

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

"THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF HIM"

BEING HERE FOR THE LORD

FAITH

THE CHILDREN'S BREAD

"THE FULL KNOWLEDGE OF HIM"

Ephesians 1: 15-23; 2: 1-10

A.J.E.W. The reference to the full knowledge of Him, that is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. in verse 17 is very suggestive to us. The Ephesian saints had been remarkably instructed; so far as I recall, the longest period of Paul's service in one place as recorded was three years in Ephesus. Doubtless the truth setting forth the divine glory had been gone over, we could say forcefully gone over, because he speaks of his tears and his admonitions, and this letter is no doubt written against that background, Something of that previous history is not unknown by us in the course of remarkable instruction that has entered into the revival, and therefore this word as to full knowledge, which has a counterpart as we would recall in Colossians, is a stimulating and a searching one, and the greatness of what we experienced together this morning, the glorious realm on which we entered, turns my thought to this verse because of the need of full knowledge of Him, that we might fittingly be in that realm and fittingly serve in it that the pleasure of God may be filled out. The end of the Spirit's day, I have little doubt, is to be marked by a fulness. The grace that has wrought in the reviving of the past century and a half I believe in a certain sense makes a demand upon us for a feature of fulness springing from the knowledge we have of God, the God whom we find grace to serve.

C.S.E. There was a background in Ephesus in the saints which, you might say, prompted the apostle to write in the way he did. He speaks of "having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is in you, and the love which ye have towards all the saints". Would that be something for us to work towards as providing a basis for God to help us to this full knowledge?

A.J.E.W. That is of great import in what we are saying and it runs along with other references in this section, right on to where we finished in chapter 2, "we are his workmanship", relating to what is

wrought in the saints themselves. So the knowledge of Him is not just the light of Himself, not even the light just as received, but it surely embraces the course of experience that enters into the history of saints and what they have, particularly the reference in this latter part of chapter 1 to the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of His strength, in which He wrought in the Christ in raising Him from among the dead. He raises the question of our degree of familiarity, if I may use the word in such a holy setting, of conscious experience with Christ on the other side of death. All this links up to give us in these verses an indication of something wrought in the saints beginning, as you say, with the essentials as you might speak of them faith in the Lord Jesus and love towards all the saint - a remarkable and normal beginning of so much which can run on so far in the sense of growth and increase as God works. The knowledge of Him involves something far deeper than just the ability to state the terms of the truth.

C.S.E. What more did you have in mind to help us as to the knowledge of Him?

A.J.E.W. It is a question of how we experience the divine realm. We are not to be there as out of touch or hampered in our knowledge of what belongs there. As we know God we increasingly apprehend the blessedness of the realm that He fills and, by the Spirit, what is fitting in that realm, what the divine affections and feelings are and what manner of response is fitting in us who are creatures signally favoured and blessed of God as we are.

C.S.E. I was thinking of the Lord's own feelings in this regard in John 17 when He prayed to the Father. He said "that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (v 3). It would seem as if the Lord was reaching into something which would be substantially there in the souls of His disciples; and it is no less for us at the present time that we might know Him.

A.J.E.W. I think the link with that verse is distinctively a help to us in what we are saying; "that they should know thee".

L.MacF. The apostle is praying to the end that the thing might be full. We have some partial knowledge but we would have to confess we need fulness.

A.J.E.W. So much has been unfolded as to the glory of the Father and the Son and the Spirit and the assembly, the family nearest the Deity, that a very compressed scripture such as this, such as this letter indeed, should find a ready answer with us. The elements of truths that are set out, remarkably condensed in the way they are presented to us, should instruct us and fit things into place in our renewed minds; and the Spirit would bring in in these closing moments a certain fulness in the sense of knowledge which is not to be gained just by reading, valuable as that is, but involves the elements of experience, especially the realisation of being with Christ beyond death. The quickening touch - "has quickened us with the Christ" - reminds us that these references to quickening in Colossians and Ephesians allude specifically to the assembly, and that a quickened order of things is intended to be known among us.

L.MacF. Particularly on the first day of the week, would you say? At the essential time we have some experience like this.

A.J.E.W. And experience of a kind which leaves a mark upon God's work in all of us which remains. The experiences of the first day of the week, if our experience is any guide, are increasingly marked by wealth and depth, and the intention is that it has a powerful, formative effect spiritually in the saints. What engaged us this morning is not to be lost, it is to go through, it is to find its reflection in features taken on by us which heaven regards with delight as being related to Christ the divine ideal.

P.L.D. Are our experiences in the realm over death mostly collective? Do you feel that that is where we reach the height of it?

A.J.E.W. I am sure that is the truth. The way you express it I think is the right way; that is, you are not excluding some individual realisation of what links with that experience. You get touches of

that in your soul, do you not? but it is peculiarly in the assembly that we get the full extent, the suggestion of an immense realm where Christ is supreme, a realm in which we need continually the Spirit's sustaining, but a realm which is related to God Himself apart altogether from what man has wrought here. The level of experience which those who love Christ are to know is to be peculiarly rich at the close.

P.L.D. We often feel in reading Mr Stoney's ministry that he was experiencing something individually that we would like to know more about, but even so he had a great appreciation of the assembly, did he not?

A.J.E.W. He did. His references in his writings to union, for example, would be an instance of that; you can see that he was really in the enjoyment of it. And yet collectively the matter is entered into, you might say, in full experience.

G.D.P. So it is not just cold head knowledge but "being enlightened in the eyes of your heart".

A.J.E.W. That is a fine reference because "the eyes of your heart" is something related to ourselves; that is, the saints have certain faculties spiritually which are to operate in the sense of knowledge increasing, but it is linked with the affections. It is not linked with what I might call an academic mind but with the affections, and it seems to be linked through the course of this scripture with experience. And how rich the experience is! If we look back on the time this morning the reality of experience is something which nothing else will replace.

