

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 81

December 1979

Contents

SUBSTANTIALITY

THE FATHER OF SPIRITS

"HE MANIFESTED HIMSELF THUS"

THE CHILDREN'S SURPRISES

(Each of the first three brothers named being with Christ the notes have been revised by the editor only).

SUBSTANTIALITY

Joshua 1: 1-18

E.T.M. I thought we might get some help together and be encouraged in viewing afresh the substantiality which began here.

The testimony is marked by a substantial moral character as over against what is so pretentious in the public profession of which we form part, but ours is the privilege in a dark day to realise what the apostle refers to in his urging Timothy to go in for what is real and substantial - "what is really life", 1 Tim 6: 19. Our brother referred particularly in his prayer to commandment: that confirmed me because this chapter is full of the thought of commandment. It is not an arbitrary matter although God has a right to command - He has not to give an account of what He is saying or doing - but it helps us to see that commandment is the result of love. It makes it attractive rather than irksome. I thought we might see how these points in this passage are intended to help us on, especially in the day of small things. We see how we might be privileged to take account of our days in a more meaningful way, and the love that is towards us in a realm where the Spirit is free. So here God says to Joshua "Moses my servant is dead; and now, rise up, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people". We are encouraged to see that the testimony moves on uninterruptedly, undiminished from beginning to end. God has assured us of support as we obey the command. It is a living matter because it says, very soon afterwards, "Every place whereon the sole of your foot shall tread have I given to you, as I said unto Moses"; and later, "None shall be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life". We have to see that this is not just a question of time or a duration of time but the livingness of it. It becomes more meaningful to us as we see that it is not just a question of time but that it is a question of spiritual life that negates what is set to stand athwart what God has in mind. Life really sets aside every opposition. It is not just for all the days but the days of your life. Much is said as to this in the days of the lives of certain godly men

and women. I thought that we might be encouraged about these matters because they are so full of what is vital in the way of life.

J.G.C. It is what you find in a man like Caleb; he wants to go in, does he not? He wants to take possession and God kept him alive, and he was strong too: he was not afraid of any of these enemies.

E.T.M. His faith at the end was as it was in the beginning. He says "as in the day that Moses sent me" (Josh 14: 11); so that would help us to appreciate more that one of the main thoughts in this passage is commandment. I would say that his faith was connected with his obedience and he was ready, as you say, to go into the land.

J.G.C. Yes, because blessing is dependant upon obedience. That is one thing that Mr Darby taught, was it not? He said obedience first and then wisdom.

E.T.M. So I venture to think that the brethren are being helped in every part where the twos and threes and small numbers are prepared to go on in what is vital, what is living. In the same way the Supper is a commandment. The Supper is becoming of more value to us - I am sure it is right to say that - as we go on in this promise of His.

Rem. Mr Taylor said that the Supper is to us what the Lord was to Israel. It is binding on us but not in a legal sense. It is attractive where there is affection for Christ.

Ques. Is it fine to see that there is an urgency from God's side to get the people over to enjoy these things?

E.T.M. That is a good thought, because He is self-sufficient. He can do without us; He can destroy a nation and create another nation, as He said to Moses. It is in His power, it is His prerogative to do all that, and yet, as you say, from His side, we say reverently, He is more urgent for us to get over into the inheritance than we are to go.

Rem. It is fine to see that. God wants us to enjoy with Himself what He has in mind for us. As you say, the Supper is a commandment that would lead us into the enjoyment of these things.

J.G.C. So it is right to carry on with the Supper as the Lord's commandment, is it not? Some wanted to stop and some did stop.

E.T.M. It is a very sad thing; we know that in many places persons just give up the Supper lightly. It is a sad thing because God is going on; He has never ceased and He will never cease until His end is reached. One man comes to the end of his service and it is a wonderful thing that he dies by commandment. He goes up into the mountain and dies according to commandment, and God says to Joshua that he is dead. That is a fact, it had to be faced. He says "and now, rise up, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, into the land which I give unto them, to the children of Israel".

Ques. Would that mean that the result would be in Moses' attendant? I was thinking of what we are saying about being subject and obedient. Such a one would be obedient because Moses represents the authoritative side, does he not? Joshua was blessed in being obedient to what he had had from Moses.

E.T.M. Is that not a great incentive to us, especially to the young men, to commit ourselves in obedience to be affected rightly by what is coming in attractively from the authoritative side? In times of crisis or in the continuance of the testimony there is the wherewithal from God to draw on that things might continue the way they began. It is a vital thought.

