

A
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THE COMING OF THE LORD

1 John 2: 28, 29; 3; 1-3; Revelation 22: 16, 17, 20, 21; Luke 12: 32-40

E.M.W. I have been thinking about the coming of the Lord. That strikes a chord in every heart here. The outlook for the believer is not depressing but bright. Jesus says "I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star". Most of us would know that the Lord Himself is the hope of the church, it is not just an event; nevertheless there will be an event, the next vibration of His power will gather together to Himself every redeemed one. If we spoke for a moment of the rapture it is based on God's rights in grace and redemption, so that every believer will be gathered together to the Lord. The kingdom is based more on His rights in government but the rapture on His rights in grace. No believer will be overlooked then. The brightness of His coming is apt to fade in our hearts.

Scripture itself says "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick", Prov 13: 12. Hence, I think, we need to be maintained in our souls and affections in the anticipation of the imminence of the Lord taking us.

The first scripture read says "And now, children, abide in him, that if he be manifested we may have boldness, and not be put to shame from before him at his coming". He then proceeds to show us the position that love has placed us in as children of God. So that the anticipation of His coming has an effect upon us; it is not that it ought to have but it has an effect upon us if it is there. In the second scripture He introduces Himself (speaking reverently) "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies". He sent His angel to do that, but He is not sending His angel to gather us, He is coming Himself. We might have thought it an honour if Michael had been sent, but Jesus is coming Himself. How that stimulates our affections! Then "the Spirit and the bride say, Come"; that would be, Come, take up everything that belongs to You. The Lord has been denied His rights; He has been denied His rights as Son of man having universal dominion; He has been denied His rights as the King of Israel, as Son of God, the Messiah was cut off

and had nothing (see Dan 9: 26); but the bride cherishes everything that is His and holds it for Him and says "Come". That has in mind to take up all that belongs to Him. He says "I come quickly", as though He is on the way. Response from our hearts is "Amen; come, Lord Jesus". I wondered if that needs to be revived in our hearts, dear brethren. And the last scripture is watching and waiting, and working of course for Christ because we are bondmen. So that while the blessedness of the coming of Jesus is before us, the Spirit would revive it in our affections. Clearly in each case it has a moral effect upon us. If it does not have such an effect, then the question is whether Jesus Himself is enshrined in our affections or whether there is some other object between our souls and Him.

A.B.P. The passage in Revelation has in view the public appearing. It would be understandable at the end of a book such as this that the feelings of the saints are in full sympathy with the Lord in relation to the relief of mankind as well as to the public display of His own glory.

E.M.W. It is important to see that; hence in testimony we would cherish that. The point you make, that it refers to the appearing, is important. The bride cherishes everything that is precious to Christ, in fact in connection with what you remark, even we ourselves groan within ourselves awaiting redemption - "awaiting adoption, that is the redemption of our body", Rom 8: 23. So that in saying "Come", simple as it is I think it has in mind His appearing and the setting right of everything, every moral issue in the world, relief for the groaning creation, the setting free of man, the taking up of government, heavenly and earthly principalities. Much could be named, but in the simple word "Come" the bride is cherishing everything that is precious to Christ and is, so to speak, on the *qui vive* for His coming to take it.

G.D.W. Is the reference to righteousness in this first scripture to indicate to us that we should be morally in accord with what will be publicly displayed at His coming?

E.M.W. Yes, that is one of the points in one's mind, not in an arbitrary way but to exercise our hearts. If you take for example the

simple expression, "every one that has this hope in him" (that is in Christ) "purifies himself, even as he is pure"; it is not that he ought to do that, but having the hope, it is the normal consequence for him to do that, so that he is brought as a normal consequence into correspondence with Christ. I think that is the way Christianity works.

G.D.W. There is a certain transforming excellency to that.

E.M.W. Yes. So the divine standard of our purification is a glorified Man. You may say, You will never reach it; but the standard is kept before us: "even as he is pure". The normal consequence of having this hope in Him is that a man purifies himself. If he does not, then the hope is not in him; it is just as simple as that.

C.G. In 1 Thessalonians 5: 23 it says, "Now the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly and your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Would you say a word on the peace of God in relation to the coming of Christ, and would the things mentioned there suggest readiness at His coming?

E.M.W. Yes I think so, your whole spirit and soul and body is to be preserved blameless. You will find, I think, that every reference to the coming of the Lord is addressed to persons who are alive at the time. It has often been said that it is never put beyond the lifetime of those persons, and it is intended to have the effect that you say. It is clearly not on the principle of 'thou shalt'. It does not say, If you have this hope in you you shall make yourself pure; it is just that if this hope is in you you will do it. You do not need a law; it is just that that Person is so enshrined in your affections that the normal consequence is that you are purifying yourself even as He is pure because you are going to see Him face to face.

C.F.D. Is what you have been saying involved in the first scripture where it says "And now, children, abide in him"? Abiding in Him would suggest that there is proceeding in us something that is compatible with what He is Himself where He is now, so there is the idea of equivalence in the believer.

E.M.W. That would be the intention. How far that is effective in us would be another matter. But he puts it so simply; he says "now, children, abide in him". Someone says, What does that mean? How do I do it? A young person might be justified in asking that question.

All your supplies are drawn from Him, are they not? In simple dependence you are related to and drawing from Him, so there is to be brought about a constancy in character with Himself. Jesus Himself uses the figure of the vine; He speaks of the branch abiding in the vine; if it does not abide in the vine, drawing all its resources from the vine, then it becomes dead and worthless (see John 15: 6). But our problem is that we tend to draw supplies from elsewhere.

G.D.P. As begotten of Him we would have those features, would we not, features of the divine nature? "Every one who practises righteousness is begotten of him".

E.M.W. Yes. I believe one of the points of John's ministry is to exercise the consciences and hearts of the saints to correspond in their practice with the work of God in them.