A.B.P. Would it be right to say that the eyes of Abigail's heart were enlightened to appreciate in David what neither Ahinoam nor Michal could give? His ejaculation seems to indicate that there was a need with him for someone that could understand the high outlook and purposes of his life. Would that be something like this, not only that we are to come to know God and respond to Him but the Man who understands and knows God perfectly is to have companions

throughout the eternal day? There will be holy converse in that day, will there not?

A.J.E.W. When you speak of the Man who knows God perfectly you are alluding to Jesus Himself.

A.B.P. Yes, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory". I thought that related to the perfect knowledge in a Man, in Christ personally.

A.J.E.W. It comes back to the scripture that our brother quoted in John 17 where the perfection of that knowledge is most feelingly presented to us.

A.B.P. Would you say that the experience of the disciples in discerning the perfect response to God in Him would stimulate their earnest desire that this may be accomplished and that they may arrive at the full knowledge of God?

A.J.E.W. I am glad you say that because it has impressed me this past week what those beloved disciples must have seen and heard as they kept company with Jesus. They would be affected by everything He did and the way He did it, everything He said and the way He said it, the way in which His manner of speech would reflect deep feeling in His heart; the disciples were in the immediate range of that and greatly favoured, and they would learn things in a way which is not expressible in statement; it requires contemplation and the substance of the thing to be wrought out. But in this time of the Spirit we are not at a disadvantage in this connection; the Spirit being here is able to bring to remembrance things in relation to Jesus. The tendency for us - and I speak very much for myself as to this - to relate ourselves to what is mere knowledge in the mind instead of what comes through the eyes of the heart is something which does not bring us into the enlargement of knowledge that such a scripture as this contemplates.

C.S.E. I was impressed some time ago when an elderly sister told me how she proved God by way of experience in a certain matter; it made an impression on her. So I wondered whether the collective experience of the saints, for instance at the Supper, gives character

to the service. It is the God whom we have known in our varied experiences with whom we have to do.

A.J.E.W. I think it helps to emphasise collective experience. There is rich opportunity for it; the Supper and what follows is the glorious climax, but the word comes at the prophetic meeting; how much it can open up! And if we are in the experiences of the light of the temple in the city reading and such occasions, how much can open up! The individual experience is so often - not always closely but largely - connected with the side of discipline, and there is much at the present time by way of discipline which all the brethren feel and enter into in affection and body feeling. But when we are together for the Supper or when we are together like this it is not really a question of discipline but of spiritual expansion, and that is how the apostle is getting to work in this letter.

A.M. Would the richness of God's mercy and the greatness of His love bring about a moral fibre in us individually and contribute to the occasion?

A.J.E.W. I think it would in a very distinct way; but give us the benefit of your own experience in this.

A.M. That hymn came before me very forcibly: "See mercy, mercy from on high, Descend to rebels doomed to die" (No.366). I felt God's mercy coming in and then His love enfolding me.

A.J.E.W. It is most interesting how the side of mercy is dwelt on here: "God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith he loved us". Behind it all there is something immeasurably deep in the divine affections themselves. To know something of those is really part of this fulness of knowledge that we are speaking of. It can well be repeated, it is not an academic matter, it is not a matter for retention in the natural mind, but it is a question which affects the moral being of the saints. You will recall I expect the way in which Mr Raven referred, to me very powerfully, to the new moral being that is in view in this section, in the saints as quickened and out of death with Christ. You cannot unite to Christ what is not of Him; nothing can go through which belongs to the old thing, and what is

brought out of death in every one of us is related body-wise to Christ and is of Him. There is a new moral being in mind which makes these things peculiarly substantial in our knowledge and experience. It lifts us so distinctly above the dark level of everything here, to have before us a realm beyond death and to realise that we have within us a being that belongs to that realm and not to this one; and that is the kind of knowledge that is going to nourish and strengthen us to enter into the service of praise.

L.MacF. So would "part with me" (John 13: 8) be what you are saying? It is only as quickened that we come into that, do you think?

A.J.E.W. You can see the affectionate, mutual side in the company there. The Lord is saying that in the context of His washing their feet, binding them together company-wise in a very sensitive way.

Remarks were made among us during this past week which left an impression with me as to what Mr Hibbert brought before us a few weeks ago, tending so distinctly to deepen and refine the mutual bonds that unite us in the testimony and in the truth, and the need for communication one with another of a spiritual kind, the need of what is social spiritually, not social in the sense of man's world which is not of God but social spiritually. That is the way in which we enjoy our bonds together and enter into the affinities that unite us, leading to a binding together which the vicious, subtle attack of Satan shall not be able to intrude upon. Let us build up links of that kind in our collective relations, in our intercourse in our homes, the way we greet and speak with one another after the meeting, and so forth. It is not a matter of waiting for Satan's attack but of building up the situation on the line of true knowledge. We know what God has in mind in these things and He would have us to move with true knowledge, and "full knowledge", as Colossians says, "of his will", chap 1: 9.

J.E.T. Do you think what you are saying is the answer to any tendency to division?

A.J.E.W. Well, there is a great need of building up. I do not want to be too specific; there are matters that particularly cause us grief, but

it is a time to be building up because the enemy is attacking, you might say, at every quarter. There is that, thank God, in the course of lovers of Christ moving together which will build up and fortify against the enemy's attack, and that is what we want to attend to.

Let us not be engaged with the attack; it has to be contended with, it has to be discerned, it has to be met, we have to be with the Lord as to the meeting of it, but what is our prime objective to be? The crisis? No! but that which is going to meet the crisis; that is, the state of things in the saints, the knowledge of God which no attack of Satan can invalidate. I believe that is to be what is to be before us. What do you think?