Ques. There is a great calamity here, is there not? Moses' end is a great calamity to Joshua and to Israel. But God says "go over this Jordan", as if we are to face a thing and what it means.

E.T.M. There was no mitigation of anything that they had to face. It is what God purposed and how He had purposed that the thing might work out, and that line has to continue without any variation.

Ques. The Lord would encourage us in regard to there being no mitigation as to what we are to face up to. It says "Be strong and courageous", and "I will be with thee". The sense of the Lord being with us would increase our faith and give us the courage to continue, would it not?

E.T.M. Yes, and the gain of it would be immense. That is what He intends, that the gain of it should be secured and enjoyed and be of benefit to the saints and that the service should be enriched by it.

Ques. The sense that God would be with us - "as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee" - is a great stimulant to the soul, is it not?

E.T.M. Yes.

Rem. In Ephesians there is the power that is towards us and the power that works in us. It is not only life. Ephesians is our life but it is possession, and what we possess we have. It is a great epistle of substantiality, as you said at the start.

E.T.M. That helps greatly. The Lord teaches us how to value days.

How He moved here day by day! He said to His opposers "I was daily with you teaching in the temple", Mark 14: 49. Think of what those days meant, days of the Son of man, and yet so many persons missed it. We do not want to miss anything in the way of spiritual wealth that is intended to mark us; it is so abundantly towards us in the Spirit in a day like this. There is pressure on the beloved brethren from every angle, inside and outside. It is all the more intended to bring out what is substantial and what is incapable of being reduced under pressure.

Ques. Was Paul on that line too when he said "night and day, I ceased not admonishing each one of you with tears", Acts 20: 31?

You mentioned reality in life; is that seen in Paul, and the results too?

E.T.M. I would think that that way of looking at it is very encouraging because night and day would be that he put in a full day every day.

They emphasise that in business and other activities of men so as to make the thing attractive and to indicate that the thing is always available to you; they say, We are open twenty four hours a day.

That is a full day - night and day.

Ques. Is it fine to see that it is in the Galilee position that the Lord says "Behold, I am with you all the days", Matt 28: 20? We have been encouraged as to the sense that the Lord is with us.

E.T.M. It is well to refer to these passages; they strengthen us. "All the days" - that means He is with us every day, and we often experience that there are no two days alike. Each day has its own testings - its own privileges too, its own blessings, what is favourable - but there is the thought of goodness and severity. There are no two days alike but He is with us, He has pledged to be with us every day until the completion of the age.

Rem. That brings out that it is to be enjoyed. There is no end to that realm.

E.T.M. Yes, "Every place whereon the sole of your foot shall tread". It is an active matter; a person who likes to stay in the house and not go anywhere is like a person whose feet are in fetters. This is an active matter, faith is active and affection - every bit of ground that you put your foot on. That would mean that you are moving constantly; it brings out the living character of one thing, the days of your life.

Rem. You are making it your own in that sense.

E.T.M. So Joshua would be on his own; I mean as far as he was available to God, what he had was his own. He continued with Moses, attending on him, just as Luke speaks of attendants on the Word.

Ques. That is where the substance comes, is it not? You make it your own and value it.

E.T.M. We want to make room for these young men. Timothy was a young man; you might say that the charge laid on him was tremendous, but he was available even though he was a timid young man. So you get the thought not only to be courageous but to be very courageous. There is a need for that, I think.

Ques. He says "Turn not from it to the right or to the left". Do you think that would help us in our day? And He says also, "as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee; I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee".

E.T.M. Yes, a determined effort, you might say, to go straight ahead. To be practical, you started with us from Macduff to come here and just got going according to the direction, straight ahead. Now if you had turned one way or the other way and gone at random you would never be here. That is a good way to look at it. You had the room, the objective, in your mind; you were not going to stop until you reached the room. So that means that you did not turn to the right hand or to the left.

J.G.C. The trouble with us is we take forty years when it is an eleven days' journey from Horeb to the land.

E.T.M. And yet God's mercy is attending us and we should from our side encourage one another to see to it that the forty years is not fruitless. As our brother said, something is worked into your system that is yours, and at any turn in the way it is available to the brethren, because what is yours belongs to the brethren. The young men want to be encouraged about that because David was a very young man when Samuel enquired as to his whereabouts. There were two wonderful things about that: his father knew where he was and he knew what he was doing. When he was enquired of he says "There is yet the youngest remaining", 1 Sam 16: 11. He was the youngest of Jesse's sons and he says he is remaining - a wonderful thing that - and he is feeding the sheep. The young men can feed the local brethren in the local meeting. 'Remains' goes with feeding the brethren and you are not turning to the right hand nor to the left, not electing yourself out of the current of the testimony but remaining and feeding the sheep even as a young man.

