed to see that that is what is in mind here, that there should be a complete surrendering, spirit, soul and body.

R.T. He takes over, does He not? Think of the Spirit of God having dominance. He has dominance in this area and is strengthening the saints that they "may be fully able to apprehend " "breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ".

J.C.E. What I meant was that it is not just something partial within us. We speak of the work of God in us, but I think this word 'inner man' is intended to be the whole of the person held available for this.

R.T. It is something substantial. As we respond to the Spirit on the Lord 's day we would think of this. What sonship's feelings He is going to promote in our affections! What sonship's joys He raises in our hearts that is causing delight to the Father!

S.D.K.R. It says in Ezekiel 43: 5, "the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court". Is that to be experienced on the Lord's day morning, the lifting up of the Spirit?

R.T. Yes; being in the Old Testament you might think there is something dramatic about it, and there was because of the dispensation I suppose. But we should think of this as something normal: "strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man". He

would cause us to be at home in an area that, we may say, is banned to creatures after the flesh, an area that is exclusively for God and for the divine pleasure; we are there and not strangers in it because we are strengthened with power by His Spirit. We are very much at home.

G.W.B. If we could go back for a moment, could you say what you think about being made to "drink of one Spirit"?

R.T. I just thought that we would be satisfied persons.

G.W.B. I think Mr Taylor made some connection with drinking the cup. I wondered if divine love would come in as we drink; drinking is easy.

R.T. I am sure that would be right. As we think of the cup we would be satisfied persons, full of the sense of divine love. We "have all been given to drink" takes away any standing that may belong to us; it strengthens us in our inner man, in this area where the Spirit is holding us for the divine pleasure.

F.C.M. Do you think this expression "filled even to all the fulness of God" involves a certain spiritual capability? There was a glorious point in the Old Testament where the priests could not stand, but here you have a company who are standing and serving and there is glory to God in the assembly.

R.T. Well, as we have said, there have been experiences of this among us and I think we would count on the Spirit that they may be more sustained. Formation takes place in these experiences. We begin to realise that this is our portion, this is our home. We have to go back into normal everyday circumstances but we go back to them as coming from this area where we have been filled. Filled! We have had a touch of it and we carry something of that with us into everyday matters. We have to attend to them but I think we will attend to them all the better as trusting the Spirit who strengthens us in these inner matters.

H.P.W. Does the reference in Jude help us? - "building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" (v 20).

R.T. Yes, and "keep yourselves in the love of God". It would be a matter of faith, would it not? And I think it would strengthen us. He is writing about very difficult times but he is saying that divine Persons are set to see us through. So let us keep ourselves in the love of God. What an area to enjoy! I think these impressions that we have spoken of would cause us to be more responsive, more appreciative of this divine Person, the Spirit of God, who has come so near us. Yet the fact that He has come so near should not becloud who He is. The fact that He helps me to deal with the flesh should not becloud the glory of His service, and that is that I might be at home as a son in the Father's presence.

R.L. It is Jude who finishes by saying "to him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory"; it is the divine pleasure in having us there, is it not.

R.T. That is a fine doxology; and there is room for doxology to the Spirit too. I think Romans 11: 33 is like a doxology to the Spirit; "O depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable his judgments, and untraceable his ways!" It refers back to Isaiah where it would seem to be the operations of the Spirit. I think we need to be expanded that our affections go out to Him more who has helped us in such lowly things. May He become an object for our affections more and more.

LONDON

15 January 1977

Key to initials

A.A.B. - A.A.Bellamy, Buckhurst Hill; C.R.B. - C.R.Byng, London; E.C.B.- E.C.Burr, London; G.W.B.- G.W.Brown Barnet; V.H.B. - V.H.Browne, London; W.J.R.B. - W.J.R.Brodie, Ealing; J.C.E. - J.C.Evershed, London; D.J.H.- D.J.Hutson, London; CC.C.I - C.C.Ikin, Southend; F.M.K. - F.M.Knappett, Maidstone; R.L. - R.Lawrence, Maidstone; E.C.M. - E.C.Muggleton, Croydon; F.C.M. - F.C.Mutton, Redbridge; J.M. - J.Mitchell, Bexley; E.P. - E.Palmer,