J.E.T. I think that is good. I was thinking about what Mr Parker said about holy conversation; we want to be talking about things other than what is a crisis, talking about Christ and things which engage us on a spiritual level.

A.J.E.W. The engagement with Christ: who shall exhaust it? Do we ever go to Him without getting something fresh? If our minds are just clear and ready, do we ever go to the Lord without getting something fresh? It is not a matter of claiming anything but that is the simple experience that I would have to express, you never go to the Lord without getting something fresh. If you do not it is because something is beclouding your mind, you are thinking of something else, wanting to hurry away and do something else, and yet if you just wait to speak to the Lord and wait for Him you never come away without something fresh.

C.C.G. Would moving on in the light of what Christ has given to us, love for one another which is the new commandment, and then what you are bringing before us as to the nearness to Him, bring us on to the platform where we sit down together and are raised up together in Christ so that there will be a great response to Him?

A.J.E.W. The word platform, which Mr Raven used quite a bit, is a very interesting word to us because you have solid ground to stand on. You are not there in any vague or uncertain sense; you have solid ground to stand on all the time. You are there, you belong

there, you can stay there and you will be there eternally. The realisation of it is very sustaining, that this realm of things is the realm for which we are marked out in purpose and to which we belong. This is not a question - could I use a simple expression? - of a privileged visit; we belong there and it is the realm in which God would have us for His satisfaction.

A.R.S. Is it comforting to know that the power that worked in raising Christ from among the dead is towards us to help us to get into the gain of what you are bringing before us?

A.J.E.W. That is one of the outstanding points of this passage I believe: "the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength, in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead". He wrought in the Christ in raising Him from among the dead, touching what is in a sense inscrutable, the operation of it, that is the action of raising Jesus. What can we say about it? We know that He was raised, He came forth from the grave living, but what can we say about what transpired in that grave, that amazing transaction that took place there when the Father raised His Son by His glory? And yet the power that wrought that, in the character of it, is towards us.

We are not going in by mental exertion or by any kind of human intent; we go in in the power that raised up Christ, and the working of that is fully assured; there is no question of it not being effective.

A.B.P. Is that carried forward into the expression "has quickened us"? That expression, "which he wrought in the Christ", as you say is inscrutable but it is indicative to us that it is not a matter of an outside power exactly but something that operates in us. We are to know something of it, are we not?

A.J.E.W. In a certain way that is the key to all that we are saying, that we should know something of the inward working of that power. Thank God we do know it, but He would give us to know it more and more.

A.B.P. If we link this with Romans 6 we know that love was operating; "raised up from among the dead by the glory of the

Father" (v 4). That would be possibly the expression of love, but this is the *modus operandi*, so to speak, the quickening. I think it is a very challenging matter as to how much has been wrought in us by God.

A.J.E.W. That is it. It is very interesting to note verse 3: "among whom we also all once had our conversation in the lusts of our flesh"; none of us are outside of that but it is not a continuing thing. I thought the introduction of that side really fastens this on to our own experience. You remember how Mr Taylor referred to love at home in chapter 1 and love away from home in chapter 2. Well, that love has wrought away from home in us.

A.B.P. I was thinking, when Mr Macdonald was speaking, that it evidently was the wisdom of God to allow Saul of Tarsus to go the length that he did in order that he might get such an impression of mercy that it would balance out the glorious height of the truth that he was given to minister. So we should not rush away from any impression as to mercy but absorb the great result so that it helps us appreciatively by way of contrast to enter into the heights of the truth.

A.J.E.W. I thought just lately of Saul in that connection. We might say that Saul of Tarsus, or Paul as he became, was a very special vessel, we recognise that; and yet in Timothy he reminds us of himself as an ensample of those who should hereafter believe in this very sense of the proof of mercy, as if something of the complete turning round that Saul of Tarsus knew is not to be absent from our own experience.

A.B.P. I think that is a very fine expression, complete turning round, because what has come in in the work of God is not just something that is patched on to what we are.

A.J.E.W. Exactly so. And that of course is really the bearing of quickening, because what is the state initially - "being dead in your offences and sins". What more gross condition could we contemplate than that, and yet God has come in in quickening power. And what is quickened is a new order of moral being altogether which relates to Himself and His power and His love, and

is intended to find its place and part in which is, in the assembly, due to Him.

G.D.P. "We are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus".

A.J.E.W. The word 'created' is a most interesting word to me because it corresponds with what we spoke of just now as a totally new beginning. It is not a patching up, as Mr Parker said, of something that was there before; there is a new moral being in view and the reality of that is to affect us; it is not just an abstract idea. As we engage in these holy communications one with another I believe we shall increasingly find that this new moral being is not just an abstract idea but something that is real in the saints and comes to light as we enter upon our true portion.

P.L.D. These early verses in chapter 2 help us to come to a sober assessment of our part in man as a fallen race but, as you say, they do not leave us there. Perhaps in my beginning I did not fully arrive at that, that I was once a part of a fallen condition that God drove out of the garden.

A.J.E.W. There is a lot in that. You can speak from experience and help us about it because we want to be clear of the old thing and thoroughly occupied in the new, this full knowledge governing us so that God gets what is His due in His saints, which is not just in the utterance in the service on Lord's day morning but the whole course of the saints. "We are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them"; that is, the new man is fitted to the works which are fitting according to God. God has a certain view of what is fitting in the walk of man and He has found it in perfection in Jesus, but He makes clear that there is a walk in His saints which relates to the reality of His own work.

A.B.P. Does that expression, "which God has before prepared that we should walk in them", relate to what was set out in Jesus personally?

