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Contents

AUTHORITY IN MINISTRY

PRESENT ENJOYMENT

THE CHILDREN'S THOUGHTS

AUTHORITY IN MINISTRY

1 Corinthians 3: 9-17; 2 Corinthians 10: 8; Ephesians 2: 19-22; 4: 1-6

E.C.B. There is much other ground that we might have sought to touch on in these meetings, but I have an impression to refer to these scriptures, in pursuance to what we had this morning, because there is much in them that would have a continual and practical bearing upon us. We were speaking about the place that God's hands prepared, a sanctuary that He had made; and in Ezekiel the way in which God Himself works apart from man, to have a place for His dwelling. Now in verse 9 of 1 Corinthians 3 Paul says "Ye are ... God's building", and that refers, of course, collectively to the local assembly. It is clear that in that expression Paul is referring to something that is entirely from God. He says, God built you. Then he goes on to discuss the question of our responsible actings in relation to what God has done for Himself. He says, You are what God has built; now what are you going to build? He starts with the foundation which is laid, which is Jesus Christ, and goes on to instruct the Corinthians as to their responsibility in that setting. He does not exactly say what that foundation is but deliberately leaves the term that we might see its generality, like the foundation of God in 2 Timothy 2, or as the footnote says, 'it is simply God's foundation abstractly', without specifying what the foundation is. So here he says "ye are ... God's building" - what God has built without specifying what the building is; but I think, reading through the section, we can understand that what God had built was temple of God, that is the place where God dwells, and he is pressing on the Corinthians that their building should be in accordance with what God had built. As we may have remarked earlier, the house that Solomon built he built himself. Solomon's house was not something that God built. Even as to the house of the most holy place it says he made it. It may be typical of various things but Solomon made it, it was man that made it. That is the other side of what God has done

for Himself. I think we are tested whether consciously we are building in relation to the temple of God.

Now the scripture in Ephesians shows again that there is a work of God going on. The body increases to a holy temple in the Lord and it becomes, or we become, a habitation of God in the Spirit. That seems to me to be entirely from God's side. But Paul begins chapter 3 by saying, "For this reason"; and then he has that long parenthesis which touches a very high level of spiritual enjoyment, and he comes back in chapter 4 still carrying with him that the basis on which he was now going to speak was what he had said at the end of chapter 2, that there is a habitation of God in the Spirit. Now he says, "I ... exhort you therefore to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called"; and it is to be noted that Paul comes back to the question of lowliness and meekness.

I have read the verse in 2 Corinthians 10, which also comes in chapter 13 (v 10), because it points to the way in which, under Paul, the building was going on; that is to say, it was going on through the authority of ministry in Paul. He would minister and that would be the means of building, and therefore what the Corinthians had to have regard to was that there was authority in ministry. Now one question for us currently is whether we believe that there is authority in ministry - a very current question. Do we believe that there is authority in ministry? It is not a question, Do we believe there is authority in a particular brother's ministry? If there is authority in brothers sitting here it is because of what they are morally. But is there authority in ministry? If there is we shall not assent to things in the meeting and go away and either not do what we have assented to, or do something different. Paul says he would use the authority that the Lord had given him for building. That is what the Lord has given authority for, not for overthrowing but for building. That authority that Paul has for building seems very much in his mind at the end of 2nd Corinthians. He uses this verse, as I say, twice. It seems to me that he is going back to what he began with in chapter 3 of the first epistle - that there was God's building, but then that there was the building taken up in responsibility; and what helped to

effect that was authority in the ministry which was recognised. It was needed too in the Ephesian setting. But I wondered if it was not something that we should reflect on currently, that the means God uses is the authority of His ministry.

C.F.D. The Lord had that in mind in Mark 13 (a section that has been brought to our attention of late), that in going away He gave to His bondmen the authority (v 34). Therefore as having in mind service - the servant's gospel as it is often referred to - the Lord indicates that there is a line of what is authoritative left here in His absence and in the presence of the Spirit which will be used for the building up of things.

E.C.B. Yes, that is what I think; it is all related to "ye are ... God's building", and that is really, you might say, the pattern of the house.

We would be inclined to say it exists abstractly. But then Paul raises the question of how we are going to build, and he says he has authority and he is using it to build. Now the effect of that authority would be seen in what people became under Paul's ministry. Those that paid attention to Paul's ministry would not try to put wood, hay and stubble into the building; they would say, The Lord has spoken to us about that.

J.A.P. Paul refers to himself as an architect; what would that mean in the ministry?

E.C.B. An architect is a man who knows all the plans, and he not only knows what it is going to look like on the outside but precisely how it is going to look on the inside. (As a matter of fact, nowadays the most high-class architects design not only the building but the furniture; so that they have a sense of a consistent entity). Then the builders come in to give effect to what the architect had in his conception. But Paul has no conceptions that he has not received from the Lord.

R.H. How does Paul's apostolic authority compare with authority in the assembly now?

E.C.B. Apostolic authority relates to something that the man receives directly from the Lord and he is commissioned with that gift.

Apostleship after Christ ascended is not just designation, as it was in the gospels; it is a gift and the Lord has identified certain, some of no great distinction evidently, in Romans 16, among the apostles; they have received something directly from the Lord. We have learned the damage that comes from identifying authority with a man, but let us not, in identifying that danger, reject the idea that there is authority here. That is what I had in mind in Exodus 24 yesterday.

Moses went up the mountain and he said "behold, Aaron and Hur are with you". We know that they failed and the golden calf was built, but in the divine view there was enough authority on the earth to maintain things consistently with the man who had gone up.

C.F.D. The situation in this part of the world, maybe in yours also, is that there has been generally a disregard of authority, I mean publicly; authority in the government, authority in the law-enforcement bodies, and so on. This can easily creep in among us so that we despise or make little of anything that might come to us representing the authority of the Lord. Now what do we need in our souls not only to recognise the Lord's authority but to be prepared to accept it?

E.C.B. The teaching that helps us with most of these things is Romans, because it helps us first to submit to the Lord as the means of our salvation, and to confess Him as Lord, but also to arrive at the end of ourselves and to bring to an end my acting according to my own will. The reason why authority in ministry is not accepted is that it does not fit with my will, so I set it aside, deliberately or even unconsciously, overtly or hidden. The demonstration that I accept that there is authority in the ministry the Lord gives is that I subsequently direct myself by it.

C.G. 1 Corinthians 3 refers to manifestation, declaration and revelation. Now in Ephesians 5: 13 it says "But all things having their true character exposed by the light are made manifest; for that which makes everything manifest is light". Connecting being made manifest with the building material, will you say something on that?