G.D.P. Yes, we are to walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh.

E.M.W. To abide in Him is most important. I suppose if we went into detail and comparisons it is like holding fast the Head. We know of no resource save Christ.

T.E.D. Is the earlier verse in the chapter (v 6) a challenge in that way: "He that says he abides in him ought, even as he walked, himself also so to walk"? It is one thing to say, but then the test currently is the living expression of the answer.

E.M.W. Yes exactly.

A.B.P. This word 'in' - "abide in him" - is used in a number of relations. Do you think that it is vital because it seems to be the opposite to mere profession? I am thinking of the expression, for instance, to the Thessalonians, that they were "in God the Father" (1 Thess 1: 1), and Paul uses the expression "only in the Lord", 1 Cor 7: 39. Could we have some impression as to what that 'in' means?

E.M.W. It has been called, as you would know, a preposition of power. It seems to me that we should be exercised to be under the direct influence of Christ as attached to Him. We learn by way of contrast, and, as you say, it is in contrast to mere profession. "Abide in him" I think means that we are attracted to Him and attached to Him, and to reach it would include our simple, practical devotions of prayer, meditation, seeking His presence so that we are brought under His influence, in the same way (as has often been illustrated) that the earth is under the influence of the sun. It seems to me that abiding in Him and having Him enshrined in our affections is the basic solution to our problems, whether personal, or household, or assembly problems. I feel sure that, if we were in the power of this, it would be the basic answer to many of our problems, if not all of them.

A.B.P. By way of illustration, would it be right that, if we are 'in', it is a sort of orbit in which attraction holds us in relation to the Person in a personal way?

E.M.W. Very good; our brother's comment on being in orbit and attached to Christ is helpful in regard of this expression "And now, children, abide in him". Most of us will know of Mr Raven's three 'a's' - attraction, attachment, affection. I believe the Spirit of God operates - and we should be concerned to give Him room to do so - to attract us to Christ, and attach us to Him, and develop our affection for Him, so that He becomes the great object before us; He becomes our life, our strength, our object and our motive. We all have to acknowledge how many different objects and motives we find in our hearts. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and incurable" (Jer 17: 9) but I think that in the power of the Spirit, we learn to judge that as it was judged on the cross and we are held in attachment to Christ by the Spirit.

G.H. Abiding in Him is set out in John himself; he was in the bosom of Jesus, leaning on His breast. That gives power to what He writes because he set it out himself.

E.M.W. Yes, it gives him moral power too, which is of all importance. The secret of power is simply abiding in Him.

A.B.P. Peter certainly got out of orbit when he denied the Lord but he stresses the point that he is attached to the Lord. This would be as recovered, of course, but did the Lord allow that to go on through three inquiries so that he might come to that consciousness that what he said was to be expressed in what he did? The use of the word 'knowledge' there is changed, as you know, but it seems to suggest that tie came to it that he realised that his love for Christ was going to be expressed in what he did.

E.M.W. Yes, and the heart-searching is very deep; it is with each of us; and it is not simply related to some specific problem but it is general. I believe that Mr Darby says of that heart-searching of Peter's that the Lord never trusts a man who trusts himself. So if I am trusting myself, the Lord does not trust me.

L.MacF. What follows is that Peter inquires as to John, "What of this man?" John 21: 21. Does John exemplify in his complacency one who was really in orbit and attached?

E.M.W. I think he would; he illustrates the character and substance of persons that will go through to the end; "If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me" (v 22). It seems to me that these are lessons we need to learn which deeply exercise the conscience and the heart. I believe it was Mr Darby who also said, The question is, When I see the Lord what is He going to say to me?

A.B.P. 'How will He greet me?'

J.A.P. You would include therefore in your inquiry about the Lord's coming His coming into this meeting and His searching us out through His word. If He manifest Himself (I know that may be something more) we anticipate something in these meetings, do we not?

E.M.W. I think we should do that. I thought of this very thing because he says "And now, children, abide in him, that if he be manifested we may have boldness, and not be put to shame from

before him"; you could have had a full stop there, but he adds "at his coming". It seems to me that the moral effect of what he is saying is that He might be manifested at any time.

J.A.P. I was wondering that, because it says at the end of John, "This is already the third time that Jesus had been manifested" (v 14). It is a very testing thing when He comes into the service of God and when He comes into these meetings, such meetings as we have now. Is that right?

E.M.W. Yes; so we should make room for Him. I think it is clear that in the teaching of it He is speaking about the manifestation of Jesus, that is His coming: "if it is manifested we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is". But in the earlier verse to which you have alluded it says, "if he be manifested we may have boldness, and not be put to shame from before him at his coming". So if Jesus is manifested here, have I boldness or are there hidden motives of any kind working in the heart which are contrary to Christ?

T.E.D. Is there something in the typical teaching as to Joseph? It says "they made ready the gift for Joseph's coming at noon" (Gen 43: 25), and yet in that they were searched through and through by the presence of Joseph, and even had to go through a further test to bring out what was in their hearts.

E.M.W. Yes. Hence the presentation of the Lord's word bears not necessarily on specific difficulties but on the state that causes those difficulties. Hence "abide in him, that if he be manifested"; and there is no question about it that through the problems that arise the Lord is exposing state among us, and I have an impression that there is a state of unreadiness for His appearing.

A.B.P. Do you think that the matter of a sister lingering, waiting for the Lord to take her, is intended to convey something to us as to the reality whether what we profess and say in ministry is really operating in us and that our expectancy is such that we are ready?

E.M.W. That is salutary. We think of our dear sister; as you say, what is before her? You might say she is brought to a point where the only One before her is Jesus. Now that should be with us when

we are in life and health. I think we must admit that the brightness of the coming of Jesus tends to become dull and consequently we get into a state where our affections are not moving towards Him.