A.J.E.W. I thought so. What can you say about it? What did the Father see in the Son? What the detail of every day must have yielded! John expresses it feelingly and soberly; if all the things that Jesus did were written one by one he supposed that not even the world itself would contain the books that would be written; yet every one of those things was taken account of with holy delight by the Father.

A.B.P. Does this link on with Him as "the originator of life" Acts 3: 15? I understand that as such He introduced an order of life which was wholly pleasing to God. It would be in His humanity. I wondered if it connected with this.

A.J.E.W. I am sure it does. "The originator of life ye slew", it says. The setting in which that is brought in is very solemn; God was introducing in Jesus that which would fill eternity for His satisfaction and rest, and yet He was slain.

C.S.E. So when the Lord Jesus said "I do always the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8: 29) we get an insight into such a life that was lived here. Every footstep was delightful to the Father and such a Man we are to be engaged with.

A.J.E.W. And all this relates back to the experience of being with Christ beyond death. You think of the twelve stones that were brought up out of the Jordan and laid down in the land to which they went, laid down in that place. I believe it is an indication of something in substance coming out of the death of Christ that relates to His satisfaction.

A.B.P. Was the value of that seen in the fact that the Father was prepared to wait forty days before receiving Christ into glory in order that the disciples could get that impression so as to be able to minister it in power?

A.J.E.W. That is very fine. I have wondered sometimes whether we have sufficiently appreciated the bearing of those forty days when a risen Christ, a Christ beyond death, was moving among those same disciples, you might say the same Person among the same disciples but in a totally different condition of things, and therefore educating

them in the tenderest of grace in reference to the new order of things which He introduced and which the Spirit would come in to fill out and to confirm.

P.L.D. How do you present quickening to souls? What I have in mind is that Mr Taylor taught us that quickening was a subjective work, it was not said to be by faith. So we should not tell a soul he is quickened unless he really was so, and yet it is so wonderful.

A.J.E.W. It is indeed. Of course you can pretty quickly tell a quickened soul, can you not? Once you get on to the holy subjects of things which we have been speaking of a quickened soul responds very quickly. It is like the fish rising to the surface, they come up very quickly when there is something there which attracts them.

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Key to initials

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BEING HERE FOR THE LORD

J.Strachan

Mark 11: 1-11; 2 Timothy 2: 19-21; Acts 22: 10

I just want to say a word about being here for the Lord, at His disposal and serviceable to Him. It is a very simple idea, but for the believer a very important one to understand that he or she is intended to be here for the Lord. He has established an indisputable right to us. He has a right to every man, a right to the whole of the human race, but then the believer as having been brought to trust Him and have faith in Him would recognise that right. Therefore the believer's course down here is to be governed by the fact that the Lord Jesus has died for him, that if he lives he lives to the Lord. He has established such a right over us that our suited response as believers is to live for the Lord, to be for Him. It is a very attractive situation to be in because the Lord Jesus is not the kind of Person who makes demands on us that we cannot meet. He does not leave us at our own charges. If He wants us for Himself, wants to direct the course of our lives, He will make that abundantly attractive and will supply what we need to be here in the way that is pleasing to Him, in a way that we can fill out His will, to enable us to find that attractive and not irksome. You will remember it says of David that certain persons "collected round him; and he became a captain over them", 1 Sam 22: 2. It was because of his personal attractiveness, what David on the one hand had done for them and then the attractiveness that they found in David, that they were glad to submit to David - "he became a captain over them". As a result of the glad tidings we are to find that not only has the Lord Jesus done things for us - done things that no one else has done for us in setting us free from our sins and from our guilt and that kind of thing - but He has also become personally attractive. You remember the woman in John 4; what she came to was, "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done: is not he the Christ?" (v 29). We would have thought a woman with such a history as that would be afraid of someone who knew all things she had ever done. But no, it was just

the opposite. She was quite happy to stay in the presence of someone who knew her history perfectly and yet who had become attractive to her. Now that is the kind of Person we have in the Lord Jesus. "God has made him... both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2: 36); God has exalted Him to the highest place, and I think God expects us as believers to submit to what He has done. God has put everything under His control and we as believers are expected to come under His control, and the great advantage of it is that, as we do so, we will find that He is personally attractive.

The Lord Jesus here sends these disciples into this village; the instruction they get is that they would find a colt tied, and the message they have is "loose it and lead it here. And if any one say to you, Why do ye this? say, The Lord has need of it". I would like to say to our dear young brothers and sisters here this afternoon, the Lord needs you. Just think of that - the Lord needs you. You have been brought up probably in a Christian household; you have been accustomed to the name of the Lord Jesus being treasured; you have been accustomed to the idea of the gospel, how God has approached us in the Lord Jesus: you have been accustomed to all that, and I would just like to say simply that the Lord needs you. The Lord has these households where He is treasured and, as our fathers and mothers grow older, there comes a time when they can no longer carry what is precious to Christ; some depart to be with Himself. To those who are left the Lord would say, I need you young people, I need a young brother or a young sister to carry on the testimony, to carry on what is precious to Me down here. What a thing that is! for the Lord Jesus to have persons down here who will continue what He has set on Himself. He has set on the testimony with the intention that it should be continued until the moment when He will take His own to be with Himself. Therefore young people as growing up in the environment of Christian households are looked for to come in to have their own part - it may be small to start with but it can grow - to have their *own* part in what the Lord Jesus has set on. So I would say to you simple, the Lord needs you.