E.C.B. It awaits another day - the day (which is probably Jesus Christ's day) will manifest what you have built with, whether with wood, hay and stubble, or gold, silver and precious stones. Now the building that is done in accordance with what the Lord says at any time has the character of gold, silver and precious stones. The rest has the character of wood, hay and stubble.

E.E.H. That would be the building from man's side; there is so much around us of that.

E.C.B. Yes, in the general public position. If to start with we have some idea of the Lord's building, then we shall understand what the Lord gives all the time, because there is current ministry. What the Lord gives all the time is intended to build among the saints now after the pattern of God's building. So that we are taking up in responsibility what is already in design from God's side.

E.E.H. That is what you get in Romans 13; "Let every soul be subject to the authorities that are above him". There is that in the world.

E.C.B. Yes. Mr Dadd was saying that authority is not a thing that is recognised in the world. Even children at school will not be taught unless they submit to authority.

A.B.P. The conditions which exist in the world are because the light that God has brought in has been rejected, is it not? I am thinking how important what you have been bringing before us is, that we should get to God and be with God, and that what we do and what we are should be characterised by what God forms in us, rather than be influenced by any public condition.

E.C.B. Yes. Let us always keep in mind that Paul says: "not from man nor through man", Gal 1: 1. We are more prone than we think to be regulated by what is of man, even by the brethren as men. I have had the privilege of being with the brethren over here a lot this year and last; do we recognise authority in the ministry that the Lord gives? Because when we are together one is conscious of manifest support of what is being said and of a sense of the brethren being in the current of what is being said; but then afterwards you wonder

whether it was a pleasant song. But it should not be so; everything that we assent to in the meeting we should then put into practice.

Do you not think that?

A.B.P. I do; and we do not want to appear to be going along with what is being done and assenting to things. If there is something that is said that we cannot understand or agree with, this is the time (because it is a time of enquiry) to raise questions. We do not want to hinder the flow of things but, after all, the meeting is for our edification. If after it is over we say that we had a wonderful time but there were a lot of things that I could not understand - well, we should not be on that line.

E.C.B. That is exactly right. Two consequences may arise out of ministry: one leads into questions being asked in subsequent readings, which is profitable; and the other leads to questions being raised in subsequent care meetings which is often less profitable.

Much that we say bears on things that ultimately come out in administration, and we should be sure that, if we are being carried when we are together, we go on in that spirit when we leave the gathering of the saints.

R.H. How are we preserved from reverting to official authority?

E.C.B. Just as I said before, to see that the authority is in the ministry and not in the man. Do you not think that?

R.H. Well, I would like help about it.

E.C.B. I think the two things need fairly careful distinction. The authority is in ministry; and to take an extreme case from the Scriptures, God can use wicked men for ministry that is authoritative. What Balaam said was absolutely right; what Caiaphas said was absolutely right; and yet they were wicked men. I am not saying that there are wicked men ministering at the present time, but the authority is in the ministry. If there is authority in the vessel it is because of what he is as morally related to what he is saying, and that is all.

R.H. Does that go further than the Scriptures? I mean the authority in the ministry would correspond with the Scriptures, would it not?

E.C.B. It would. It has been said that it is very difficult for someone to say 'that is not in the Bible', because it implies that you know every word that is there. But the brethren, especially in the temple (there is much more in the temple than in the sittingroom) know virtually the whole of the Scriptures; it is not that they could recite them but they know, as in the temple, whether what is being said is in the Scriptures.

R.H. What you are saying is very important, particularly on this continent where the democratic idea is so strong and there is a great tendency for each to maintain his own opinion.

E.C.B. I think that; and it is very encouraging to be with the brethren because when we are together like this we find how much support there seems to be for what is the truth. One is always ready to be adjusted, and willing to accept it in the humility of which we have been speaking, but one is conscious, in the meeting, of support for the truth. But then the question is, after the meeting, is the support still there?

R.H. Did not Mr Raven say that light becomes law to us?

E.C.B. Exactly; and ultimately these things are revealed by our practice, by what we do.

H.J.G. Paul says that not only is there his position as a wise architect but let each see how he builds. That is laying it on us, is it not?

E.C.B. It is. Paul had the pattern and the design and none of us would speak now as if we were in any way comparable to what the Lord gave to Paul. We serve in whatever grace the Lord gives us, but it is necessary to keep hold of the fact that there is authority in ministry, but do not claim it for men save as they are morally formed. There is authority in ministry.

E.C.M. How do you connect the Spirit with that authority?

E.C.B. The Spirit is really the authority of the ministry; what is said in the power of the Spirit must be authoritative because it is God speaking.

A.B.P. "If any one speak - as oracles of God, if any one minister - as of strength which God supplies", 1 Pet 4: 11. We should be concerned if we minister that we are not simply expressing our own opinions about things but are speaking as oracles of God; and that, as I understand it, is from above the mercy seat and between the cherubim.

E.C.B. That is very helpful and fits in with "ye are the living God's temple", 2 Cor 6: 16. All this helps us to see that while we may be, I was going to say, rightly critical of the actual state of things at Corinth, yet Paul is able to keep the substantial truth very much before the brethren. Paul always has the pattern in his hand. He goes around Corinth with the blue-print. He says, Look, you have not built according to the blue-print there. He has the blue-print all the time because he understands God's building.

S.McC. Mr Taylor gave an excellent word in New York (the brethren local would remember) on the subject of leprosy. He said it was necessary to understand the law of leprosy, connected with leprosy in the warp and leprosy in the woof; as things are laid out in the meeting, in the assembly, we are fully with them, but when we are outside we may deny them in practice, which would involve the woof (see Vol 50, p.455).

E.C.B. The way you draw attention to that is helpful and should operate in us, that what we agree to in the meeting we will do outside. I do not intend to give illustrations of this, but what we agree to in the meeting we must do outside, otherwise we discredit the ministry, we discredit ourselves and we discredit the temple of God.

J.A.P. In Acts 15, which was alluded to this morning, when the meeting was finished it is said of Paul and Barnabas and others that "They therefore, being let go, came to Antioch, and having gathered the multitude delivered to them the epistle" (v 30). So when we

separate from here, those that preach and the ministers, are we going to say the same things? Paul and Barnabas set the thing out that they arrived at, and they disseminated it with profit among the brethren.

E.C.B. Yes that is right; and no brother that serves now, including myself, will claim that everything he says is perfect; yet you seek to serve under the direction of the Lord. As a matter of fact, if I could comment on experience (and I am sure that other brothers that serve have experienced this too), you might come to the meeting feeling you had very little, or feeling you had thoughts on a certain line, and suddenly you are in the stream of something, carried along by the Holy Spirit. Now that is authority in ministry, and you could not afterwards say where you got it from; you never had such a thought before and here it comes out in the temple.