E.E.H. This word 'abide' is testing, is it not? The Lord Himself uses it in John 15 in relation to Himself as abiding in the Father's commandments. He says in verse 4 of that chapter, "Abide in me and I in you". But then He says "As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you: abide in my love. If ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (vv 9,10). One thing follows upon another. The Lord would present to us that, as He abides in His Father's commandment, we are to abide in His love.

E.M.W. That is very much what is one's mind. So each thing is that normal consequence in the believer's experience. We are so apt to be governed by rules and regulations and the like. People like that.

In a sense if you have a book of rules it makes things simple, but things are not so simple. But the Spirit is here to hold us in attachment to Christ, and I believe that each of these things to which you refer is the normal consequence in the believer's experience.

E.F.C. Do you think that this affluent, materialistic age in which we are living tends to keep most of us from being as near to Christ as we might be and abiding in Him as John contemplates in his ministry?

E.M.W. Yes. I have no doubt whatever about that. We were speaking on Thursday evening of our young men and women elsewhere in the world. They have to come to a decision, it is Christ or communism. For example, one young brother has the ability and the desire to be a doctor but unless he joins the communist party he cannot be a doctor. He has to make up his mind, it is Christ or communism. The young man has made up his mind; it is Christ. So he has just a menial occupation. But there is witness to the simple devotion of that man and the progress he is making in his soul because Christ is his object and motive.

E.E.H. That is a real practical example, is it not?

E.M.W. Yes. If a young man wants a motorcar he has to put his name down and wait several years for it. What Mr Cary brings up is of the greatest importance; affluence, material prosperity and the like, which enters into our last scripture, may hinder us in our souls because it tends to become an objective with us. We thank God for His mercies and we do not want to despise them; if He gives us a good home we use it for the brethren; if He gives us a good meal we enjoy it; He gives us all things liberally to enjoy (see 1 Tim 6: 17), but at the same time those things may tend to dull our spiritual sensibilities and hinder our spiritual progress.

C.G. That was the sin of Sodom: pride, fulness of bread, and careless ease (see Ezek 16: 49); they had everything they needed, so they felt they did not need God.

E.M.W. That is like Laodicea, rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing - we are the people! We need to guard against that, dear brethren, and be lowly.

A.Macd. Do you think Mephibosheth's state was right? His heart was attached to David and he was prepared to let everything go in view of the king coming back.

E.M.W. Very good; provided that the king was back in his place that was all that mattered to Mephibosheth. He said, Let Ziba take everything, I do not want what is material, what I want is the king to be in his proper place. So the aim of each of us in our localities should be that Christ has the first place in every thing, not only in our localities but in our persons and lives as well. I think what will promote that is the consciousness of the imminence of His return.

P.L.D. Does being established more in what He accomplished at the first coming prepare our hearts to be attracted to this?

E.M.W. That would be the case I think. You mean the great work that He accomplished for us.

P.L.D. I was thinking of the last verse of Hebrews 9: "Christ... shall appear to those that look for him the second time without sin for salvation". The note there shows how the completeness of what He

did by His first coming reflects on us in the meantime so that we are in the good of that.

E.M.W. Yes, "shall appear to those that look for him the second time without sin" - that is, He has no more to say to us (save in judgment of course) - "for salvation".

B.T. After Peter had denied the Lord thrice he went out and wept bitterly. He was ashamed then, but later as adjusted he was quite bold in his ministry, was he not?

E.M.W. Yes he was. As you would know, Mr Taylor said that a spiritual man is quickly adjusted.

A.B.P. When the Lord refers to Himself as "the root and offspring of David", does that relate in any sense to this matter of abiding in Him? Does it suggest not only His deity but the fact that the features that delighted God in David were drawn, so to speak, from the Spirit of Christ operating in him?

E.M.W. I think that is right.

A.B.P. Why does he bring it in now? Is it that we might abide in the root, so to speak?

E.M.W. Yes, and I think be established. He does not change, does He? The root, as you say; everything that shone in David really found its origin in Christ. Then the offspring, every promise of God to David and all that belongs to David will all be fulfilled, set up and established; the Yea and Amen is in Him.

A.B.P. So when He comes in His operation in establishing the kingdom in the millennium will it be Davidic?

E.M.W. Yes I think so. Of course we must not leave out Solomon, as you know.

A.B.P. I know that is generally the character of the dispensation, but the beginning of it even in the tribulation will probably be Davidic, David's greater Son.

E.M.W. I would think that. Now the exercise is how far we are cherishing in our hearts what belongs to Him, what is due to Him

generally in universal dominion as Son of man, what is due to Him in government which He shall take up, what is due to Him in the fellowship generally, what is due to Him in our several localities, whether we are cherishing His rights in every connection or whether some other motive is governing us.

A.B.P. In that sense, inasmuch as the house of God is the area of His present judgment, the outflow of that should be wholly in keeping with what comes into evidence in public administration in the millennium.

E.M.W. That is where we are very much tested I think.

A.B.P. It is a test and something to keep us very humble. I wondered if you had in mind in the introduction to the millennial day something of this character.

E.M.W. Yes I had, and the present effect upon us. The world is full of lawlessness and anarchy, and that has crept in amongst those that are in touch with the recovery. It is a most astounding thing to me that a man should write a book justifying anarchy and making it almost a doctrine. Now we are affected by the environment around us, and I think in our localities generally in the fellowship there should be a simple expression of what will obtain in the world to come; Christ will be supreme. Of course then there will be a metropolis, the heavenly city, but at the present time administration is worked out in our localities, and each locality virtually should be a miniature world to come, so to speak, and the conditions of the world to come should be there. But they will never be there unless there is implicit subjection to Christ.