In another gospel we get the ass and the colt; that is, the Lord needs the older ones and the younger ones, but here He is putting in His claim to a younger one: "The Lord has need of it". Therefore this colt has been kept; it was "bound to the door without at the crossway". It had been kept there. It is like a young believer who has been held in the environment of a Christian household in view of the moment when the Lord would send and say, I need you. When that moment comes I think he or she would be happy to reflect on this and say, I was glad I was brought up in a believing household; I was glad that I was kept from the world. The Lord has better things for believers than to go into the world, far better things. Hence this colt is kept in the environment of this house. It is at the crossway; it is not in the main street - the note tells us that - it was the path around the house, like being kept in the environment of a Christian household; there is protection there and preservation; in a sense there is salvation there. The Lord said that to a man who had a household: "To-day salvation is come to this house", Luke 19: 9.

What a privilege it is to be in a household where there is salvation, where the Lord has brought salvation! You can see how He would be appreciated, the One who has brought salvation to a household; and as brought up in such households we have to learn to appreciate the One who has brought salvation to us. So it is at the crossway, not just left to run around loose but tied there, held there for the moment when the Lord will put in His claim; when He will say, I need it for Myself. It is not in the main street because that is a dangerous place, alluding to what the world is. The main street of any city; what does it hold? All sorts of allurements; for those who like music, plenty of music; for those who like dancing, dancing; for those who like other things, literature and so on, the main street will cater for every taste. Satan has great advantage in the main street. He has what will appeal to young believers. You might say, what harm is there in it, but there are things that will damage you and hinder your response to the Lord's claim. Take universities through which the enemy would appeal to what is intellectual; there is dangerous teaching going on there, teaching that we are preserved from in believing houses and assembly gatherings. Then another thing

about those places is that you are expected to participate in their community life, to have part in their societies and their social occasions, you are expected to live as part of that community, that intellectual community. The Lord Jesus has better things in view for believers. Our society is far greater than any society you can get in the world; we are called to have part in "the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven", Heb 12: 23. Think of having a heavenly registration, a name up there! That is greater in a sense even than anything you could accomplish in service for the Lord; to have a heavenly registration, part in a heavenly society amongst those that are registered in heaven - that is infinitely greater. That is part of the better things that the Lord has for us; so as having part in the better things the believer is spoiled for this world.

Then the things we are connected with have a future. One of the Lord's servants was asked when he was taking a certain step, But what of the future? He replied, There is no future but glory. Do you realise that there is such a future for the believer - glory with Christ, to be with Him, to be like Him; and that is eternal. To have a certain present advantage down here is only for a time, but to have part in the better things that God has designed for believers is to have part in what is eternal. Now it is a great stimulation just to accept the fact that we are tied at this crossway, this path around the house. Then the Lord puts in His claim. Do you know what the Lord was doing here when He put in His claim for this colt, when He said, I want this colt, I have need of it? What did He need it for? He was going to enter into Jerusalem. Do you realise that the Lord Jesus has a kingdom and He is going to come into it triumphantly? That time is future, and the accomplishment of it is future, but we are in the light of it and we are in the present testimony of it. I think that is what this colt was apprehended for at this point, to be in the present testimony of what will be brought into full accomplishment in the future when Christ comes triumphantly into His kingdom. "Blessed be he that comes in the Lord's name", not coming in His own name - how wonderful! how unselfish! - but coming in the name of Jehovah. "Blessed be the coming kingdom of our father David": that is just a

suggestion of the attractiveness of Christ as coming on the line of David. David represents that side in Christ, that he is personally attractive, and it is the coming kingdom of the One who has become so attractive. This colt had the privilege of having part in this triumphal procession, and the testimony is a triumphal procession.

You might say, What about the brokenness? What about the confusion? What about the conditions of scattering? I say to you, the testimony of our Lord is proceeding triumphantly and is going to have its full accomplishment when the Lord takes over and comes and reigns. The testimony of that is found in believers at the present time who are prepared to submit to His claims. What the world will come into the benefit of in its fulness in the future, the believer can know in its moral import even now and exemplify the advantage of submitting to the lordship of Christ. Dear young brother, dear young sister, I would say simply, the Lord needs you.

In 2 Timothy 2 what I want to speak about specially is the idea of being for the Lord in the sense of being a vessel that is serviceable. Now I know that Timothy has this addressed to him very particularly because he had something committed to him, and Paul was very concerned that Timothy should carry through what was committed to him. In a sense we all have something committed to us. From one point of view "The Lord knows those that are his", the Lord knows them, every one of them, and at times it is a great comfort to rest in that. He knows every one of them and He can put in His claim if He wants to. Then there is the other side: "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity". We have had something committed to us in trust - "the name of the Lord". That, you might say, is put into our hands down here, and we want to be true to that. As believers who have some consciousness of "the name of the Lord" being put into our trust we would have respect for what is due to it and seek to fulfil that trust. I think that would be accomplished in vessels that are serviceable. Therefore "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity".

That puts a responsibility on every believer to withdraw from iniquity. We do not go on with what is wrong, we do not go on with unrighteousness, we do not go on with iniquity. It is not suitable to the Lord's name, therefore we do not go on with it. If principles or practices are allowed that are dishonouring to the Lord then it is for each believer to come to it and say, I have to be separate, I cannot go on with that. If it involves persons who are identified with principles or practices that are dishonouring to the Lord, then I come to a point when I have to say, I cannot go on with them, I have to be separate from such. But it is not all negative. What I want to point out from this scripture is that there is a certain positive objective in this, that the believer is to be here for the Lord serviceable to Him; as it says, "If therefore one shall have purified himself from these, in separating himself from them, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work"; that is, you are set apart for His use. If He wants to use you, then He can; that is, you are holding yourself available for that purpose.