R.H. Was authority affected in any way by the breakdown? There is a tendency to say, Well, that was Corinthians and now we are in second Timothy.

E.C.B. What difference does it make whether you are in Corinthians or Timothy? You have to face the same issues; 2 Corinthians 6 is the same as 2 Timothy anyway. But it is very important to see that the breakdown has not affected authority in ministry. In fact I believe that to hold the idea that the breakdown has diminished authority in ministry is to believe in increasing breakdown. Do you not think that?

R.H. Yes I do. The same argument is often used as to Old Testament scriptures.

E.C.B. Yes it is. We have read a lot of Old Testament scriptures in these meetings but I have never found them anything but profitable.

Mr Taylor spoke of them as antiques and therefore of special value (see Vol 11, p364).

A.B.P. But to assume that, because I give a word in the ministry meeting, it is clothed with divine authority would be presumptuous.

E.C.B. It would; just because it is said on Tuesday night does not add anything particular to what is said: "let the others judge", 1 Cor 14: 29. But then you can discern in meetings, especially in readings, that the spirit of judgment is there, because you know your brethren and can see the spirit of judgment working in them, and you can see them assenting to what is said.

A.B.P. I think we have been tremendously encouraged in seeing that character of things work out amongst us.

E.C.B. Therefore the need to maintain that in practice and that what we have assented to in the meeting we are subsequently governed by.

C.G. Would you not say that the authority in the ministry is the Scriptures?

E.C.B. Well, it has no authority if it cannot be found in Scripture.

C.G. I would like to read this from 2 Peter 1: 20; "knowing this first, that the scope of no prophecy of scripture is had from its own particular interpretation, for prophecy was not ever uttered by the will of man, but holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Spirit". The note to that is 'it is not explained by its own meaning, as a human statement. It must be understood by and according to the Spirit that uttered it'. Would that not cover the authority?

E.C.B. Yes that is right, but we must bear in mind that Peter would not let you speak in the meeting unless you spoke as oracles of God . If you cannot speak as oracles of God, do not speak.

G.H. You referred to Romans as to authority. It says "Let every soul be subject" (chap 13: 1) and "Let not sin ...reign in your mortal body", chap 6: 12. Do you have something more to say as to that?

E.C.B. Well, one aspect of what Romans is for is to bring you into subjection to the will of God, where you have been lawless, subject to your own will. The law of sin is really lawlessness, and Romans is to bring you under the lordship of Christ, and in a certain sense under the lordship of God. Then you present your body a living sacrifice willingly because in a sense that is the only thing to do with

it; and the soul that has come through those exercises readily submits itself to the authority of God, in the Father or the Son or the Spirit, however divine Persons operate, and much of that comes through ministry; the authority is in the ministry where the Lord is. I do not claim particular authority for men, but I do claim authority for ministry.

A.B.P. Do you think that we are hindered greatly by allowing our souls to control us more than our spirits?

E.C.B. Do you mean that we get into the emotional area?

A.B.P. Yes, and God distinguishes between the two and He intends us to be intelligent. We are not regulated by the way we feel but by the truth.

E.C.B. Exactly. I think that is very important. The companions of Judah and the companions of Israel (see Ezek 37: 16,17) would all be in the 'soul' area, in the feeling or emotional area, but God has set all that aside.

A.B.P. The soul is right when the spirit is right. David controls his soul; he says "why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God", Ps 42: 11. His spirit was controlling him, not the feelings of being downcast and under pressure. When our spirits are right the soul fills out things in such an abundance of feeling that it becomes vitally precious to God.

E.C.B. David says in another Psalm: "I have restrained and composed my soul" (Ps 131: 2), so that all that order of things is kept under control. Now the point of this is that the building should go on consistently with God's building, and what is in view is the temple and a habitation of God. That is what we are seeking to consider - where does God dwell? He dwells in His temple; He dwells in His habitation. The ministry is all in regard to that and should have the effect of keeping away wood, hay and stubble. God is doing something, He has done something, but then there is responsibility. How are we in responsibility to answer to the pattern?

C.S.E. I have been impressed by Genesis 2 which so many times says that Jehovah did certain things; and one thing was that He "built the rib that he had taken from man into a woman" (v 22). Then in the Acts "the Lord added to the assembly daily those that were to be saved", chap 2: 47. Would we see the divine mind here in regard to what They have done and what They are prepared to do, so that we see that any building that has to be done has to be done from Their side?

E.C.B. Well, it does from one point of view, but Corinthians on the other hand brings out our responsibility to build as well. How are you building? It is very remarkable that to Corinth Paul says "ye are ... God's building" . We might have expected that in Ephesians. It was a local assembly where, as we were saying, all was disordered, yet he says "ye are ... God's building". Now, he says, we must have things consistent with God's building. This is almost as if he says, to use the homely example, This is God's building, now we are going to have it spring-cleaned so that it is fit for God.

E.E.H. Then in a later verse he says "ye are the temple of God, and ... the Spirit of God dwells in you". Is not the place the Spirit must have very important?

E.C.B. Yes, but is not the Spirit the means by which God dwells at the present time?

E.E.H. That is what Paul had in mind.

S.McC. It is important that we keep in mind that, in the fifty years of Mr Taylor's ministry, nearly all of it except two articles was given in the light of the temple, the area in which he seemed to get particular help. I think it brings in the importance of the building as in Corinthians: "ye are temple of God". There was a tendency for gift to parade itself in Corinth but Paul brings in the importance of the temple, and Mr Taylor was particularly marked by his respect and regard for the temple.

E.C.B. I think that is right. I trust I have great respect for the temple myself. In fact I have often said there is nothing like a good reading. Have you found that?

S.McC. Just so.

E.C.B. There is nothing like a good reading, where the brethren are active and the truth flowing and scriptures are coming up and everything is active.

S.McC. It is not only that all the brethren are stimulated by it but the one who is serving is stimulated by it.

E.C.B. Greatly; so you get the sense of the building going on. What Mr Hoyte calls attention to is important and touches something you referred to before: "the Spirit of God dwells in you". I wonder whether we sufficiently realise that the Spirit is God, or whether the idea of the Spirit seems to convey something to us a little different. But the Spirit is God and is the means by which God is in us now.

R.C.McD. There seems to be a connection with the sheet let down from heaven. Peter had his own mind about things but it was not the Lord's mind; and if He could not find a Peter He would find a Paul.