Rem. 'Remain ' is a fine word - "we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord", 1 Thess 4: 15. It is the living side of things which is going through the testimony.

E.T.M. I would think that the brethren here cherish what we might refer to as 'key words', especially in Scripture, and that is one of them - 'remain'.

Ques. Would you say more about his father knowing where he was and what he was doing? That is very important, is it not?

E.T.M. That would also point to the gain of being appreciative of the commandment. David must have had real satisfaction and feelings. You will remember when Joseph was called by his father and sent to his brethren with their welfare in mind, how happily he sprang off to go. You would expect that the same qualities were in David; and Samuel says "Are these all the young men?" Jesse could tell them immediately not only that the youngest remained but where he was and what he was doing. You love to think of young men like that in the local meeting, always available to the older brethren; the older brethren being given an account of them at all times and happily occupied with a view to the health of the local meeting.

Ques. David just lived with the sheep, did he not? And he can say the Lord is my shepherd.

E.T.M. The thing was so in his system or constitution that he became like a sheep. But he was substantial.

Ques. What courage the woman in Luke 7 must have had to break through the critical line of things to get to the feet of Jesus and wash His feet! But here in Joshua it is part of the blessing, is it not? We are going to inherit and claim things for our enjoyment from the divine side, are we not?

E.T.M. That helps us because it shows the need of courage and the effectiveness of it. As we know, we are in days when, especially in Great Britain but I suppose all over the world, persons know something about gentry, nobility, royalty; but in Luke 7 is a woman who is hardly regarded in society and she is going into the house of a nobleman - Sir Somebody, Lord Somebody. And she goes in, not afraid; but there are two things that seem to give the key: she loved Him, she valued who He was and His service, and she knew that He was sitting there. The Spirit of God does not tell us how she knew but it says she knew that He was in there. She seems to have been following Him in her affections every step of His journey in this remarkable service. She knew He was in there and nothing was going to stop her; you must conclude that God was operating and angelic service must have encouraged her. There were the

doormen, the guards; she must have had to pass a lot of authority to get into the house but it is like the gate that opened of itself when Peter was being led out. Everything had to give way; she got right inside the house.

Ques. Do you think we want to feed more on the death of Christ? Was the entrance into the enjoyment of all these things on account of the ark going into the Jordan and opening up the way for us?

E.T.M. Yes. As to "victuals", we know in the teaching (we need not be afraid to mention it, the good teaching, we need not be afraid of what we heard that is right) that 'victual' is not an ordinary matter. It is strong meat, perhaps the best you can get in the way of strength; it was vital that they fed on this kind of thing in order to go over. As you said, the death of Christ provides this, the various kinds of food for us to feed on, including venison.

Ques. Everything is for us, is it not? You get the impression in this chapter that God is for us with a view to opening up the inheritance and we being in it.

E.T.M: As we often say, He is the Same. As we know, that is a name of God. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah they relied on that: "Thou art the Same" they said, Neh 9: 6. What God is saying to Joshua here emphasises that. He says "as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee". There will be no change from His side; so the testimony goes on undiminished, untarnished, in all its lustre, and in spite of what is so miserably darkened publicly, alas! in the profession. Somewhere the thing is going through.

Ques. It says "I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee". Is that not a comfort to us in this day, especially to those who are few in number? It has come right down from Moses and Joshua to our day: "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you", John 14: 8. Are we true to this at the Supper? And that helps us not to forsake the prayer meeting. Think of the house of God and the house of prayer. The Lord does not leave us; on Tuesday He speaks to us, and so on.

E.T.M. It is wonderful to bring it in like that because it cheers you, as you say, even in the prayer meeting. You are lifted above confining your exercises and desires to the meeting of need, even for service, and to matters involved in caring for the assembly. We can rise up and praise God, happy there. What our brother said is good in that way because, from God's side, He proposes to make us joyful in His house of prayer. What you said brings all of that into relief.

Rem. As to what you said about the good teaching, Jehovah says "that thou mayest take heed to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded thee". The line of things that has come down to us from Mr Darby, Mr Raven, Mr Coates and Mr Taylor would keep that before us. There is a line of good things, is it not?