C.F.D. I think what you are referring to is vital. As you will remember, Mr Taylor used to refer to the fact that what is current in the countries in which we live very often finds its way in amongst the saints. This should be something that is constantly before us so that the mind of the Lord, the mind of the Spirit, should be the predominating line in our motives, not the line of independence. I do not know so much about your own country, but in this country young people are taught the line of independence and selfreliance and

thinking for themselves and this kind of thing. Every man doing what is right in his own eyes creeps in amongst us, does it not?

E.M.W. Yes it does. You fear it has crept in amongst us. I am not speaking of this country simply, I am speaking generally. The teaching of self-expression which is pretty much universal is really leading to the man of sin who will be the full-blown expression of it.

Now the Spirit of God would bring in the truth to help us in our souls against that; He would bring in an antidote to it in ministry.

C.F.D. Therefore are we tested constantly as to our spirits and the bent of our minds, whether we are seeking to be on the alert to link on with the truth and accept the truth, and accept that which would come in in the way of the word of God which would be the governing factor in our lives, rather than a spirit of challenge which is so common in the world?

E.M.W. Yes I think that, and that Christ should be your life and object, not your hobby. The assembly and the things that are precious to Christ are not just an attachment to your life but they are your life.

G.D.P. So in your first scripture it says "the world knows us not, because it knew him not"; should that not be the state we should be in?

E.M.W. That is true; "the world knows us not because it knew him not", but then how true is that? How much of Christ does the world see in me to which it objects?

A.S.H. In the scripture in Revelation we have the word 'athirst'. Do you think that to be able to be fully in the things of Christ we must have a thirst or right desires? I was struck by the young man to whom you referred and his direction, he had the right desire.

E.M.W. And the Spirit of God would honour that. Now there is no reason why every young man and young woman, and those of us who are older too of course, should not come to the same decision.

It has often been said that every crisis and every conflict and every division resolves itself into this: Christ or the world, earth or heaven.

Now the resolve of our hearts should be Christ and heaven. You will find weakness, you may fall away, you may have decline and recovery in your history, but if that is the resolve of your heart I believe the Spirit of God will help you and honour it.

E.E.H. This word "purifies himself" is very important, is it not? There is constant need for purification because everything around is so soiled. It says "purifies himself, even as he is pure"; we want to correspond at the present time with what He is Himself.

E.M.W. That is the thought, that when we see Him we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Now a person who has that hope in Him would desire to be morally like Him now even in these conditions. But we get accustomed to all these impure things, things which our fathers would have been horrified at.

E.E.H. There is a tremendous stress on the mind of the young. So we need constant purification.

E.M.W. That, I think, is brought about by constantly seeking the Lord's presence.

G.D.W. We were talking about self-expression and communism: whatever kind of thing it is it is a system that is not of God, a system where Christ is left out. Is it important that we do not allow any kind of system to develop in our own minds so that Christ may be supreme?

E.M.W. We need to be constantly in His presence because what is called 'the system' is just the working of the flesh, and that can work anywhere at any time. Immediately it begins to work it gives the enemy an advantage.

G.D.W. The thing I have to judge in myself is the natural tendency to drift into these things. We may say we would not do what is being done elsewhere, but the flesh is still the flesh; we need to have Christ before us.

E.M.W. Yes exactly. When we speak of the system which system are we talking about? Are we talking about the prison or the tree?

J.A.P. What do you mean by that?

E.M.W. Well, one system has become the hold or prison of every unclean and hated bird (see Rev 18 : 2). You say, That is the papal system. But it is nearer to us than that as witnessed in the bondage of many of our brethren.

G.D.W. Mr Darby used to speak of brethrenism; maybe that is the guise under which it reaches us.

E.M.W. Yes; well now that is the prison, and many of our brethren are in prison and we pray for them. Some of our brethren have their children in prison, or "the hold". But then there is the tree in Matthew (see chap 13: 31,32) and the birds come and go as they please; the same birds. So you might have the bondage or you might have the looseness and corruption ecclesiastically. If you could find more devastating words than Mr Darby uses of the open system you would be quite a clever man. He speaks of the open system in the most devastating way, and I do not doubt he would speak of what we call the prison in the same way, because Christ is not its object or motive.

C.S.E. I was thinking of the way the Lord uses the word "abide" frequently in John's gospel. He says in chapter 15, "He that abides in me and I in him" (v 5) as if that is the way to be preserved and kept, in a sense of constancy in abiding in Him. Is that what you are seeking to impress us with?

E.M.W. And it would be strengthened as the brightness of His coming and the imminence of it is kept constantly before us.

A.B.P. What Mr Elliott has just said seems to me to be expressed in the title 'the bride'. She would be seen here as in Christ, abiding in Him, would she not? That is what involves bridal state.

E.M.W. I would think so. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come".

A.B.P. He could have said 'the assembly',

E.M.W. Yes, but "the Spirit and the bride" shows the freshness that is maintained as abiding in Him.

A.B.P. And purity; "purifies himself, even as he is pure". I thought there was a direct relation between that and the title 'bride'.

E.M.W. I think that would be right. Now in this passage the bride is in correspondence with the Spirit. It is not the Spirit in the bride but the Spirit and the bride say, "Come"; that is saying, Come to Jesus.

O.L.L. We have to remember what the Lord particularly tells us: "without me ye can do nothing", John 15: 5.

E.M.W. How true that is! The Lord brings us to the consciousness that we have no strength so that we might realise where strength really is, that is in Himself. Paul had to come to that. I can do nothing in you and you can do nothing in me; we can seek to help one another, exhort one another, admonish one another, but the work is the work of the Spirit of God in the soul. Nothing can be determined by argument at all. The truth is arrived at by us where there is purity of motive for Christ alone, His glory, His rights, His testimony.

C.G. Purification as set out in 2 Timothy 2 has a favourable result; "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" (v 21). Is that not fine?

E.M.W. Yes. Do you follow it?

C.G. I seek with the Spirit's help to do so.