E.C.B. Yes, but I think that Peter was quickly adjusted on a lot of things, and the Spirit quickly got a lot of wood, hay and stubble out of Peter's mind, showing him the kind of material God was going to build with, a lot of it to Peter's mind unlikely. Paul says later that he awaits "a building from God" (2 Cor 5: 1); that is personal. But "ye are ... God's building": you can experience now what you are waiting for.

C.G. It has been said that there are three factors involved in building: the foundation, the material and the specifications. We have the foundation here and the material; would you say something about the specifications and where they originate.

E.C.B. They originate with God and that is the thought of the architect; he knows all about the specifications. Read the rest of Paul's epistles. Ephesians brings out that God has His building; He has a house, a household, a habitation. A habitation is the general sense of a dwelling-place: "ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit". Now that bears on what we were just saying, that the Spirit is God. There is that now which exists and God built it.

We do not build anything in Ephesians 2; God builds. After all, we were dead in our offences and sins so we could not do much then.

But if God has that, what kind of people ought you to be? Well you ought to walk worthy of that "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love; using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace".

A.B.P. This is after the two sticks have been made one, is it not?

E.C.B. It is certainly after that; it is after alien sticks have been brought in as well.

A.B.P. Those that are near and those that are afar off.

E.C.B. Yes, but the two sticks in Ezekiel are both Jewish, are they not?

A.B.P. Well, they are; but I was thinking of the middle wall of partition being broken down, Jew and gentile made into one. That is connected with the mystery, is it not?, which is a very high level.

E.C.B. Yes. We were touching in London in Colossians on "this mystery ... which is Christ in you"; that is one thing. Then having learned that mystery you have to go on to the mystery, because you cannot learn the mystery until you have learned that Christ can be among the nations. "The riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations", I think, has to be learned before you can understand the mystery, which is the assembly.

A.B.P. Would you clarify my mind a little please. I had the impression that, in a sense, those that were afar off were like the ten tribes that were lost and those that were near like Judah who were recovered from Babylon. I know that it refers to Jew and gentile but I thought that you had the elements carried forward in relation to the two sticks being made one.

E.C.B. Well, I am sure that the application of scripture would bear that out. But what God has in His habitation now is the result of that; and there is a habitation of God in the Spirit. That is something entirely from God; it is not a thing that man has made. But Paul says, therefore you are to walk worthy of it.

A.B.P. So that through Christ and by the Spirit we both have access to the Father. It is one action is it not?

E.C.B. It is one action. If one could use the expression (I know doctrinally it does not quite fit), it is the new man, something that is not what either was before.

A.B.P. Exactly. I think therefore that in these issues that arise, when they become settled, neither will be just the same as they were before.

E.C.B. May I say, I hope not.

R.H. Would you say how we can recognise authority in ministry.

E.C.B. In principle we can recognise it because the Spirit in us responds to it. Now it may be we all find difficulty in taking on the ministry, especially when in effect what is said is something that we do not really agree with. Then there is that struggle between the Spirit and ourselves, and the Spirit should prevail; but as long as there is something in me recognising that what was said was of the Lord, then there has been something in me that could identify authoritative ministry; but what rejects it is what my personal preference would have. Do you not think that?

R.H. Yes; but I was thinking about what Mr Taylor said, that the only authority now is moral (see Vol.69, p.87).

E.C.B. Yes that is right, the only authority in man is moral. The Lord has authority, and that is still here.

G.T.McC. Is it not a Berean principle; that is, that we accept things with readiness of mind? Then we have access to the Scriptures ourselves to search it out if we are in doubt.

E.C.B. If we are in doubt; but then we should not have assented to it in the meeting if we are in doubt.

G.T.McC. Inquiry confirms the thing; otherwise we are in danger of falling into what is clerical and congregational, are we not?

E.C.B. Well we are, but in the temple you can feel (I speak humbly as to these things, I am not claiming anything for myself, I just

happen to be serving here) that what is being said carries the brethren. Now, how far will it carry them? to the door? or to the next care meeting? How far will it carry them? That is the question. And that will show whether what was said has authority over the brethren, because it works with the Spirit in them. Do you think that?

G.T.McC. Yes I do, and I think that puts us back on to a readiness of mind; in fact what you began with, lowliness and a contrite heart, whether we are prepared for that. Sometimes we are not.

E.C.B. Sometimes we are not. And, of course, we being the kind of people we are, one of the most difficult things for us is to indicate to anybody that we have changed our mind - a terribly difficult process. But this is a system of things operating here, which prepares the way to the city of refuge (you remember how Mr Taylor spoke of the cities of refuge in Deuteronomy - see Vol 32, p.363) and there is a system of things operating among the saints which makes it easy for someone to 'come round' as we say, and indicate afterward that they do now see things differently. There is a great deal of inherent obstinacy in human nature and it does not like to say that it has not been quite right heretofore, but Mr Parker told the brethren once (I was there) that the prophet would even tell you what words to use. You told the brethren that in Buckie, do you remember?

A.B.P. I said it in so many places, I do not remember just where.

E.C.B. Well, if you said that in so many places you will be able to help the brethren as to how to express themselves if they find they are thinking differently from what they may have been saying for a long time.

S.McC. It helps to see, in Ephesians 4, that all ministry that is of God flows from the ascended Christ who is in the place of authority. It may work out, in the power of the Spirit, in vessels here below, but it is proceeding from the One who is in the place of authority.

E.C.B. Yes and that is the basis on which we would recognise that there is authority in it. Now Paul is able to say "I give my opinion" (1 Cor 7: 25) and that is scripture, and it is authoritative. Now I do not think any of us is going to say, I give my opinion, and that is

authoritative; but you find that what we arrive at in the temple has authority with it, and you can tell, in the temple, that it has authority because of the way it carries the brethren. But what concerns me is how long the effect of that lasts after we separate.

A.B.P. The effect after the meeting is probably suggested in the word about the man who had the vineyard and told his two sons to go and work in it (see Matt 21: 28). One said "I will not"; the other one said "I go", assenting to everything that was said, but he did not go. The first one was probably like Paul's exhortation: "Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things", 2 Tim 2: 7. Do you think that bears on it?

E.C.B. Yes I do, and the great thing about the person who actually did the will of his father is that he never said anything; he never made a public confession or anything like that. It would be interesting to watch his actions, they were different.

G.H. You used the word 'moral' in relation to authority; what did you have in mind?

E.C.B. Moral in this instance involves that whoever is speaking is consistent with what he is saying; then he has moral authority in what he says. Mr Hibbert raised the question last night as to what we mean by moral. What the word 'moral' covers is the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, all that area of things. When we talk about things being on a moral foundation it is when the question of good and evil, right and wrong, has been settled in us in relation to that matter.