E.T.M. And there are so many turning away, either going off on something that does not savour of or link on with what has come down, or they are seeking to find ways to start something new. It is a sad thing.

Rem. I have a letter from a brother in which he said that what affects him is that most of those brethren who have gone aside have been acquainted with the truth of the revival.

E.T.M. It is darkness. The Lord said "if... the light that is in thee" - that is a solemn thing - "be darkness, how great the darkness!", Matt 6: 23. What a privilege we have! Whether two, three, four, five, fifty, one hundred, it makes no difference; the testimony is the same, the maintenance of it in any given place is on the same level, the same standard, with two or three as with three thousand.

Rem. Thank God for the way He speaks in Matthew of "two or three", chap 18: 20.

E.T.M. There is no 'if' in that passage; "where two or three" - 'where' not 'if', as though He counts On the product of His own suffering and death, that there will be at all times, somewhere, two or three to begin with. He says "I am in the midst of them". It is very stimulating and assuring.

Rem. That scripture has been a help to me, and the reality of the Lord's words, "on this rock will I build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it", Matt 16: 18. Thousands have come in right down to the present time.

E.T.M. From His side that is sure; but then from our side feeding on this kind of food makes you see to it that that is not going to happen - to turn aside. We know that the Lord Jesus is God and He can do everything Himself. In John He does things Himself - He finds the ass and sits on it - but the Spirit of God gives us two sides - a wonderful thing that in all His teaching the Spirit of God brings in for us the two sides - the side that He can do without you and the side that He does not elect to do without you. He says to His disciples, make the men sit down, and He distributed the food. In John it is the same thing but it is not put that way. It says He did it Himself. It shows that He can go on without you; if I elect to take myself off out of it, He can go on without me. If you are available to Him He will go on, but on the other hand, while He can do without us, the economy is such that He might allow persons to work the thing out. So faith and courage help you. You need to have courage to go against the tide. If you say, to be simple, The Lord is saying "on this rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it", so as far as I am concerned it has to be just that: and another brother says that and another sister says that, you have three persons in a place that will say, As far as we are concerned in Lossiemouth the gates of hades shall not prevail against what the Lord has in mind for this town.

Rem. It is a great comfort to know that the assembly position as such is invulnerable; what was established at Pentecost comes right through; it will never break down. Mr Raven said that everything established here by God will stand against the devil and men, and they will never be able to overthrow it.

E.T.M. And when you get down to rock bottom it needs you and me, each sister and each brother here, ready to see to it that that is going to be true.

Ques. That constitutes a man, does it not? It is living persons that we want and it is enjoyed amongst the saints by the Spirit. Heaven is here, is it not, amongst the saints? God is encouraging us to go forward to this chapter's enjoyment of the inheritance, and it is amongst the saints in this village.

Rem. That is one of the fine touches in Judges; Judah says to Simeon "Come up with me", chap 1: 3. It is the mutual side of things enjoyed together.

E.T.M. "And I will go with thee into thy lot" - they go up with each other. The woman in Luke 7 must have had much appreciation of the prophecy of Isaiah as regards the feet: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that announceth glad tidings, that publisheth peace; that announceth glad tidings of good, that publisheth salvation", chap 52: 7. She must have known something about that. With the kind of woman she was you would think it very unlikely, but she must have been reflecting on something like that because the Lord said that from the time she came in she had not ceased to attend to his feet. Those feet were beautiful to her. The crowd cried, Away with Him, crucify Him. They could not see, but this woman saw His feet and what kind of feet they were. They were answering to the prophecy and she, from her side, was prepared to relieve any tiredness or anything that would, you might say, retard the progress of those beautiful feet. She would do anything to hasten them on.

Ques. "How beautiful... the feet"; would that be the perfection of His walk? I was thinking how she must have appreciated that; she must have been affected by His perfection.

E.T.M. No feet like them! She would say that no two feet have ever walked the earth to compare with these two. Do you think that?

J.G.C. Maybe her mother had read Isaiah to her.

E.T.M. Somebody must have done.

J.G.C. Do you see that with the dying thief too: "Remember me, Lord, when thou comest in thy kingdom", Luke 23: 42. Maybe his

mother had read Psalm 31 to him.

E.T.M. So we have to think of godly women. Paul spoke of Timothy's mother and grandmother. Those of us who have gone on for a few years in this period of testimony in times of battles and the wars of the Lord, conflict, reproach and all that, know that at such times moral substance is seen peculiarly in the sisters. It makes it all the more incumbent on brothers to take on responsibility because the sisters are not allowed to speak, as we are sitting here now. But you could not for one moment think to confine what is coming out here now to brothers. We make ourselves available; the Spirit of God would use us to bring out what the sisters have in the way of substance. A sister might be sitting by with a certain thought in mind, a certain line of things, and normally the Spirit of God, if we are available, would use us to bring it out.