E.M.W. When I was a boy I was listening to Mr George Ware on that passage and he said to us, Now, you young men and young women, do not go to the Supper and break bread tomorrow morning unless you have a pure heart. I thought to myself, I do not know what I am going to do now. And he stopped - as some may know it was his custom to stop for a moment - and then he said, And what is a pure heart? I thought, well now, this is going to help. He said, A pure heart is a heart that would not willingly hold any motive that is contrary to Christ. I have never forgotten it.

G.D.W. I have often been intrigued with the reference in 2 Timothy 2, after he says "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace" he says "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart", and have

wondered whether the definition of a pure heart was the four qualities just listed; or was it left indeterminate?

E.M.W. I think that righteousness, faith, love, peace would be included. The word 'with' involves association, "with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". So that you have now not only as a separated individual a direct responsibility to the Lord, but you have a responsibility to the "those" with whom you walk, and that should be recognised. Do you agree with that?

J.A.P. Yes. I was thinking that the man came to the Lord and said, Tell my brother to divide the inheritance (see Luke 12: 13). What the Lord brought out about it was, What is your motive? It was covetousness. Pure hearts involve right motives; perhaps only the Lord can show us how bad they are sometimes.

E.M.W. The heart needs to be constantly in the presence of the Lord, or at least before Him, because, as we have already quoted, it is deceitful above all things and incurable. Now do I really believe that about my heart? I know it because the Scripture says it, but do I really believe that of my own heart? I see the answer in the cross of Christ. That heart, that state, was effectively dealt with by God, but the problem often is that it has not been resolved in me.

A.B.P. So the heart is purified by faith (see Acts 15: 9). That would be what you have just referred to, our apprehension of the work that has borne all that the heart is capable of.

E.M.W. I think we have to come to that, and I do not think I would be very far wrong if I said that it takes most of us a lifetime.

A.B.P. Do you not think that it would help some of us if we realised that we have not been subjected to the temptation or brought up in an environment where what is of the flesh finds expression so freely unjudged. The fact that there has been a hedge about us and we have been practically saved by parental care and by being with those who love the Lord, we have not perhaps had the opportunity to learn just what our hearts are capable of experimentally. Like Peter, he did not know that he would deny the Lord until he was in an environment where he was tempted.

E.M.W. I think there is that danger. At the same time I believe the Lord has His own way of taking us experimentally along the moral road to learn what our hearts really are.

A.B.P. Paul for all those years was trying to exterminate the name of Jesus, and the Lord allowed that so that he would understand what his heart was capable of.

G.D.W. Does this bring out the watching that you referred to? In other words we have to make certain observations as to what our hearts really are. Is the house going to be dug through or is it going to be protected? That is experimental.

E.M.W. Yes exactly; the whole thing hinges on affection for Christ.

G.H. I would like to get hold of what is involved in "purified by faith".

A.B.P. Their hearts became a suitable place for the Spirit, did they not?

E.E.H. That is the work of God.

E.M.W. Yes, He did it by faith. But then there is always the need for our hearts to be maintained in purity of motive. There is so much that works in the human heart, and we all know how subtle it is. The psalmist says "Search me, O God". First of all he says "Thou hast searched me", and then he says "Search me"; he invites it (Ps 139: 1, 23). He is not inviting it when a problem arises, he is inviting it all the time so that when the problem arises he is ready for it. You may say, When a problem arises you fly to the Lord, but how far do you have to fly?

C.G. Would you say a word on the difference between a pure heart and a perfect heart. In 2 Chronicles 16: 9 it says "For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward him".

Would you say that a perfect heart suggests singleness of purpose for God, and that a pure heart is free of all things contrary to Him or anything that is not in keeping with Him?

E.M.W. That probably could be expanded as to a perfect heart and a pure heart, but I think that would be included. But what one was

seeking to emphasise was nearness to Christ, so that we should not wait till trouble comes and then fly to Him, as we usually do, but be near to Him all the time. I think the man that is near to Christ, such as the men who have helped us and taught us, sees everything in His view of it; they saw it through His eyes, so to speak.

A.B.P. That is protective maintenance. The whole world has been alerted to the necessity of it recently through the conditions of the airlines, but it is a vital matter for us. Self-judgment does not mean just judging yourself when you have done something that is not right but judging the source from which what is not right comes.

E.M.W. It is self that is judged. That is an expression which is very common amongst us but how far the depth of it is really known would be a question.

C.F.D. We might get to the Lord about certain acts or things that we have done, or maybe a line of thought in our minds which is not in keeping with His, but can we get to the Lord and judge the state? That is getting to the point of origin, is it not? It is the man; and this seems to me to be a very important thing if we are to get to grips and finish with some of these things.

E.M.W. Yes, and it is to be characteristic. You speak to a man in the world and he will often tell you that when he gets into trouble he says his prayers, goes to God, and then he will acknowledge that he forgets about Him when the trouble is gone. But the believer is to be characteristically with God, and it is because we are not characteristically with God that when difficulties arise we are, to use a homely expression, caught on the wrong foot.

C.F.D. Do you think we are challenged therefore in the way we begin the day? The Lord, speaking reverently, said, Thou hast opened my ear morning by morning, (see Isa 50: 4). Do you feel that if we truly relate ourselves to Christ, and find that the word of God is sought by us, that it brings in a certain stability and nearness which would pay dividends as we proceed in the day?

E.M.W. Yes, that should be going on all the time. We are too spasmodic, I think, in our links with the Lord. So in Luke 12 He said,

Watch. He said "And if he come in the second watch, and come in the third watch"; that would link with what was said, that the Lord may manifest Himself in a meeting like this. Now we should be watching for that, not necessarily trying to take in everything that is said but watching for the point the Lord is seeking to make for our benefit in an occasion like this.