London, D.E.R. - D.E.Remmington, St.Albans; S.D.K.R. -
S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon; R.T. - R.Taylor, Barnet; A.J.E.W. -
A.J.E.Welch, London; H.P.W. - H.P.Wright, Gillingham; J.W. -
J.Wright, Redbridge

THE SPIRIT WITH THE SAINTS

G.W.Brown

John 14: 5-17; 15: 26,27; 16: 7-11; 20: 21-23

We come in chapter 14, as we have been taught, to what is collective. We have been speaking about the blessed Spirit in relation to Christ and in relation to man, that is in relation to ourselves. It is a wonderful order of things, of divine operations, that we have been able to touch upon, the Lord Himself having been brought forward as the One who baptises with the Holy Spirit. It is fine to trace these distinctive titles of the Lord; this is one of them: "he it is who baptises with the Holy Spirit", John 1: 33. No one else shares that; not Paul, not John, no apostle, great as they were, shares that title: "he who baptises with the Holy Spirit". Do you not love Him for that? How much we owe to Him! We often dwell on how much we owe to Him in sacrificing Himself for us, what we owe to the shedding of His precious blood, the outpouring, as it were, of that spotless unique life of Jesus. There will never be another life like that. Thank God the saints as indwelt by the Spirit can be like Him, but there will never be another life like the life of Jesus, and that was laid down for us, and He was buried for us. There is great deliverance in understanding and dwelling on His burial, especially when you get disgusted with yourself and the things you find in yourself - the understanding of the meaning of His burial, that God is not looking at that order that you are disgusted with, it was buried for Him in the grave of His Son, vicariously of course. In Him there was nothing but that which was delightful, but He went there for us. Paul says he received that - "I also received" - he is not on a different level from ourselves, he received it. I wonder who told him about it. The Spirit brought it home to him of course, but probably somebody told him about it; others believed it besides Paul, some received it before him. You remember that at the end of the epistle to the Romans he greets the brethren he knows there; he had not been there but he greets the brethren one after the other and says something about each one. Could you say something positive about

each of your local brethren? About some he says "who were in Christ before me". Others had received it, he is on the same level: "what also I had received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and that he was buried; and that he was raised the third day, according to the scriptures", 1 Cor 15: 3,4. I have often wondered why he does not say "according to the scriptures" about His burial, for it was certainly according to the Scriptures. God did not leave that out of the Scriptures, He recorded that He was buried. How liberating, as I say, when you feel disgusted with yourself, to know that the man you are disgusted with, or the woman, was buried for God in the grave of His Son - liberating; you are free now to judge yourself, to confess your sin if it be so, and to go on, I was going to say go on as usual. Why not? Our usual occupation should be the pursuit of what is pleasing to God. If Satan should trip us up the point is to judge it, to be free of it, to be in liberty with God.

In this 14th chapter the Lord Himself says "If ye love me, keep my commandments". Most of John's gospel is anticipative, he is looking forward to what is developed through Paul, looking forward to the assembly. Things begin with Jesus and develop by Him through Paul's ministry. He is addressing Himself to us in our own localities: "keep my commandments". I hope we are continually exercised about keeping His commandments. Rightly regarding other assemblies, rightly regarding one another in our own assembly, loving one another, that is all part of His commandment; but I suppose we are concerned as to order - not that we do not slip up as to order sometimes - but order is not the only thing although it is very important. The rights of Christ in the assembly, in this assembly and in the next one and each one, everyone, we should have regard for them. It is comparatively easy to talk about loving the Lord and meaning not very much by it. What do we mean by it? You say you love Him as your Saviour; thank God, so do I! I suppose we always shall love Him. It is easy to sit back and say that, and think there is some virtue attaching to us because we say that. What He says is "If ye love me" not merely say so; "keep my commandments"; that is a bit more challenging. Then He says "And I will beg the Father, and