Rem. What you have here is Joshua as Moses' attendant. Would what you are saying as to the sisters be seen in Lydia? She would be Paul's attendant in that way; she attended on the things spoken by Paul.

E.T.M. Yes, that is an excellent reference.

Ques. Do you think the way that sisters deport themselves is important? When Hannah prayed, Eli took account of her, her lips moved but she spoke in her heart. She was not, speaking in another way, taking a public position but she was with God in relation to the condition of things that was current in Israel.

E.T.M. Her lips were seen to move but her voice was not heard. That was depth of feeling, and we want to value the comeliness and all that marks the sisters. But later on, when she had the results, she said to the same man "For this boy I prayed", 1 Sam 1: 7. She had the results to show; he thought she was drunk - a terrible thing for a man in his position publicly; he should have known better. It is just like the public profession today; but there is a woman labouring in her spirit, her soul you might say, pouring out to God; and what for? Not for herself but for Israel. She must have been thinking of

what God said of Eve, that the seed of the woman shall crush the serpent's head.

Rem. Coming back to your initial remark as to the substantial side of things, when the Lord appeared to His own in Luke they were afraid and confounded, supposing they had seen a spirit, but He said "Handle me and see", chap 24: 39. Was He not presenting the substantial side of things to them on the other side of death ?

E.T.M. And the way He puts it would serve as a help to us as we sit here tonight in Lossiemouth. He says "a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see me having". "Me having": He has not changed, He is the same tonight as we sit here now, simple and unpretentious. He is the same to us: "see me having". He is going on with us to the end.

Ques. A real man is He not?

Ques. And is it how we are presently linked? We are truthfully enjoying things because the disobedient side, can we say, has left us? We are those that are longing to keep His commandments and the Spirit of God is free amongst us; humbly but truthfully we are enjoying things.

E.T.M. Yes. Our brother's reference to the continuity from the Supper, carried right through the week, helps because We know we have had our part in failure. We are constantly kept humble by that. We have had times when we saw brethren laughing and laughing and being apparently happy, but there was a lot of admixture and we have had to judge all that. But there was never a time, in my life any way, when the brethren were more really happy.

Rem. I am thankful you say that.

E.T.M. Wherever you go it is the same, whether two, three, ten, twenty or a hundred.

Rem. There is a restfulness and joy amongst the saints; and God has provided the best for us and He is encouraging us to go in for it.

E.T.M. Yes, and we need to strive to encourage one another.

Rem. Paul says "forgetting the things behind". He knew that side, but "stretching out to the things before, I pursue", Phil 3: 13.

E.T.M. There never was a day when there was so much emphasis on athletics. Every field - tennis, golf, every different kind of athletics - is being pointed up today and men go to extreme lengths and spend millions of dollars to promote that kind of thing. Well, stretching out, pressing towards the mark is an athletic idea. It is like a runner or any kind of athlete; he is trying to win.

Rem. Paul uses the illustration as to the race, does he not? It was current in his time and he uses it to impress the souls of the saints.

E.T.M. "Stretching out" means what we said earlier: you do not turn to the right hand or to the left; he would go straight ahead until he gets there.

Rem. Thank God that, if we do have a tendency to turn to the right or to the left, we will get a word behind us saying "This is the way, walk ye in it ", Isa 30: 21.

E.T.M. Yes, He will not leave you - "I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee". Who of us is not prone to, or capable of, turning one way or the other; but, as you say, you will hear a voice, not in front of you, but behind you; that is a remarkable thing, that is grace. "This is the way" - that means the voice that was calling for your attention was in the way. "This is the way", not, That is the way. The person who is calling out to you is really the way.

Ques. Is the voice referred to there that of the Spirit?

E.T.M. I think so; what do you say?

Rem. Persons are setting aside the Spirit today, they are not hearing the voice saying "This is the way, walk ye in it". They are walking to the right and to the left.

E.T.M. The Lord said of Himself when He was here, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life", John 14: 6. Then He said 'I send you another Comforter': it is not going to be different, it will be the same.

Rem. Every day is very important in our links, in our measure, with divine Persons. "This is the way, walk ye in it" involves nearness, in one sense, does it not?