E.E.H. I like the term 'characteristic' which you use. I think John is on that line, a characteristic follower. The Lord had to say to Peter, Follow Me; but what Peter said originally came from the fact that he saw John following. So the Lord said to Peter, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me", John 21: 3. Is that not important?

E.M.W. It is indeed. "Follow thou me"; as has often been said, we follow Him by following the ministry that He gives. I think one of the evidences of the Lord supporting a company is that there is a living ministry, and not only a living ministry but also power to deal with evil. If those characteristics are not with a company, then you raise the question as to whether the Lord is there.

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Key to initials

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD

E.M.Walkinshaw

Romans 14: 16-18; 1 Corinthians 4: 17-20; Colossians 1: 12-18

I have the impression, dear brethren, to say something about the kingdom of God, because the gospel has in mind that God should have moral sway in the soul of the believer. It is the secret to much, I think, in our history. The glad tidings reach us bringing with them benefits - the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit - and I trust that every one here knows the forgiveness of sins and has received the Holy Spirit; that is God's intention when the glad tidings reach us. God's disposition which is towards all men is that of blessing. Often we get a wrong impression of God. I had a wrong impression of God when I was a young man, thinking for quite a long time that God's attitude was one of severity and judgment. But because of the work of Jesus God's disposition towards man is to bless. Now I know that Scripture does speak of the severity of God and of the judgment of God, but judgment is His strange work. What God has in His mind for man is blessing; that is for all mankind.

Scripture says "God, who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth", 1 Tim 2: 4. What a wonderful outlook that is! It is God's outlook, and that is to be the outlook of the believer; so you can preach the gospel to anybody. There is no class distinction, no colour distinction, it is a question of God and men, and God's outlook towards men is that of blessing.

But God blesses in order that He might rule. His will in the world to come will dominate, but there will still be blessing. And I think the end of the gospel is that man should come under the moral sway of God. Our greatest deficiencies, dear brethren, I think spring from insubjection. The world is insubject; man in the world is increasing in lawlessness and in the insistence on his own way, and it will no doubt culminate in the man who exalts and opposes himself against all called God, or object of veneration (see 2 Thess 2: 4), so that he himself sits down in the temple of Goel saying that he himself

is God. That I suppose is the fullblown expression of what was said at the beginning: "ye will be as God" (Gen 3: 5) - a solemn consideration, because we are having to say to divine realities, not philosophies or teachings, either Christian teachings or teachings of a particular group of Christians, but we are having to say to God.

This is a sobering consideration that such a man, the man of sin, will appear and sit himself down in the temple of God saying that he himself is God. Now that is in every human heart. As far as I am concerned personally I have the potential in sin to be the man of sin, but I have not the potential in brains, for which I can thank God. I have the potential in sin, my heart is no better than his and no different, but I have no doubt that that man will be a genius, which everybody knows I am not. Nevertheless it is a sobering consideration that there will be such a man that will be the full blown expression of what is in the human heart.

Now God has a kingdom and He would bring us into the gain of it. As we are brought into the gain of the kingdom we are brought, as we know, into the assembly. There is no room for any will other than God's in His assembly, and there is no room for selfopinionated people in God's assembly. And I think the object in the gospel is to bring us into subjection to God, because the kingdom of God is that God is supreme. He will be that in the day to come but I think that the word for us today is that there should be subjection. Now I would like to call attention to the fact that subjection is not simply obedience to commandments but is a state of soul. You will notice that in the end of John 3 it says "He that is not subject to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon Him" (v 36). The footnote to the word subjection is, not simply practical obedience to the commandments which may be a consequence but the obedience of submission to His person. So whether you approach God, or the Scriptures, or the brethren, or a brother in regard of a difficulty, or a problem in the local assembly, you approach in a subject frame of mind and a subject state of soul. You may have to question what is said or raise questions about the truth, but you would raise them in a subject frame of mind and state of soul. So I look on subjection not

as a practical submission to commandments but as a state in the believer who is in the gain of the kingdom of God.

Now we all know the expression 'the moral sway of God in the soul'. That is continuous and constant, not something that arises when it is necessary. But the fact is that God is to be supreme in the soul of man and I think the gospel would bring us to that. The Lord Jesus has died that it might be so. Righteousness has been satisfied in the work of Jesus and love flows freely. But love flowing freely is intended to bring us into love's subjection to God Himself, so that He is supreme in our souls. And if He is supreme in your soul, and if He is supreme and in control in the soul of every brother in the meeting, you have a subject state where the will of God predominates. And where do you begin? You begin with number one, you must do! It is not a question of looking at some difficulty; I am not thinking of that for the moment but of what is characteristic in my state of soul as I am before God. Peter says "ye younger, be subject to the elder", 1 Pet 5: 5. And let me appeal to my younger brethren in particular, those who are likely to fall into the snare of the enemy through this teaching of free expression; if you are seeking to stand for the truth with the older brethren, stand for the truth with respect both for it and them and approach it in a subject state of mind and soul.

Now as we proceed in this epistle Paul comes to this wonderful statement that "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit". That is the normal consequence seen in a person under the moral sway of God. Is God not entitled to expect us to be practically righteous if He has reckoned us righteous through faith in Christ? And peace, which is a consequence, and joy in the Holy Spirit; all three are in the Holy Spirit; it is righteousness in the Holy Spirit, peace in the Holy Spirit and joy in the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God emphasises the presence of the Spirit here to put into effect in the souls of the saints what is vested in Christ on high. The kingdom of the heavens of Christ above; the kingdom of God is the effective operation of the Spirit to put the truth into effect. Now I would desire myself, dear

brethren, to be in the gain of the kingdom. If I am not in the good of the kingdom I shall be of no value in the assembly, in fact I shall not be vitally in it. It is a solemn thing when there is an expression of the will of man in God's assembly. And after all, whatever difficulty may arise there, the reason is that there is some will working other than God's. You may say that it is weakness. But whose will is it? God's will? That is the question that determines everything, and I think that the Spirit of God would help us to be under the moral sway of God and exercised in His presence to be characterised by subjection.