For example, you could have a vessel containing something on the table, and it might be there unused, but it is set apart for use, it is available, and if its owner wants to use it, then he can. I think that is the idea in this scripture, that you are just available for the Master when He wants to use you. The idea of the Master here is the Despot, the One who has absolute rights to do what He wants with us. He has secured proprietary rights over us, no one can argue with that; but then the thing is that practically we want to hold ourselves in such a way that we are available and serviceable to Him, just ready to be used, "serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work". The vessel is sanctified, set apart and ready to be used. It is a great thing to be at the Lord's disposal in that sense. We are in a day when things are very small. There is a lot to be done and there are so few to do it. It is a great privilege to be amongst the few available. You remember, in days of recovery in Ezra, among the vessels brought back from Babylon there were "two vessels of shining copper, precious as gold", Ezra 8: 27. The comment of the Spirit of God indicates that they were very valuable vessels. I think there is a suggestion in that of persons who have

come through the exercises of separation just to be wholly available and at the Lord's disposal, and the Lord regards such as being intensely valuable. So they are "prepared for every good work". The idea of preparation in Scripture is very important and very extensive. You are not only available for the Lord but there is the preparation that has gone into our histories so that we are ready for a particular service just when He wants to use us.

Now one of the things that I would call attention to and commend to all the dear brethren, especially our young people, is that, "Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work", 2 Tim 3: 16,17. That is part of the equipment of a vessel who will be serviceable to the Master. Part of your preparation is that you give yourself time to look into the Scriptures; read them; give yourself time to look into them and ponder them and see what the Lord has said in ministry about them so that you are equipped, you are fully qualified in that sense; as it says, "fully fitted to every good work"; that is, you are able to recognise what good works are, good works in the sight of God, and you are able in some measure to see how they can be carried out in a way that is pleasing to the Lord, because He wants things done in the way He wants them done. He does not want things done in a slipshod way but in the way that pleases Him.

Therefore it requires serviceable vessels and prepared vessels. It is not only that there is preparation for a certain service, it is the vessel that is prepared. In Revelation certain angels are mentioned who had a service to carry out, of whom it says that they "prepared themselves", chap 8: 6. So the vessel is a prepared vessel, ready and at the disposal of the Master. Now that is the positive objective in 2 Timothy 2. It is not just that you are treating things negatively and you are separate from iniquity and from the world, but you have an objective, you have an aim in life; the believer is someone who has an aim in life, to be here at the Lord's disposal, serviceable to Him.

Now Paul helps us in this verse in Acts 22 as to how this is worked out practically: "And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said to me, Rise up, and go to Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which it is appointed thee to do". A very remarkable transformation was brought about in this man. You think of a man who would go along a certain line, even persecuting the saints, and he goes straight ahead with that; and it needs be he would get letters giving him authority to proceed on that line. A man such as that is now changed and takes up this attitude of saying "What shall I do, Lord?" That came from Paul's side. This is no longer the Lord saying I need you. This is something coming from Paul's side, from the believer himself: "What shall I do, Lord?" I know that Paul was an elect vessel, there was something special about Paul, and yet in another sense Paul was a delineation of what would be possible in any believer. Any believer could say "What shall I do, Lord?" It is a great point to come to, that you have an understanding with the Lord, that you are submitting to His claims, that you want to hold yourself at His disposal and say "What shall I do, Lord?". Then the Lord will give direction, I have no doubt about that. Simply turn to the Lord and say "What shall I do, Lord?" Just get into the secret of the Lord's presence and ask Him what He wants you to do. Just be simple about it. There is plenty that the Lord wants us to do. By way of contrast the enemy has certain advantage in regard of persons who have nothing to occupy themselves. There is a saying that Satan finds plenty for idle hands to do, and it is very true. The positive aim of a believer is that he wants to know what the Lord's intention is, what the Lord has for him to do, and that is something that can profitably exercise us.

So Paul gets directions here: "And the Lord said to me, Rise up, and go to Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which it is appointed thee to do. Damascus was not a particularly prominent assembly; it was not like Jerusalem that we hear so much about, or Antioch that shone so much in the book of Acts, or Ephesus where there was such distinctive light and first love. Damascus was probably a rather more obscure place, but that was

the place that Paul was directed to. So you might find yourself in an obscure gathering, away in the background and not in the public limelight. It was to such a place that Paul goes, "And he was with the disciples who were in Damascus certain days", Acts 9: 19. Just think of his being there with the disciples, and it is there, in that setting, that Paul is finding out what the Lord has for him to do. It is often in our local meetings that we find out what the Lord has for us to do. The Lord would perhaps put it into your mind to go along and see an old brother or a sister who is not too well; He might indicate to you to take along something for so-and-so. Things can start simply that way, and it is in your local meeting where things mostly begin. It says of Samson that "the Spirit of Jehovah began to move him at Mahaneh-Dan" (Judg 13: 25); that is like the Spirit of God starting to act through someone in the local meeting. The Lord could have told Paul what to do Himself, He had a right to do that, but He says, No, you go to Damascus and there you will find out all the things I want you to do. That is a great encouragement for ourselves, to submit to the claims of the Lord and to seek to hold ourselves "serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work", and then to find out practically just in the place where He has set us what He has for each one of us to do. May the Lord bless the word.

KILMARNOCK

25 November 1978

FAITH

E.M.Walkinshaw

Hebrews 11: 6; Acts 20: 18-21; 2 Corinthians 5: 5-11

I wanted to say a word about faith. Needless to say one feels very limited in speaking of such a matter; at the same time one feels the importance of it. Faith has been said to be light in the soul, not knowledge in the mind but light in the soul, the soul embracing the light of God. It comes by hearing and hearing by report, and it is very striking that the writer says here that "without faith it is impossible to please him".