J.A.P. You have been speaking about authority in ministry. Where do you put the matter of authority in what we speak of as assembly judgments?

E.C.B. An assembly judgment has authority. I realise that will allow someone to say, Suppose it was not right? If a thing is done in assembly, you might say in the name of the assembly, I would respect it, and if I was not convicted by it I would pray either until I had conviction from the Lord that my impression was wrong or until the Lord intervened and changed the situation; but I would

thoroughly respect what was done. Sometimes this may result in a long period of burden and it tests whether we are like Elijah, whether we can pray with prayer for God to come in, but the right thing is to respect it.

H.W.K. Does Paul explain in Ephesians 3 that through the grace of God a certain line of ministry had been given to him to minister to them? To embrace Paul is to embrace his ministry, and to water a servant's hands is to take on what he ministers, not just to assent to what he says but link on with it as coming from the authority of the Lord.

E.C.B. Yes that is right. I expect you find, as I do, that your hands are very much watered in the meeting. But then if you go away and find afterwards that the ministry that the Lord gave, or seemed to give, has changed nothing, then you wonder what your hands have been watered with.

J.C.E. I just wanted to ask if the thought of authority and the anointing go together.

E.C.B. There would be no authority if the anointing were not there; that is what makes a man a prophet or a priest or a king. I just wondered if you had finished.

A.B.P. Well, what is going through my mind is, are we impressed sufficiently with the fact that an assembly meeting decision or judgment or action, even though it may be wrong, must be respected.

E.C.B. Well, are we? Now you have said that here, and no doubt the brethren agree with it, but are they going to act as if they agree with that?

A.B.P. I think it is vital, because we have no authority to minister if we do not accept that principle.

E.C.B. Well, the brethren come together in assembly and take certain action; you may feel sorrowful about it at the least, but you respect it because it was done in the name of the Lord. Even if the brethren were weak, misled, misguided, you respect it fully and live

in the light of your acceptance of it, and you wait on the Lord with your exercise.

A.B.P. And you are not saying things on the side that are different. We had an experience in this area years ago, when in New York we made a wrong assembly judgment. Mr Taylor was away, and when he came home he did not say, You are all wrong. He ministered the truth until the truth penetrated into our souls and we saw that we had been wrong and came to it, and we adjusted things.

E.C.B. I think that is right and is the normal way of proceeding. We are weak and we fail, but another thing that you will agree with (because Mr Taylor said it so often) is that the care meeting does not make assembly judgments. So something that is determined other than in an assembly meeting does not have the same effect as an assembly judgment.

R.H. Do I gather that you distinguish between the authority of ministry and authority in men?

E.C.B. I was trying to do that; do you agree with that?

R.H. I think that is very helpful.

E.C.B. I do not want to detract from the value, or from the judgment the brethren have of those who serve - it is one of the most prized things - but if they begin to put the men above the ministry it will not be long before, as somebody referred to it already, we are in the situation of clericalism.

R.H. That would result from accepting a man's opinion.

E.C.B. It would, but I am sure we are just recapitulating things the brethren know very well. I originally had in mind to take up something else, but following on the previous reading where we went over a lot of things, it seemed to me it would be well to consider this question, that there is authority in ministry and it relates to the building according to God's pattern.

P.W.C. Should not any assembly judgment be based on scripture?

E.C.B. Yes, we have been helped about that, the assembly meeting now takes much more, shall I say, the formal character than it had.

The facts are set out and the brethren generally sit quietly for a few minutes and wait; and then the Lord will direct to a scripture and thus to a judgment. If you cannot think of a scripture on which you can act, then you had better not for the moment act. Do you think that out of your experience?

P.W.C. Yes, I think that is good. In every detail we should say "what says the scripture?", Gal 4: 30.

S,McC. I remember Mr Taylor making a remark that we generally accept all assembly judgments *prima facie*, but if subsequently facts come to light it leaves it open to question.

E.C.B. And the respecting of an assembly judgment does not hinder the raising of exercise with the local brethren, for instance, as to the spirit in which they have acted. Would you not have more leverage with them as to their spirit if you respect their judgment? That may lead them to rectify it.

S.McC. That came out very clearly in regard to the history in this city of Plainfield.

O.L.L. Do you think we need discernment in regard to these things? It is said of Abigail that she had discernment.

E.C.B. Yes, I am sure that is so. In so far as Abigail is typical of the assembly she had it and David recognised it; she does not acquire it through her knowledge of David.

A.B.P. Is it important too to realise that God has anticipated that there may be failure in assembly matters? He has provided, in Leviticus, a case when the whole assembly sins. Therefore we must not say that because it is an assembly judgment it stands and is right. It may not be right, but we need to be very careful if we do not go with it.

E.C.B. Yes I think that. What you are saying is a very good illustration of a present exercise, that things are said in the meeting and the brethren agree with them. Now will we go away and act in

the light of that, act as if we recognised assembly judgments as such, even if we have strong exercises in relation to them?

A.B.P. I think we dishonour God if we do not.

E.C.B. I trust that no one is going to go from here, dishonouring God in that sense.

B.T. In many meetings with Mr Taylor there was definite opposition right in the meeting, and there was support and clarification of the truth; so the meeting was not spoken of as a pleasant song. So that we can do nothing against the truth. It is good to be opposed during the meeting rather than afterwards.

E.C.B. Exactly; it is sad if the truth is ever opposed, but it is better that things be brought out in the meeting where the power of the temple is present to adjust everybody, to adjust even the servant.

Those that are serving can be adjusted any time. No doubt you have found, when you have been giving a lead in a meeting somewhere, a brother says something that you see has corrected something you said earlier, and you can see it was needed. The Spirit often gives grace to bring that in and adjust it. If there are difficulties the place to bring them out is in the temple, and it is a place of very great help.

J.W.H. In Romans 13 it says "Let every soul be subject to the authorities that are above him". That is the spirit in which we should be together, as subject to Christ, and would be governed by it and would carry our spirits.

E.C.B. One thing you must remember is that that scripture has been referred to several times during this reading. Now is everyone going to be subject to the authority that is above him - that is Christ?

G.H. The Lord said to Ananias, "Go, for this man is an elect vessel to me", Acts 9: 15. He uses the word 'elect'. Does that signify that there was distinct authority in Paul's ministry?

E.C.B. O yes, but the Lord took him up specially in order that he should be the vessel of unique ministry. It is as if He said, I have chosen him out of everybody that I might have chosen, and I am

going to use him for the teaching that will enlighten the church till I come again.

A.B.P. I have been impressed lately that the Lord allowed Paul to go to the extent that he did in the assertion of his own will, even to the persecution of the assembly, in order that that man may have so thorough a judgment of himself that he could be trusted with authority.