he will give you another Comforter". In this section He is speaking about His going away, leaving the earth where He had been with them. They would be feeling it, missing Him because they loved Him. So He says "If ye love me, keep my commandments", that is while I am away, "And I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth". We are not lacking, the truth is here still, all that came out in the Lord Jesus is maintained here by the Spirit. The Spirit is not incarnate, He is indwelling the saints, and the truth is maintained and has been maintained since Jesus went on high, maintained by the Spirit in the saints, "another Comforter", down to the present time. What ravages there have been, even in our own day! What success the enemy has had in our own times! How well it is known to the brethren in these parts as in the parts from which we come! But the truth is maintained, continuing because the Comforter is here, abiding with us for ever. If I fall out, God forbid; if all here fell out, not that I anticipate that, the truth will be maintained in someone, and the Spirit will not leave us. A beloved brother used to say years ago that the Spirit never leaves the believer even though he gets old or weak, or even if his mind should fail; He is with us for ever. We can cling to that. One Person's word we can all put our faith in, on the word of the Lord Jesus; He said that the Spirit will abide with you for ever. Believe that, hold to that, cling to it. He has never made a mistake, He has never failed to keep His promise and never will. The Spirit of truth, thank God, will maintain the truth. What a privilege to have part in the maintenance of the truth! I know it is not always easy; it comes down to our relations with one another. The maintenance of the truth sometimes means that there is embarrassment between brethren, but the Spirit of truth would maintain the truth. The case of Paul and Peter would illustrate that I think. Peter, I suppose like all of us, got his eye off the Lord and for the moment he was more concerned about his reputation as an apostle greatly esteemed. The Spirit says in the list of the twelve, "first Peter". You see what a place he had among the brethren. Then after having to do with gentiles certain very strict Jews came along, brethren, but Jews, and he just thought of their natural susceptibilities, thought he had better

be careful how he moved. Paul saw through it, saw the danger, and he withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed. How embarrassing you say, these two greatly honoured men! Peter who had known the Lord on earth and had such a place in the testimony; Paul too of course greatly honoured among the brethren, but he withstood Peter to the face because, as he says afterwards, he was to be blamed. But the truth was maintained; thank God for that! So it must be, dear brethren, the truth must be maintained at all costs. Shall we say it again? That persons are never the issue, the truth is the issue, let us not forget it; and let us remember too that God is no respecter of persons. We respect one another rightly, but the truth is to prevail among us, the Spirit of truth is with us and He will help us to do so however fearful you may be of upsetting someone. Another word is that everything that is to be done is done in love. Love considers for God first. It does consider for the brethren, you can underline it as much as you like, but love considers first for God, then for the brethren.

Then the Lord says "whom the world cannot receive because it does not see him nor know him". You see: the world could have received Jesus, they could see Him, they said they knew Him, they said they knew His family, His mother is with us, His brethren, we know all their names; where did this man get this learning from? We know how He was brought up. And they decided to reject Him. They could have received Him but they decided to reject Him. Now He is gone and the Spirit is come and the world cannot receive Him. Let us keep that in mind, let the younger brethren keep that in mind, the world cannot receive Him, "but ye know him, for he abides with you and shall be in you". What promises these are! The Lord in this gospel speaks anticipatively. What the disciples had in the presence of the Lord who can say? Who could measure its worth and value? Who could say what power was afforded to them while He was with them? But He is anticipating going away and the Spirit being with us instead, the Spirit down here as a Comforter, as a companion to the saints collectively; He is with us individually with all the benefit that that is to us but He is with us collectively, and if we have not a sense

of that we are very poor spiritually indeed. Of course it means that the Lord has His right place, that His commandment is recognised, His commandment through Paul. Fancy persons saying, Well, that is only Paul. They would not know the presence of the Comforter; they might have good bright believers' meetings but would not know the presence of the Comforter.

In chapter 15 the Lord says, "But when the Comforter is come" - He Himself would have gone - "whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth "who goes forth from with the Father". There are both sides; He "goes forth" and "I will send." How the Lord should be magnified in our hearts as the One "who baptises with the Holy Spirit". But here He says "whom I will send". Peter enlarges on it; he says that the Lord Jesus glorified received from the Father the promise of the Spirit. Joel prophesied about it long before: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh", chap 2: 28. Peter can explain that rightly on the day of Pentecost. Now here the Lord Himself is saying when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father"; that is where the Lord is now with the Father, and He sent the Spirit from there, "the Spirit of truth who goes forth": that is His own dignity; "from with the Father", that is where the Spirit of God has come from. Is not that wonderful that He who has taken up His abode in us is gone "forth from with the Father"? I suppose you could not say in the same way that the Lord Jesus came forth from with the Father; He came from God and went to God; but He says that about the Spirit who has come and "taken his abode in us"; as the apostle James says (chap 4: 5) (we are thankful to him for that word, I love his expression). The Spirit has come forth from with the Father": all that the Father is and feels is so well known to the Spirit, and Jesus was there when He came forth. Then the Lord says "he shall bear witness concerning me"; that is, He will tell you what the Father thinks about Me, because He goes forth from with the Father when Jesus is there. That is why the Lord's relations with the Father and the Father's relations with the Son are known a little by us, because the Spirit who has taken up His abode in us has come forth from with the Father, the Son being there in His