Persons may wish to, may even try, but without it is *impossible* to please Him. The word 'impossible' appears in this epistle several times; in this case in connection with faith: "For he that draws near to God must believe that he is", that is that He exists, "and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out". There are many persons who believe in God but who do not believe that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him out. Agnostics, I suppose, come within that category, but he that comes to God must believe that He is, that God exists; and then it is added, as I have said, that He is a rewarder of them who seek Him out. I suppose, dear brethren, seeking Him out might test us, but it is a great thing to do so. In one sense of course, as other scriptures show, you cannot search out God because everything is dependent upon the revelation of Himself. Scientists and such like men, while they may be respected in their own field, cannot search out God. Some years ago the Russians sent up some kind of capsule into the universe; their report when it came back was that we have found no trace of your God up there, something of that kind. That to any enlightened believer is a most absurd statement, as indeed the efforts to discover the origin of the creation. By faith we apprehend that the worlds were framed by the word of God and that is just simple for the believer; he does not need more than that. "*He* spoke, and it was done; *he* commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps 33: 9); faith lays hold of that and everything is simple,

very simple for the believer because he believes that God is and is aware that God is infinite, that is that He is unlimited; man is finite, that is limited.

So the assertion of the writer of this epistle is that it is impossible to please God without faith because coming to Him you *must* believe that He exists. You can never prove it by scientific or mathematical demonstration, you must believe that He is, and then it is added, He is a rewarder of those who seek Him out. Is that true of everybody here? I trust so. He says in the beginning of the chapter, "Now faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen". I think those are the effects in persons who have faith in God. So we begin there, dear brethren; we have all begun there in some way or another. Mr Darby tells us that faith must come first. I always used to think that repentance came first; I do not know what you think but it is what I used to think. I saw very clearly the point he made that you never repent towards the God in whom you have no faith, so faith must come first. In one way it is the gift of God; from another point of view Jesus says "Have faith in God" (Mark 11: 22), so you are responsible to exercise it. I think it comes first in that sense, the soul embraces the light of God as it reaches the soul and there is an answer to it. Another point about the verse, which I commend to your consideration, is this: it makes a clear link between faith and believing. Sometimes people say, What is the distinction between faith and believing? In this basic verse it makes a very clear connection; it says "For he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder". So John, generally, uses the simple words 'believe', 'believing', 'he that believes' in the present tense, showing I think how, while we are here, we are always to be in faith, no matter what the matter is. It just comes to mind that Mr Stoney says, I believe, You walk down the street in faith, you come to the meeting in faith. So whatever you do you do in faith; that is, you are not governed by material things or the five senses but by another Man in another world. Of course you have to say to material things, each of us has our normal occupation whatever it may be and we have to say to it, but you are governed by

another Man in another world, as Paul shows in other passages. So I commend simply to our consideration this great basic truth of faith, and I believe the Lord would call our attention to it because we are in a world that has become materialistic, very much so. Only the other day a fairly prominent man in our industry said to me, We have become so material that we worship what is material. It is not an idol formed of wood or stone, but we have come to a point in the history of this country and the western world where we worship what is material - that was his general comment. You say it is not true of everybody, thank God I do not think it is true of everybody; at the same time we are all inclined, particularly younger men and women, to be influenced by the environment in which we are most of our time; that is, our waking hours I suppose are spent in our normal business, secular occupation shall I call it? We are apt to be influenced by it, hence maybe the Lord is calling attention to faith, that we are not governed by what is seen but by what is unseen.

Then we have the reference in Acts where Paul, in connection with his preaching, does put repentance towards God first, then faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. So the light of the gospel reaches us - how wonderful that is! For my part I feel how little I appreciate the glad tidings and what they bring to me, that is in the way of light.

The evangelist enlightens as we know; he tells me of righteousness satisfied, love flowing freely; of the fact that God has been made known, that the righteousness, glory, majesty of His throne have been met by the precious blood of Jesus, and that forgiveness, the remission of sins, is preached in the Name of that Man. Here Paul says he had gone around telling them this. It says he held back nothing, "in every house, testifying to both Jews and Greeks repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ".

As I have already said, you would not repent towards a God in whom you did not have faith. Here he says "repentance towards God", that is the first thing, and "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ" - changing the mind towards God, and then faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. I suppose we often take the good news as quite commonplace for we hear it so often, but I would like to emphasise

the greatness of it, that God has granted repentance, granted it to us so that through His infinite grace we can be brought into blessing; in fact it is called the gospel of the grace of God and it has reached us on this great principle of faith. I desire, dear brethren, that we might all appreciate that these things spoken of are not simply initial but that they are to continue. So the way in which Paul presents it is "and to teach you publicly and in every house, testifying to both Jews and Greeks repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ"; that is, that that blessed Man is the object of the soul. There is no doubt much more in it than that, but at any rate that Person is before the faith of the soul. There are those as we know in the gospels who had to be told "O ye of little faith", Luke 12: 28. As feeling that we would say, I suppose, O Lord increase our faith. It says "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed" - that is not very much - "ye shall say to this mountain, Be transported hence there", Matt 17: 20. That is the practical effect of faith in the soul, I suppose what the Lord is speaking about there is what is so essential for us in our daily lives. So Paul's glad tidings were announced on this principle. We know that he says in the epistle to the Romans "on the principle of faith, to faith" (chap 1: 17); faith on the part of the preacher and faith in the person that hears. I would desire that the Lord might increase our faith. You will recall that Paul says to one company of believers, "your faith increasing", 2 Cor 10: 15.