PLAINFIELD

9 April 1977

Key to initials

E.C.B.- E.C.Burr, London; P.W.C.- P.W.Coombes, Plainfield; C.F.D.- C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; C.S.E.- C.S.Elliott, New York; J.C.E.- J.C.Ebanks, Jamaica; C.G. - C.Greenidge, Plainfield; H.J.G.- H.J.Glass, Toronto; E.E.H.- E.E.Hoyte, New York; G.H.- G.Hesterman, Plainfield; J.W.H.- J.W.Harris, Barbados; R.H.- R.Hibbert, Calgary; H.W.K.- H.W.Knauss, Indianapolis; O.L.L.- O.L.Linton, New York; G.T.McC,- G.T.McCrone Toronto; S.McC.- S.McCallum, Villa Grove; R.C.McD.- R.C.McDowell, Plainfield; E.C.M,- E.C.Muggleton Croydon ; A.B.P.- A.B.Parker, New York; J.A.P.- J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; B.T.- B.Taylor, New York

PRESENT ENJOYMENT

R.Taylor

John 3: 35,36; Hebrews 7: 24,25; 8: 1,2; 10: 19-25, 35-39

I often read passages of scripture such as we have in Isaiah and think there are wonderful times ahead. So there are. What a time it will be when things are put right, when the Lord has His place and famines cease, when peace is extended like a river (there are some beautiful expressions in that book) and you think what a time it will be. But I think, dear brethren, that time has come. We do ourselves a great disservice through putting things off; the most of what is to be enjoyed is to be enjoyed today because of the place that Jesus fills.

There are wonderful blessings, joys, eternal things, to be enjoyed today because of the place that Jesus has. I sometimes think, as a Jew would think, that it would be a wonderful thing if Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David and Solomon were all alive at one time. What an administration it would have been! Think of all these men filling their offices at one time; the Jew would have some longing for that maybe. But it would be far short, beloved, of the administration that flows from Jesus. There was imperfection in all these men but in the administration that flows from Jesus in the place of glory that He fills, what eternal joys are to be known now.

You may say, Today, with all the breakdown? Yes, whatever it is, whatever pressures press in on you, they are eternally met in Jesus, the One who loves us. It says He "loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood", Rev 1: 5. What an incentive to have confidence in Jesus, that He took up your sinful history and mine.

What an incentive to trust Him! Whatever state of soul you may be in, you are never worse than when you were in your sins, and He took up your case then and He will take it up now.

What a Man to have on your side! What a Person to trust about your path! - Jesus, a divine Person, come into manhood to be the object of our affections, to be the object of the Father's affections. Think of a divine Person coming into manhood; He came, beloved:

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners", 1 Tim 1: 15. He came into the world; it was His own action, His own desire, you may say. He came into the world, the world of men, where men were pleasing themselves, where men were active in the pursuit of their own interests and their own sins, He came into that world "to save sinners". Christ Jesus, that glorious Man, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners". O, beloved, what a Person to trust, that He would come into the world to save sinners. He could have spoken; he did for creation - "he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast", Ps 33: 9 - but He came into the world to save sinners. He came into manhood's condition, came into the form and likeness of a man to save sinners. I trust that there are none here troubled about their sins. If there is we would long to continue on this theme, that He came into the world to save sinners. O, beloved, that meant all. That was what he embraced in His attitude in coming, that He would save all men. The gospel is preached to all, God's attitude is proclaimed to all men, because Christ Jesus came to save sinners. O, what a mission, what a task to undertake, a divine Person coming so low! You may say, Surely a man in his sins was not to be touched, lepers were not to be touched; but here was One, a divine Person, who took up man's case and came into the world to save sinners. I trust we all trust Him about the matter of our sins. One of the most glorious things of this dispensation is that our sins are met for all eternity. No one need ever be troubled about them again; they may trouble you - I trust you will get help about that as we proceed - but no one need ever be troubled again about their sins. He, beloved, has met that question to God's glory, to God's eternal satisfaction. As we sing sometimes:

'My sins - O the bliss of this glorious thought –
My sins - not in part, but the whole -
Were borne on the cross, and are gone evermore'

(No.238)

O beloved what a fact! What a joy to have in our souls that they are gone evermore! Why? Because of the One who came in to take up our case, because of the One in whose hands the administration is,

spoken of in this scripture here as the Son. There is much reason for you to love Him; what reason there is to have confidence in Him, if He has taken up the matter of your sins and mine!

But here in this scripture it says the Father loves Him. You wonder at this verse coming in almost abruptly: "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", It is said early in the gospel; it brings out the perfection and beauty of His Person.

You may have said it should have waited until He had made atonement, you may have understood it better had it come at the close of the gospel, but here it is early, the verse is almost interjected: "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand". The Father's confidence in Him brings out who He was, and He brought it out in manhood. That would be conveyed in the verse. Things, beloved, are sustained in this dispensation by Jesus, the Son. Think of things being sustained by the Son, superseding, as I said, every other dispensation, every other administration. "The Father loves the Son": we would all like to know more of the delight the Father found in Him. It certainly was not about the sin question; that must have entered into it but it was not only that. What delight that the heavens were opened upon Him! We do not get the mount of transfiguration in this gospel, but maybe it is here. You hardly need that incident in John, every page is full of it: "The Father loves the Son". It is commended to us all that our confidence too may be in Him. The Father has placed things in His hand. It is beautiful that the next chapter is concerning a woman, a person in her sins. It shows how the administration is working. As I said, He came into the world of men and here we have things given into His hand and the first thing He does is to adjust a woman's affections. I believe it would show us how the Son is working, the administration that He is operating; it is not yet putting things right publicly, causing the physical wilderness to break out and be fruitful, but He is working in persons, He is working in souls to bring them into life, to bring them from an area of despondency and despair into an area of life and joy and liberty. That is how the Son is working today, and He would seek to bring you, He would seek to sustain you, in the joy of the

place that He fills. Think of persons being given into the hands of the Son; think of yourself, beloved, subject of the work of God, placed in the care of the Son. That is what the Father has done.