presence. It is not only that we have read about it in the Bible but we have the matter in our own souls; we have love for Him, we love Him as the Father loves Him; as He says: "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them", John 17: 26. We are dependent upon the Spirit for that. These things are familiar to us but the mere familiarity may take off the edge of the greatness of the glory of them, that men should know these things, should delight in them, should live in them, should serve God in relation to them; it is a surpassingly wonderful thing. Then He says "and ye too bear witness, because ye are with me from the beginning". The Lord provided for the special place of the twelve, never forget that; the twelve have a special place permanently, in the foundations of the wall of the holy city you will find their names. Paul has a special place, but the twelve have a special place and it is permanent; "ye too bear witness, because ye are with me from the beginning". So you can understand why it says that the believers continued in the apostles' doctrine, the twelve who had been with Him from the beginning, that is from His baptism. I would say they have a place no one else has. It does not say that Paul's name is in the foundations of the wall of the city; it is the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, so we need to pay attention to what they have to say. John's name would be there, we understand that. Well, if his name is there we had better pay attention to what he says.

In chapter 16 it is more comfort. How they would need it! If you were there and heard the Lord saying He was going to leave us, would you not need comfort? We should need it indeed, but it is established now. "But I say the truth to you, It is profitable for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you. And having come he will bring demonstration to the world, of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe on me; of righteousness, because I go away to my Father, and ye behold me no longer; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged". We think of that in connection with the world, that is the world as a moral system, but I do not think it is only that, it is rather we

ourselves, the conviction is brought to us of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. So we have an understanding of the sin that it is not to believe on the Son of God; we should not understand that apart from this service of the Spirit. Of righteousness: we understand how right it is that He should go away to the Father. Let us thank God that that, I was going to say, is ingrained in us, it is the Spirit's service; and of judgment: a solemn thing but it is the truth that there is judgment coming. Judgment in part will fall on this world as soon as the Lord has come for us and taken us, and He may come at any moment, so judgment may be very near; we shall meet Him in the air and the judgment will follow. It will not be final judgment but judgment, "the hour of trial" the Lord says, Rev 3: 10. Thank God He has said that He will keep us out of the hour of trial which is coming. But we understand the necessity of it, we are not in darkness as to what is in the book of Revelation, we do not regard it as a closed book, indeed we take the Spirit's word for it that there is a blessing attached to reading it so we read it and get enlightened by it; we get pricked too sometimes in our conscience, but that can be put right through self-judgment; we do not neglect it, put it away; we understand the rightness of judgment that is in the hands of God, and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (see Heb 10: 31).

Now as to chapter 20, we were saying that the Lord developed the truth through Paul, but He touched upon it, He brought it out in His own ministry here below - wonderful picture this! Himself in resurrection and His own with Him in affection in the closest way, He leaving them. What resources are His because of who He is! Would He not leave them something? O yes He would leave them well provided for, the best that His love could give. If you are going away for some time you would leave something with the family, you would be concerned in your love to leave something with them. Well, He leaves peace with the brethren, and He breathed into them "and says to them, Receive the Holy Spirit"; not the Comforter now, not the individual side now, He has got them together, "breathed into them" and they were to be trustworthy as having a charge from Him.

That is part of it; I think the other part would be developed through Paul, the power to rise to God's greatest thoughts, His thoughts of sonship, His thoughts of the assembly's association with Christ.

We carry forward what we have individually but this is something more; these four passages refer to what is collective according to the Lord's initial ministry in the gospel of John. His further ministry, development, came through Paul. We go back to John and dwell on what the Spirit has recorded, what is in that verse in chapter 7 (v 39). Think of the Spirit impressing John to say, as he had his pen in his hand "But this he said concerning the Spirit" - the Spirit is inditing it, moving him to write - "which they that believe on him were about to receive". The Spirit was inditing that and John was writing it - wonderful! "The Spirit was not yet", He had not taken up residence yet, Jesus was not yet glorified. He is glorified now and the Spirit is in residence, this is the Spirit's day, it is the day of testimony. The apostles have gone, the witness remains thank God the truth remains in the Spirit, the Spirit is forming truth in us. Let us be subject to Him that the work may go on and the truth be maintained, whatever it may cost you or me personally, until the end, for His Name's sake.