Now not only is there the faith of coming to God; that is, believing that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those that seek Him out; and then the light of the glad tidings which brings us into blessing on the same principle; but there is also living or walking by faith, which brings me to my last scripture. Paul says here "Therefore we are always confident, and know that while present in the body we are absent from the Lord, (for we walk by faith, not by sight;)" . We have not yet seen Him; when we see Him we shall be like Him - a wonderful prospect! but at the present moment we are absent from the Lord. Sometimes we speak of living near to Him and I suppose that would be a right expression, living in His life, but here the apostle is presenting the truth from the point of view of our

being absent, or not at home (that is evidently the force of the expression). As absent from the Lord we would like to be present with Him; not alone, as others have said, but present with Him with all His people. I think another has said that he did not want to go to heaven alone, he would like to go with all the saints. I suppose all of us would like that. Here Paul says for the moment, "while present in the body we are absent from the Lord, (for we walk by faith, not by sight;)" that is, not as governed by seen things. A little earlier he said, "while we look not at the things that are seen, but at things that are not seen", chap 4: 18. Generally when we get into a scripture like this, or Colossians 3, "the things that are above" (chap 3: 2), someone asks the question What are they?. We know what the things are that are seen, that is not difficult, everything around us, what is material; but he speaks of things that are not seen and of looking at them. It seems a paradox in one way to the mind of man, but he says "while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen". I take it that we could allude to the city and the house, to many things, the light of which we have and which we can look at by the Spirit, take account of and be occupied with. I would urge all of us, especially our younger brethren, to be increasingly occupied with the things that are not seen. The Spirit of God will help you to understand them, help you to enter into them, help you to walk according to them, so that you are governed not by sight or any of the five senses but you are walking by faith. I believe basically, dear brethren, what is in mind in that is that the whole of your course is governed by having another Man in another world as your object. A little later in this passage he opens that up: "that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised" (v 15). So that quickened persons here, while absent from the Lord and present in body, are governed by that Man in that world and all those things that are related to Him. I think it behoves us all to give ourselves more to divine things, more to unseen realities. I believe that what is spiritual is as real to a spiritual person as what is natural is to a natural person, and I think that what we apprehend by faith the Spirit gives us the conscious enjoyment of.

So into this passage Paul introduces the truth of the earnest of the Spirit. Now the earnest is of the original. So we have brought together in a number of scriptures these two great salient facts of Christianity, that is faith and the Holy Spirit. Faith is not, as a clergyman once said, believing in things which cannot be known to be true. Maybe they cannot be demonstrated scientifically or mathematically to be true, but they can be known to be true by the Spirit. So we have the earnest of the Spirit. May the Lord help us, dear brethren, on this great matter of faith that we might be relieved from being occupied with, and governed by, material things, that we may be occupied and governed by the things that are not seen, for the things that are seen are for a time but the things that are not seen are eternal. I think the Spirit of God would engage us with those things. Now you younger men, younger women, look into them. Ask the question, What are the things that are not seen? Do not leave it hazy. I find often in my reading of Scripture I have left things hazy. One is beginning to be helped a little to enquire more deeply. I think the Spirit of God would deepen our thinking and deepen our souls not only in faith but in the knowledge, in His power, of the things which God has prepared for those that love Him. May the Lord exercise every one of our hearts about this great matter. I have touched it, I appreciate, very feebly and from only one or two scriptures, but I believe at any rate one has touched the basic scripture as to faith, that without it it is impossible to please God.

Then the way in which it enters into the glad tidings, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and then the way in which it is to govern us in our walk. How far it does, of course, would humble us but we do not want to be too occupied with that. I find at times I am very much occupied with the enormous amount I do not know. If I were more occupied with the little that I know of the Lord it would expand, and I think that would be more exhilarating. May the Lord help us in that, and then to understand that the ultimate is as it says of others, that they died in faith; not by faith because it was not their own action, but they died in faith. The just shall live by his faith and walk by his faith and ultimately he dies in faith. How wonderful that is! It is set out for us so perfectly in

Jesus the Author and Completer of faith. You may remember that Satan tried to attack that, he tried to say that Jesus was not a Man of faith, but the Spirit of God helped us to see that it was seen supremely in Jesus as a dependent Man here, the Author and Completer of faith. Look off unto Him, dear brethren, and be governed by faith. May it be so, for His Name's sake.

CROYDON

27 May 1979

THE CHILDREN'S BREAD

Luke 15 is everywhere loved because it tells of the salvation of a son: Matthew 15 should also be loved as recounting the blessing of a daughter. Doubtless she was not so great a sinner as the son in the parable, yet, being lost in sin like us all, she needed to be brought to Jesus for healing and salvation. In conversation at that time the Lord spoke of "the bread of the children", meaning the basic food made from wheaten flour or, amongst poor people, from barley or even rye. It was made in thin wafers or cakes that could be quickly baked if visitors came unexpectedly as when Abraham and Sarah entertained angels long ago.

This food was of course for the body - what kind of bread do children need to nourish their souls and quicken their spirits? Scripture knows more varieties of bread than we ever see on our tables, and they all have to do with the person of Christ and with life

eternal. In their pathless journey of forty years the Israelitish children had daily supplies of manna. This was a grain-food something like thick frost which their fathers had to stoop down to collect early in the morning, yet it was called "the bread of the mighty". Therefore to keep strong for the way of faith in daily life we need to feed our souls on thoughts of the humble life of Jesus in this very same world. The Gospels would be food for over a year, reading ten verses each day!

The Lord Jesus spoke of Himself in a four-fold way as bread and in particular as "the bread of life" and "the living bread". Both these expressions show us how vital it is to nourish our souls on Him as we see and know Him in heaven, so as to enjoy life in the land of the living. We come in our hunger to Him as the bread of life and we continue to live in Him and on Him as the living bread.

In the ancient tabernacle tent-service there were always loaves of bread set before Jehovah to represent the tribes of His people. This was called "the shewbread" or 'bread of the presence' and the meaning for Christians is that God's joy in His saints is nourished by having us always before Him. Further, there were many offerings made to God, all of which presented some perfections and glories of Christ and are called "the bread of God". We too may feed on these and must also eat always the untainted bread of "sincerity and truth". Do you enjoy this feast?

J.C.Evershed