E.T.M. Yes, the Person is right by you. In that way He would be teaching you the value of nearness to Him self. He teaches you the value of drawing on Him because evidently you would be going ahead not really near to Him in your affections and He has to call t o you when you are turning off. Nearness will protect you from turning off.

Rem. Prayer is a very important side in this at the beginning and end of every day.

E.T.M. It helps to be in a prayerful attitude. While we may not be praying formally as we say - you may not have time - you are constitutionally so being built up along that line that even though you may not have time formally to pray, the attitude of your mind is there so that when the time comes, and you have time and it is needed, it is not irksome. It is spontaneous, you just go right in to Him.

Ques. You spoke about me days being meaningful. There is nothing wasted, everything has an objective, would you say?

E.T.M. You love to learn to value the ways of God. If you were not at work and you found yourself in circumstances that obviously were being ordered of God, it would be a test to you; but in that, in His ways with you, it is to bring out whether you are dependent and obedient. We would have to value His ways. You may go through things that would be irksome to the natural man, but you get something out of them that makes the day meaningful to you.

LOSSIEMOUTH

May 1973

Key to initials

J.C.Chalmers - Lossiemouth; E.T.Maynard - New York.

Other speakers not identified in original notes.

THE FATHER OF SPIRITS

W F.Flowerdew

Hebrews 12: 1-11

I link on with our brother's prayer as to the pathway of the Lord Jesus here and the way in which He has endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God, because the apostle is particularly concerned that we should "consider well him who endured so great contradiction from sinners against himself, that ye be not weary, fainting in your minds". It seems that there is always the need of being strengthened and encouraged and lifted up in our minds against what might depress or cast us down, or work in other ways. We need, of course, to strengthen ourselves against sin and how the enemy would try to get in in that respect. But I thought in this section particularly that the Lord would lift us up in our spirits, if any may be inclined to faint and droop in mind as we might quite easily do from one cause and another. But the Lord would encourage us, I think, to endure, to have our part in this race and have the heavenly line of things before us so that we might really be in the race with the great objective before us - the Lord Himself who has gone before and is now at the right hand of God. He sets things on and sustains us, sustaining the whole system for the pleasure of God. And He would sustain us individually too, and work with us in relation to our spirits.

What is particularly affecting in this section is the name of the Father as the Father of spirits: "shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?". It is touching to think of that. We have sung of the Father's name in our hymn. We have had it before us in Matthew's gospel, our "Father who is in the heavens" (chap 6: 1), but this seems to be a particularly intimate matter, "the Father of spirits", an inward matter, a matter in which I think we are particularly in touch with God Himself, known in this blessed relationship as the Father of spirits. We cannot tell what is going on in anybody's spirit, persons in discipline, brethren in

hospital and such places; we cannot assume to know what is going on in anybody's spirit or in anybody's heart, but the Father of spirits does. The Father of spirits is the One who cares for this inward line of things, so that on an occasion like this the word may come in, as it does, through one and another, and we do not know how it is going to operate, but the Father of spirits does. He can apply the word to our spirits, and whilst the word is given, we have to leave the results in the Father's hand. The Father would produce something with us in relation to our spirits, in relation to the result that He has in mind Himself, that we might live, that we might be partakers of His holiness. That is the result; there would be something more for Him, some greater representation of Himself.

I think we can often see this with persons who are under particular discipline, how quickly the Father works in them and the Spirit works in them, producing perhaps mature features in a very short time. I have noticed it myself with elderly brothers in particular, and sisters too - the brothers because you hear them expressing themselves - how mature they have become in their address to the Father, their speaking to God, as if something very special has been wrought out in their spirits in the time of discipline. I think that is what this thought of the Father of spirits would involve; it would produce a quality and a maturity of things which God is looking for from each one of us, however the discipline may come. But He would encourage us not to faint, to keep our eye on the Lord, to keep on in the race, not to faint, not to be weary but to endure, and just to subject ourselves so that quality might come about with us, that the Father might get more for His own pleasure and that there might be this result, increasingly partaking of His holiness. How perfectly this great feature of holiness was seen in the Lord Himself! I think the Father is producing this in His own way, that He has His own point in discipline just perhaps to adjust us, to remove something, but to produce something substantial in the way of holiness which is in accordance with His own nature, which is really the result of His own love. It has been said that the Father is out for our promotion, He is promoting us. He is always out to further us and help us forward.