MAIDSTONE

26 July 1975

SECURITY WITHOUT ANXIETY

R.Hibbert

Psalm 4: 1-8

I was thinking especially of verse 5; the note 'f' says 'implying security without anxiety'. My concern for myself and for all of us is that, if we are to be effective in the service of God and in the testimony, we have to learn how to be free of anxiety, free of agitation yet secure. In Psalm 2: 1 it says, "Why are the nations in tumultuous agitation...?" That is what is going on in the world now all around - tumultuous agitation. The devil is behind it, and what he does in the world is liable to be reflected in the assembly. I find he is constantly trying to keep us agitated in one way or another. We should just remember that assembly matters are in the Lord's hands. I do not think we worry so much about secular matters such as communism or other disturbing things because we know that God is over all that and He will deal with it in His own way, but we are inclined to become very anxious about things in the assembly. I do not suggest at all that we should not be concerned, but there is such a thing as being rightly exercised and yet peaceful, so that our part in the service of God and our enjoyment of eternal life, which Satan is out to damage and to destroy, are not damaged. The Psalms are full of this kind of thing. I was looking through them the other day to see how many there are where David is going through this very exercise, being conscious of enemies and of disturbances and yet he finds a sure resource in God. He is kept steady in spite of all the enemies, and all the difficulties. You sometimes wonder why David had to suffer so much of this kind of pressure, which would answer now to assembly pressure, but what is in view in David is the establishment of the service of God, and provision for the building of the house. That requires that we arrive at what you might call a settled condition of restfulness in the knowledge that all is in God's hands. So, as we often have been reminded, in Matthew 11 when the Lord was sorely pressed, it says, *At that time* - At that time, "Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth" (v 25); and

then He says to His own, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest". I remember a very good remark; while many believers have *peace* with God in their consciences not many have *rest* in their souls. That is an important distinction. We may be free of matters to trouble our conscience, and have peace with God in that regard, but if we do not have rest in our souls we shall be damaged for the service of God and the enjoyment of eternal life. What we had before us in the ministry last weekend, in relation to conditions suitable to the house of God, involves more than what is moral; it involves our being with God and being restful in the sense that no matter how things may appear, He is over all and has everything in hand. We sometimes act as if the Lord was neglecting things in His assembly. He is not neglecting anything. He says "on this rock I will build my assembly", Matt 16: 18 - what a fine word that is, my assembly, not just the assembly "and hades' gates shall not prevail against it".

In this Psalm David says "Jehovah hath set apart the pious man for himself: Jehovah will hear when I call unto him". What a sense to have in the soul that one is set apart by Jehovah! And that is true of the assembly, it is set apart for Christ, as the pious man is for God. Then he says "Be moved with anger"; so we are not to be unfeeling about matters and we might be angry. Matters may arise in the assembly that cause righteous anger. So it is not a question of shutting our eyes to things; but we learn when this verse is quoted in Ephesians that we are not to continue in anger; it says "let not the sun set upon your wrath", chap 4: 26. So that we are to arrive at a judgment of things and it is right that we should, and we might be very indignant about things that occur, but then we are not to remain in a state of disturbance. I think, beloved brethren, that there is a tendency to that in over-activity about matters. The Lord found Simon Peter's mother-in-law in a fever; He stood over her and rebuked the fever. Think of the Lord rebuking! He would say to us, Do not get into a fever about things. Martha was troubled about many things. Well, that was all right in a way, she was serving, active, but she was hindering; it looked like a good thing but she was

interfering with the "good part". So there may sometimes be too much activity, too much letter writing, too much telephoning - the brethren will know what I mean. The enemy can get into these things and get the brethren agitated. That is just what he wants to do. We are to be concerned and there is much to cause right concern, but it says "Be moved with anger, and sin not". Anger is a very vulnerable area, if you get angry you are very likely to sin. So we are not to give room for the devil.