Now righteousness is practical; you do what is right. I find the test is not the doing of what is right but knowing what is the right thing to do. The Spirit of God would help us about that; but one thing is certain, that if righteousness is not pursued then peace will be absent, and if righteousness and peace are not known then joy also will be absent. It may be that is the secret of Mr Taylor saying at one time that he noticed an absence of joy amongst the brethren, because it could well be there was an absence of righteousness with a consequent absence of peace and of joy. Now I think the full effects of this will be seen in the world to come: righteousness, peace and joy. Tension will be absent. I find it is difficult to visualise the world to come where God will be supreme in blessing. Now, as I say, the gospel is intended to bring us to this, and I would like to ask each of us here whether we are exercised to come under the moral sway of God. He has nothing but blessing for us. I tend to shrink from it, I admit that, because it means the setting aside of my will and I do not like that. There is nobody here who likes that. We know it is true that you may have a company present of two hundred and fifty people and you have two hundred and fifty wills, two hundred and fifty wills all working in different directions it may be.

What a wonderful thing to have two hundred and fifty persons who have come under the moral sway of God through our Lord Jesus Christ and where only one will is dominant!

In Corinthians Paul speaks again of the kingdom of God, which, he says, "is not in word, but in power". One feels the great need for this, dear brethren. It is one thing to speak about the kingdom of

God but it is another thing for there to be some evidence of divine power in the Spirit putting into effect the speaking. It says of certain that they so spake that many believed (see Acts 4: 4), and I would love so to speak that many believe. Paul was not concerned about words as we know; he says later that it is better to speak five words that can be understood than ten thousand in an unknown tongue (see 1 Cor 14: 19). The great question is, is the source of the speaking the Spirit of God or the flesh? Paul brings in the truth of the assembly about which we prayed - Christ loved the assembly and gave Himself for it (see Eph 5: 5) - and the administration of it was given to Paul - the mystery - in the same way as the administration of the glad tidings was given to him. The Lord put the two things in one man so that they would never be separated; it was never intended that they should be. Men have separated them but it has never been intended that the administration of the glad tidings should be separated from the administration of the assembly. But now he says "I will come quickly to you, if the Lord will; and I will know not the word of those that are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power". That is to say, as far as one understands it, that the Spirit of God is here to put things into effect in the souls of the saints, and I think ministry is intended to that end. But the truth makes a way for itself; so in another connection he says "we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth", 2 Cor 13: 8. You see, dear brethren, I can do nothing in you and you can do nothing in me. I cannot see your motives, your thoughts, neither can you see my motives or my thoughts. But in speaking, whether in ministry or with one another, we are wholly dependent on the Spirit of God to give efficacy to what may be said. Now we count on Him to do that, and I think if I might be so bold as to say so, where our deficiency lies today is not in assembly administration but in the truth of the kingdom. It is my impression that we are not sufficiently in the path of God's will in simple subjection to Himself. Other considerations turn us aside, such as personal feelings which often enter into difficulties. All this exposes that we - and when I say 'we' I mean we and not you - we are affected by all kinds of influences, man's soul being the battleground

of influences. But God's mind is that the Spirit should be in control and that the truth should be effective so that we may be persons subject to the will of God and as such fitted to have our part in His assembly; whether it be in administration, or in the service of praise, or in the representation of Himself here, all must be as we are in the gain of the kingdom of God. Now I think you will find that in almost every difficulty that arises amongst the saints and has done since the outset of the recovery, God in His goodness brings us back to the truth of the kingdom. In other words He says, This is the problem, there is someone else's will working instead of Mine. I think another problem that we are facing today is that there is not a resistance to the ministry but an ignoring of it, and I think we should be exercised not to resist it and not to ignore it but to take it up in exercise with God so that we might come into the gain of it.

Now in Colossians it says "giving thanks to the Father, who has... delivered us from the authority of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love". How beneficent that is! For a long time I generally thought of the kingdom as something that was introduced to put my will down. But God's kingdom is much greater than that. The world to come of which we speak and of which we have spoken will be a world of blessing, but it must be contingent on God's will being predominant - it must be so. When God comes in sin goes out. When God's will comes in publicly it will come in in power to affect the whole universe and then every other will must be put out. Now that should obtain in our local assemblies; where the Lord comes in (and we should watch for Him to come in) sin and lawlessness go out. But then there is the breadth of blessing in it: "the kingdom of the Son of his love". The world to come will be an administration of blessing. It says "he shewed me a river of water of life", Rev 22: 1. Where is the source of that? "Going out of the throne of God and of the Lamb". A river of water of life going out of the throne shows that God's throne is recognised, and the result of that is the beneficent flow of the river of water of life, on this side and on that side the tree of life the leaves of which are for healing of the nations. The whole of God's kingdom is one of blessing, where God

is known, where God is loved, where God is responded to. It is not arbitrary but marked by the divine nature which is love. So the kingdom of the Son of His love is indeed wonderful. Have we thought sufficiently about the beneficent side of the kingdom? because the throne in Revelation 22 is a beneficent throne.

Everything has been settled, and therefore the river is flowing; righteousness is satisfied and love flows freely. And how beneficent it is and how blessed in the assembly to be brought into the knowledge of God in the kingdom of the Son of His love!

Paul goes on in Colossians to speak of the greatness of the Person, as you will notice: "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; who is image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation", and then it outlines the glories of Jesus as man. There are things said of Him that could only be said of God, I agree, but what is said of Him is said of Him as man. And one of the things said to which I would like to call attention is this: "that he might have the first place in all things", that is in the kingdom of the Son of His love.