This would encourage us to go through, to endure, pointing attention to the Lord's own pathway here, its perfection, and His going on to the cross, "and that the death of the cross", Phil 2: 8. I think it would help us to be prepared for the reproach, and to go through with whatever measure of endurance may be called for on our side, in order that this positive result may be found with us, that we may be subject to the Father of spirits and live, because the Father's organisation is a living one and He desires us to live.

The end of the chapter says we have come to the living God, a great living system of things. It would have in mind, I think, that we should be more representative, more like the God whose system it is, and more matured, marked by increasing quality. I think the Lord is getting at this matter of quality, reduction in numbers may be, and sorrowfully we have had to face it and do, but I think the Lord would get at that which is more and more distinctive in the way of quality, what would be more and more for the Father's pleasure, and the understanding of Himself. It is an interesting title, the Father of spirits, and as having to do with Him inwardly in an intimate way we can rejoice in the place of children and sons in relation to the Father. The Lord would help us to see that it all has a bearing upon our increase in the knowledge of the Father Himself and what He is securing in the way of quality and life for His own pleasure. It was just this thought, as following our brother's prayer, that confirmed me to read the scripture, knowing that more is in mind, but just to touch on this line of things that we might be found more in this great sphere of life which is for the Father's pleasure.

LONDON

13 February 1973

"HE MANIFESTED HIMSELF THUS"

E.J.Jarvis

John 21:1-14

It seems to me, beloved brethren, that there is a very strong link in the portion we have read with what the Lord has been giving to us in these meetings. I think we see the Lord Jesus operating as Lord and also as Head. It is a wonderful portion to read, to see the skill that marks Him, and how He deals with His own, and glorifies His Father in the doing of it, and retains His weak, erring disciples. What a chapter it is! What a picture for us! What a lesson book! It says "Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias. And he manifested himself thus". I think that word 'thus' is to be taken account of by us all: "he manifested himself thus". This is how He did it. We might have done it very differently. We might have done it more harshly. We might have finished the matter completely, but the Lord does not do that. He does finish it, but He finishes it gloriously. And so we have these disciples, and Peter leading, and "Simon Peter says to them, I go to fish". I need not go into all this detail because the brethren have heard from this chapter many times, but Simon Peter leads others in an expedition that was really going back on what the Lord had called him to. So the Lord Jesus graciously comes in. How different things become, do they not? How different things are when the Lord comes in! So it says "They went forth, and went on board, and that night took nothing".

That was the outcome, that was the net result, if we can speak of it as a result, from that movement on the part of these disciples. "But early morn already breaking, Jesus stood on the shore". How lovely this is! The Lord Jesus would come into all our matters. I believe what has been said is right, that the Lord loves to come into all our matters and show Himself, and show where He is in relation to them; and He has the solution to the matters too. O, that we could be nearer to Him!

'Close to Thy trusted side,

In fellowship divine' (Hymn No.270)

"Jesus stood on the shore". He takes up a definite position in relation to these disciples and to what they had been doing and were doing. "The disciples however did not know that it was Jesus". How often that is the case, dear brethren, that the Lord draws near and shows Himself, positions Himself near to us to help us, to recover us, to secure what is His again, afresh, and what is for the Father's pleasure, and we just do not know He is there. So it says "Jesus therefore says to them, Children, have ye anything to eat?"

Think of this tender and gracious way that the Lord approaches His own: "Children, have ye anything to eat? They answered Him, No". What a humbling time! Fancy having to say that to the Lord; but they had to say it. "They answered him, No". But then the Lord comes in "And he said to them, Cast the net at the right side of the ship and ye will find". How simple, and yet how powerful! This seems to me to touch on the matter of His lordship. Everything was under His control; the sea was under His control, the fish were under His control, and the disciples were under His control; they had erred, they had strayed for the moment, but the Lord is acting in recovery.

If we want a picture of priestliness and how to act, I think we get it here. If we want to see headship operating, I think we see it here. If we want to see the Lord as Head, Head of the vast creation, as we sometimes sing, we see it here. How glorious He is, dear brethren! We can sing:

'Lord Jesus Christ, our living Head,
How bright Thy glories shine!' (Hymn No.199)

They are shining here. He says "Cast the net at the right side of the ship and ye will find". There is no doubt about it whatever: "Ye will find". And how much they did find! "They cast therefore, and they could no longer draw it. from the multitude of fishes". This is the way to increase, dear brethren; this is the way to prosperity; this is the way to addition; this is the way to glorify God. "That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved says to Peter, It is the Lord". I wonder if we can all say that now, at the close of this first day: "It is the Lord"?