Then it says "meditate in your own hearts upon your bed, and be still". What a fine word that is! One minute you are very angry about something and you say, That is not right; but then it says "meditate in your own hearts upon your bed, and be still. Selah". You say there are so many things to be written about so many persons to be seen, and so many persons to be telephoned about, and why would Selah come in here? Selah is like a semi-colon; it is not exactly a full stop but it is a pause. You say, How can I pause in the midst of all these things? You can pause and you can be still too: "meditate in your own hearts upon your bed, and be still". The Lord is very interested in what we do when we are not able to sleep, what we are thinking about, and then that we can be still. Then he says, Selah.

Then you get the service of God: "Offer sacrifices of righteousness, and confide in Jehovah". That is what the Lord said to His own about troublous times that were coming: "See that ye be not disturbed" (Matt 24: 6), and as to circumstances, "Be not in anxiety" (Luke 12: 29); and in the parable of the sower, one of the things that hinders the seed germinating is "the anxious care of this life" (Matt 13: 22). We need thus, beloved brethren, to learn from Him and find rest for our souls.

Then in verse 7 you see the wonderful result: "Thou hast put joy in my heart". In verse 4 he is rightly angry, and now he says "Thou hast put joy in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their new wine was in abundance. In peace will I both lay me down and sleep: for thou, Jehovah, alone makest me to dwell in safety". The secret of it all is the word "alone". It is a question of

turning to God first about these matters. Sometimes we have to speak to brethren about them, and it is testing to know how to talk about things in a way that will not cause agitation. It is a fine thing to be a son of peace. The nucleus of a local assembly is a son of peace. In Matthew it is connected with moral worth, it is a man that would be concerned about assembly matters; but in Luke it is the son of peace - one who would have peace in view, not war. War is naturally more attractive to us. I remember a brother saying that professional soldiers like war, it affords opportunity for promotions; and they may get some medals too. It is said that Nelson, by wearing his official uniform with all his medals displayed, afforded a ready target for the French sniper who killed him. If he had just been dressed like an ordinary sailor he would not have been the target that he was. David refused Saul's armour and went into battle clothed as a shepherd.

We have been reminded, beloved brethren, of two things, and it is my own concern to see what the Lord has in mind in drawing attention to them: *humility* and *sobriety*.

Let us be with the Lord about it so that we might arrive at the experience of security without anxiety.

BROOKLYN NY

12 April 1977

THE CHILDREN'S FEATHERED FRIENDS

I expect the sparrows were the first birds you thought of when you read this heading. They are so common that we often overlook them, but our Father who is in the heavens is great enough to be thinking of them always, as He does of all His creatures. In one verse of scripture the word for a young sparrow is used and when the birds become old and fall off their perches to the ground our Father is still not unmindful of them. The Lord Jesus would say to us what He said to the apostles, "Fear not; ye are better than many sparrows".

On the maiden voyage of a great ocean liner, the 'Queen Mary', a sparrow had flown on board. Later, when out at sea, it was discovered asleep on one of the ship's lifeboats! The little bird was put into a cage and looked after by the crew, taken to America and brought back to this country to be let loose in the air. How happy it must have been to be free again! Actually it had been a captive by its own fault but was nevertheless cared for. So it is with the sinner; in fact it is the very goodness of God that leads us to repentance.

The story of the sparrow reminds us of the living bird, dipped in blood, which was let loose in the open fields when a leper was cleansed. An unrepentant sinner is in God's sight what a diseased leper is in man's sight; the very letters of the word, put backwards, say 'repel'. But when Jesus was here He was not repelled by the lepers because He came for all who needed healing. Now by His shed blood and the running - or living - water of the Holy Spirit every believer can be as free from sin as the little sparrow became free from its cage.

Older children will be able to think of at least ten familiar birds mentioned in the Bible; and we can learn from them all. For instance the ostrich has no wisdom of its own but it survives by that of its Creator. Ravens are so 'ravenous' that they are said sometimes even to eat their own young, yet they brought meat and bread twice a day to the prophet Elijah. We rather despise pigeons but it was a

young pair of these birds or doves that were brought as a thank-offering to God by the mother of Jesus. Again, we may wonder how the hen can count all her chicks when they nestle under her wings, yet the Lord knows even more surely those who are His redeemed ones. Are you amongst the many such?

J.C.Evershed