The Father has not left us to our own charges; the God who purposed to bless us before time began has, in time, placed us in the care of the Son, for He "has given all things to be in his hand". That includes believers. Would you like your affairs anywhere else? I know we often take them elsewhere, we often think we can deal with our affairs better ourselves to our sorrow and grief; but think of your affairs, think of you, being placed in the hands of the Son. His attitude toward you never changes:

'Lord, on the throne Thy love's the same
As once upon Thy cross of shame'

(Hymn 15) There is always something to revert back to in your soul history as you think about Jesus. Whatever has come into our lives, there is always something to revert back to and that is your transaction with the Saviour about your sins. And He is to be trusted about that, He is to be trusted about everything. He remains the same, He remains unchanged in His love toward you. Indeed He has gone into heaven, it says in Hebrews 9: 24, "to appear before the face of God for us". The Lord in His movements would seek to transfer our interests from earth to heaven. That is where He has gone, "into heaven itself, now" (a fine word that) "to appear before the face of God for us". It shows that things are to be enjoyed today. That word 'today' comes into Hebrews as well, this day when there is breakdown and sorrow. It says "Today if ye will hear his voice", chap 3: 7.

Well, beloved, things are placed in the hands of the Son. There is an idea of stability about that. I was thinking of that verse in Isaiah 33: 6; "he shall be the stability of thy times". I think that has arrived for the believer. Stability is to come into our movements, our outlook, and the way we live here. There is certainly nothing stable around us, the world is more unstable than ever. But it says He, "he shall be the stability of thy times" - not a thing, not a company, not anything else, but He, a Person, is to be the stability of our times. It

is because He cannot break down, because the work that He has done stands for eternity, and the One who did the work remains in His blessedness and in His glory. He can never break down, "he shall be the stability of thy times".

Well, in Hebrews it shows us how that works out, how things are sustained in Him where He is. It says "he, because of his continuing for ever". Think of that, that your blessing and mine depends on Him and His continuing for ever. How unstable things were before; if there was a good priest some life was injected into the system; but it says "he, because of his continuing for ever".

Beloved, there is never a moment when He is not alive to hear your cry, ready to hear your voice. He, because of his continuing for ever, has the priesthood unchangeable. Whence also he is able to save completely those who approach by him to God". That covers the matter of your initial sins, it covers all your life here, that "he is able to save completely". What a Saviour that He is able! Moses was willing, Paul was willing, but here is the only One that is able and willing. O, what a Man for our trust! May we be helped to see that there is no other to be trusted. I think lessons in our lifetime have taught us that there is no other to be trusted like Him: "he is able to save completely". You say, you do not know my case. He does, He knows it better than you. We make life very complex, at least I do, but "he is able to save completely". Would that I believed more the simple words of Scripture. It does not say except such and such a case: "he is able to save completely those who approach by him to God". Maybe you have not approached with your problem.

Sometimes it is the last thing we do because of lack of confidence in Him. To revert again to that matter when your sins so pressed upon you, there was no one else to help you. Are you as anxious to turn to Him today about life's problems? Maybe you have felt you are able to deal with your problems yourself; He is the only One who is able, "able to save completely those who approach by him to God".

It is priesthood that would deliver us from anything that might ensnare us, that we might be serviceable to God. In chapter 8 it says "We have such a one ... who has sat down on the right hand of

the throne of the greatness in the heavens". He is the first one able to go in and sit down. Look through the Scriptures and see if ever a priest was able to go in and sit down. He was far too busy, there was so much to do in so little a time, he might have died very soon; but here is One who is able, He has gone in and He has sat down.

Beloved, He has plenty of time for you. I would just like to convey that simple impression from the verse. Having sat down He has plenty of time to hear you if you will approach. It means that you may have to leave certain things; you may have to leave the company of your family and go into your own room and shut the door. Do it, approach. I think approach involves that you rise up and leave certain things, you shut the door on certain matters and draw near and you find that there is One in there who has sat down and He is ready today, at this very moment, to hear your case: "he is able to save completely" - able. Do not put it off to another day, do not wait till the glory, as we use that expression, but go in now, approach any time, leave certain things and draw near, and you will find He is ready to save you completely. A person who is saved completely is set up in triumph. What you find as you go in is that He has your name on His breast. What a thing to go in and find you have a place inside! You are troubled about all these things in the world, about all the circumstances in your path; then you go inside and see your name on His breast. What a change! Asaph was troubled but he went in and what a view he had! (see Ps 73). I think we all need a change of view. We are seeing breakdown and feeling sorrow, and we should feel these things, but you will never bear them rightly unless you go inside and see your name on His breast. The names are on His shoulder too but they are also on His breast - your name. A place is there that belongs to you; it will soon be actually enjoyed, but as you go in you get some foretaste of the actuality of it, you get the enjoyment of it now. The actuality of it will be in another body I know, but I think the foretaste of it is enjoyed as you go in. "We have such a one high priest" - "such a one" - One who is able to deal with everything; He has gone in and sat down and is ready to hear you as you draw near.

Well, as I have said, what a thing to go in and see your name! Have you ever done it? It is a practical thing, nothing fanciful; it is something that is real to the believer, to go in and find you have a place inside. It changes your ambition about the things of the world, it changes your desires about things here, as you find you have a place inside that belongs to you alone. Your name is always there, day or night, whether you are feeling happy or sad. The Lord said to the disciples "Rejoice that your names are written in the heavens", Luke 10: 20. Think of it always being there. It is because there is such a One there that is able to bear them. You say, Me in my sorrow, me in my state? Yes, there is such a One able to bear you up as you should be, He is able to bear you up as God has thought about you. That is how much the Father loved you that He put you in the care of Jesus. He did not in this sense put you under the protection of the British government, or anyone else, He put you under the care of Jesus - into the hands of His Son. And there you find that your name is on His breast. As you face exercises through the week, the disappointments at work or whatever it may be, what a thing to revert to, that your name is there, sustained on His breast and never to be removed. We need to go in and enjoy it. Asaph saw something there that changed his whole life . I ask you again, Have you ever done it? It is nothing fanciful, it is blessedly known by those who have.

I would encourage you to draw near. "Let us approach": Paul uses that expression. He says we have boldness to enter in; because of the place that we have in there we have a title to be there. It says "boldness for entering into the holy of holies by the blood of Jesus". There is boldness because of what He has done, and there is liberty because our names are written on His breast and on His shoulder. "Let us approach with a true heart, in full assurance of faith". It means that you draw near in the worth of Jesus. Whatever you may feel about yourself, it is not the Spirit that would make you feel bad; He would make you feel what Jesus has done for you, He would point you to what the Saviour has accomplished in shedding His blood for your sins and He would point

you to the place you have in glory, your name written, indelibly inscribed on His breast. So it says "Let us approach", washed and sprinkled; that was all that anyone ever needed. He is taking up the other system and he says you can go right in past the laver, past all that was needed, the burnt-offering altar: all these things the Jew would understand, but for us it means that there is a Man in there with my name on His breast, therefore I have a right to go in at any time. I think someone said that, that he liked to go in at any time. It is open, beloved, because of the One who sustains things.