The Lord has been speaking to us, beloved brethren, bringing His excellence and glory before us, and not only His own excellence and glory but the excellence and glory of the Father for He would always be directing us to the Father and the Holy Spirit too would be directing us to the Father. So "Simon Peter therefore, having heard that it was the Lord, girded his overcoat on him (for he was naked)", fully exposed. Humbled? Yes, no doubt, and we should all be humbled; I hope there is not a proud one here today, including myself. We should all be humbled at what has come in, at the departure, the weakness, the breakdown, the failure; humbled but not hindered. God would have us to go on in triumph and in victory with what is of Himself and for Himself, with Christ before us, the Christ indeed dwelling in our hearts through faith (see Eph 3: 17).

May we be attracted to Him and then attached to Him and then committed to Him. There are no side lines in Christianity; we are to be thoroughly devoted to Christ and His interests here. May that be our occupation for the rest of our time. Joseph's brethren were asked "What is your occupation?" (Gen 46: 33), and they could answer. Well, can we all here this evening answer and say what our occupation is, what we intend it to be, through grace and by the Spirit's help, until our Lord shall come?

So it says "They were not far from the land", and they were "dragging the net of fishes". How wonderful this is! What a difference it makes when the Lord comes in! What a harvest there is, a harvest for us and a harvest for Him! "When therefore they went out on the land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it". I believe someone that we loved said that He gave them a hot meal.

Wonderful treatment, you know! If we want to know how to treat one another, just read this chapter. "They see a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. Jesus says to them, Bring of the fishes which ye have now taken". What wonderful grace! He would even use the fishes that they had just taken to add to the meal, to contribute to it. "Simon Peter went up and drew the net to the land full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty-three; and though there were so many, the net was not rent". It remained intact. We have been

speaking of regulation and things being intact in our localities. It is most necessary that we should attend to regulation. Does not Pharaoh say to Joseph, "according to thy commandment shall all my people regulate themselves" (Gen 41: 40)? And then Paul says much about regulation. So we need it. "Jesus says to them, Come and dine". It was not just a snack, it was the time for dining. "Jesus comes and takes the bread and gives it to them, and the fish in like manner. This is already the third time that Jesus had been manifested to the disciples, being risen from among the dead".

Well, beloved brethren, let us take pattern from Him; let us read the gospels to see how He acted and how He spoke, what He did and the way He did it. I think this chapter is very affecting and should move all our hearts, move us to worship Him, move us to pray, and move us to our knees too, that we might be more like Him. So I think it connects, dear brethren, with what the Lord has been giving us today - His headship and His lordship, and divine Persons coming into things. May the Lord bless the word to us.

LONDON

17 October 1975

THE CHILDREN'S SURPRISES

One day when the Lord Jesus was at Capernaum in Galilee He called a little child to Him to be a model of humility for the disciples.

The boy or girl must have been near enough to Him to hear the call and was evidently ready to answer. What a surprise to be placed among the twelve apostles and be able to listen to the Lord's teaching! Matthew, one of those present, remembered that Jesus spoke at that time of being converted and about the "little ones who believe in me". This gospel-writer shows especially how the child was used in its simplicity as an *example*. Mark tells us that the incident took place in a house and that the child was taken up into the arms of Jesus, showing that he or she became an object of *affection*. According to Luke the child was also set down beside the Lord which was truly a place of *honour*.

I have often thought about the little boy who had the loaves and fishes at a time when a crowd of over five thousand people needed to be fed in a desert place. No doubt he had thoughtfully brought food with him so as to be able to stay as long as possible with the Teacher. Imagine his surprise and alarm when it was all taken from him! Quickly this was changed to joy that the Master could make use of what a child had brought and magnify it to feed so many. Perhaps too he kept near enough to the Lord to hear Him say "that nothing may be lost" when the fragments had to be gathered. This miracle is of special interest as being the only one recorded by all four of the gospel writers.

In the time of the prophet Elisha two poor and fatherless boys had a happy surprise just at a time when their mother had no means of buying food for them. She had already borrowed much from others and, strangely enough, the prophet told her to borrow even more. This time however it was empty vessels that were wanted, probably earthen ones. The surprise for the children was that every one of those vessels became filled with oil as their mother poured it out from just one potful which was the only thing they had in the house. From the sale of the oil there was enough money to meet all

the needs of the household. Oil is a type of the Holy Spirit who dwells in the earthen vessel of the obedient believer. He provides us with all we need to live to God's pleasure and to our own happiness. Have you received the Spirit?

J.C.Evershed