I am saying these things that we may not put them off to a day that is yet to come. The actuality will then be, but I think, as I said, we do ourselves a disservice by putting things off into too distant a time. They are for now. The Father has given things into the hands of the Son now, and Paul is saying that we should approach now, and what we find inside is that there is a place there that belongs to us. We have to come out, but as we come out we have to hold fast: "Let us hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering". You do not need to come out to put everything right, He has done that for you; as you have been in there and seen your name on His breast things are settled for you. O, what a day it is, beloved, to be in today, when things are settled! Until this dispensation sin was never a settled matter, but in this dispensation things are settled because things are placed in the hands of the Son. That woman in John 4 became settled. She had been very unsettled, but before the Lord left her she was a very settled person; she says "Come, see a man". That is how persons would come out: they invite persons to come in. What a service to do to one another, as one and another gets down, to invite one another to come in! "Come, see a man". You say, But my problems! Leave them, beloved, shut the door for the moment, come inside and see what Christ is sustaining, and you are included in what He is sustaining for the Father's eternal joy. May it be your joy, too.

So he says "Let us hold fast"; it is all you have to do. As you come out problems may beset you; "Let us hold fast". To what? Hold fast to what you have seen inside. You get your own

impressions, beloved; cultivate them, do not let them be easily taken away. I would encourage all to get impressed inside and do not let it be easily blown away. How ready the enemy is to snatch and to becloud them, but let these impressions remain in your heart; have confidence in the Spirit that he will sustain those impressions you have received of Jesus with your name inside, that you belong there where He is. Count on the Spirit that you might hold fast to that impression. "Let us hold fast", it says, "unwavering". You say, How can I do that? Well, I am thankful for these words in brackets: "he is faithful who has promised". That scene where Jesus has gone for me is unassailable. Here I am assailed by many things, but "he is faithful who has promised". Let us believe Him, beloved. Let us have confidence in the Spirit here to enable us to hold fast; let us trust Him in these matters and exercises. Jesus on high sustains us there with our names on His breast; another divine Person equal in Godhead glory is here that we might hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering. Let us trust Him, let us have no longer confidence in the flesh. Paul says in that beautiful verse: "we are the circumcision ... do not trust in flesh"; we "worship by the Spirit of God", Phil 3: 3. What a description of a believer! May it be true increasingly of us, that we boast in Christ Jesus, have no confidence in flesh, and worship by the Spirit of God.

Then in verse 35 it says "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense". Do not treat things lightly, beloved. We mourn over some who seem to have cast away their confidence, some who have endured, as these earlier verses speak of, some who have borne much suffering. I can think of many who endured and were more faithful than I, stood out against trade unions, stood out about many things, suffered persecutions, and where are they? It may be in some measure they have cast away their confidence, been diverted as to their view. "Let us hold fast". It reminds me of that shipwreck in Acts 27. They were not asked to build another boat, they just held on to whatever they could; some on bits of wood, some on one thing and another, they came safely to land. They held fast to some impression, some lifesaving word, and

they came safe to land, not to build another boat, but to rejoice in the love that brought them all safe to land. "Cast not away": it means that it is possible that divine things do not have the taste or the appeal for me they used to have. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense". Maybe divine things are not as appealing to me as they used to be, my confidence in the Spirit is not as great as it might be, I have trusted myself, maybe I have trusted other things. The world is full of other things to trust, means to work out things, but as we have said, the only One that is able is - Jesus, "able to save completely". If we think of any of the world's arrangements, they are all very narrow, they cater for one section or one thing or another, but "he is able to save completely". O, what a Saviour He is! what a Man He is in glory, bearing you up at this very moment, bearing you there in the glory that is really yours. So he says "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense. For ye have need of endurance"; he is writing to saints that were upset about many things like many of us, but "ye have need of endurance".

Well, beloved, may we be helped not to cast away our confidence, but may the result of our speaking together be that our confidence is increased in the right Person, our confidence be in Him. It says here "For yet a very little while he that comes will come, and will not delay". Is that part of your confidence? Is that part of your hope, that "he that comes will come, and will not delay"? What a time it will be, as we have said, but let us not delay it. In the meantime things are secured in Him; they are to be enjoyed, they are to be known to faith and they are not to be cast away, but our confidence in Him is to be increased. Paul seems to emphasise it: "yet a very little while he that comes will come, and will not delay". That is His attitude, beloved, the attitude of that One that we have been speaking about is that He is coming and will not delay, He will come to transfer us from enjoying things by the Spirit and in faith, to transform us into bodies like to His own body, where things will be in actuality. But it says that in the meantime "the just shall live by faith".

Well, may we be encouraged not to treat these things lightly. The tendency to draw back is in all our souls and there is a very solemn word as to persons who draw back; "my soul does not take pleasure in him" - a sobering note, beloved, applying to persons that treat these things we have been speaking of lightly. What is established for faith in Jesus is to be enjoyed now. What a realm it is! May we be among those who are going on, that are trusting in Him, and may our confidence in Him at this time be increased, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

15 January 1977

THE CHILDREN'S THOUGHTS

We can well believe that the thoughts of Saul in his boyhood at the great port and caravan city of Tarsus were much the same as those of any other child taught to believe in God. He did not however have the advantage that we have now of knowing Jesus as Lord. Sadly, he thought when older that he must do much against that Name. But a sight of Jesus in glory changed his whole outlook - as it does our own. All his energies of mind and body were turned to furthering the truth. In doing so he had to put certain untrue things out of his mind and this is an important lesson for us to learn too. Later in life he wrote ten times in one epistle the words "Far be the thought".

At all times we must realise that God can and does read our thoughts "afar off". In the same Psalm that David spoke about this he also said "How precious are thy thoughts to me, O God". He even tried to count them but it was like trying to count the sand at the sea-side! Yet it is a good task to set ourselves to search out His thoughts from the Scriptures even though they be higher than our own as the heavens are higher than the earth-. in this way He who searches our hearts will find there what is pleasing to Himself.

Timothy was familiar with the ancient Scriptures from childhood. Perhaps he had learned some parts by heart, as every believer should. The Lord Jesus spoke of certain "sections" of the Old Testament and these with many other passages would help Timothy to follow the new teaching forming the New Testament as we know it. Paul insisted that he should think about these things and the Lord would give him "understanding in all things". This is one of the great promises in God's word of which we may 'remind' Him in our prayers.

I have just seen these lines about the Bible. Can you learn to say them?

Study it carefully,
Think of it prayerfully,
Deep in thy heart let its pure precepts dwell.

Slight not its history,
Ponder its mystery,
None can e'er prize it too fondly and well.

J.C.Evershed