What does "all things" mean? Has He the first place in your heart? I would desire that the Holy Spirit would make these things real to us all. Has He the first place in your heart? I noticed last week in ministry this remark: where Christ is dwelling in the heart it is hard for a person to be discontented. Now if Christ has the first place in your heart you will be contented; you will not want a bigger and better car, or a bigger or better house, or a bigger or better salary; you will be contented because Christ is in your heart and He has the first place there. Now is that the case with you? Oh yes, you are perfectly entitled to reply, I will ask you the same question, has He the first place in your heart? It is a challenge to each of us. And I repeat what has been said many times, that one of the greatest dangers that any minister or preacher could face is in supposing that what he says to others does not apply to himself. What is said applies as much to the speaker as those to whom he speaks. I would like to ask you, has Christ the first place in your heart? Then in your practical life, does He have the first place day by day? I would have to say, alas, that often it is not so with me. With the Lord Jesus His

Father was the sole object and motive of everything He did and said and thought, and I think Jesus was a contented Man. Now I ask myself if that Man has the first place day by day in my life. Then what about my home? Has He the first place there? I find that is a test too. And what about the local assembly? Has He the first place there? Remember this, if you desire the first place in the local assembly then you desire Christ's place. Now that is very sobering.

We do not want anybody to have that, and nobody would wish to have it, I trust. The human heart is such and works in such a subtle way that each person might wish to have the first place in the local meeting, but it is Christ's place: "that *he* might have the first place in all things". All of us need to be exercised about it because I do not suppose there is one person here that would say that Christ has the first place in all things in his life; I do not think there is anybody that would dare to say it. Therefore let us be exercised and we will find that where He has the first place there will be satisfaction and contentment; whatever your circumstances you will be content. I think Paul was a man who was in the good of the kingdom of God, the moral sway of God; his soul was satisfied with what he found in Christ; He was everything to him; Therefore he said "I have learnt in those circumstances in which I am, to be satisfied in myself" (Phil 4: 11); not *with* myself of course but "satisfied in myself". There is a man in the good of the kingdom. Now what about you? Paul is with the Lord, he has been with the Lord a much longer time than he suffered here in the testimony, and the same is true of Mr Darby.

Those are just practical facts. But Paul, I think, demonstrates a man who is in the good of the kingdom, and as in the good of the kingdom he knew in his own soul the beneficent sway of God and all the blessings that flow from it. Now you can have no greater blessing than the knowledge of God. You will take it with you, you will take nothing else; you brought nothing in, and you will take nothing out but the knowledge of God. Now do you not think that is very wonderful? You must admit that if you just think of it objectively it must be, that a creature such as I am should have the knowledge of the eternal God - what a privilege! - yet that knowledge has been brought to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. And in having the

knowledge of God we have the knowledge of all the blessings that result from it. Now these things will be known by us as there is a simple state of subjection with us. This is one of our difficulties I believe generally. I am not speaking of this locality or this country, I am speaking generally; one of our difficulties is that we do not approach matters in a subject state of soul and a subject frame of mind. Most of us are too self-opinionated, that is one of the greatest problems, and we are quite prepared on the basis of being self-opinionated to act independently instead of acting in the normality of the position as it is in God's grace, leaving certain matters with Him, although of course taking matters up that should be taken up as He would help us. But I think whatever it is, what God looks for in the believer is meekness and lowliness; meekness is before men, lowliness is before God. That is the character that should mark the believer; not the character of the believer when he is facing difficulties but the character of the believer all the time. How wonderful that is, dear brethren! I think there is no greater blessing than that which the gospel brings us into, which is the knowledge of God and simple submission to His will.

May we be exercised, all of us, in this direction. Wherever we may have attained, whatever present exercises may be, may we be exercised to be increasingly in a subject frame of mind and subject state of soul before our blessed God in our approach to every matter of daily life; whether home life, personal life, assembly life, general life, whatever it be, to approach it as subject to God Himself. May it be so for His glory.

NEW YORK

14 July 1979

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

J.C.Evershed

Hebrews 11: 1-13

I have read about a part of a cloud - not a crowd - a part of a great cloud which stretches from one horizon to the other, for, as the scripture says, it surrounds us. It is not a dark cloud although you might think that parts of it are dark, but it is a bright cloud. If you think of all the clouds in the New Testament you will discover, with perhaps one exception, that they are all quite good and bright ones.

And this cloud is bright. When you read of persons being sawn asunder, being tempted and not accepting deliverance, you might think it dark and wonder why God did not intervene to prevent such things. He did not, but He knew who was in a goatskin and who in a sheepskin, who was in a den and who in a cavern, who was in a desert and who in the mountains. It helps us, I think, just to ponder that and get our assessment of what the world really is. Those persons were prepared by faith to go through all those things. They relinquished, no doubt, things that they might quite legitimately have had in order that they might live in a path of faith true to God, and that helps us in our assessment of the things of the world which so easily ensnare us and turn us from the path of faith. But that does not make this a dark cloud. It is like being up above the clouds, so that you enjoy the sunshine, and you also see the sunshine reflected from the clouds. A great point about this cloud is that it not only reflects what Christ is but it draws your attention to Him. Thus the whole of this chapter does but lead on to draw our attention fully and solely to the Person of the Lord Jesus, taking our look off from everything else that we might look upon Him and thus run with endurance the race set before us.

I want to speak especially about these first five persons named here who had faith, because I think they set out basic principles for us in the path of faith. I do not overlook the earlier verses of the chapter which are vastly important. We do not exactly get a

definition of faith in the first verse; rather if we wanted one we should have to say that one has "set to his seal that God is true". A person who sets his seal to a thing makes it final. No doubt all here have done that, we have set to our seal that God is true, whatever wavering there may be in our pathway. But then there is what faith brings with it, and that is the "substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen". In other words, the things we enjoy we enjoy by conviction and yet we cannot demonstrate them to anybody else; they are real to us just as they were real in the promises of God to these persons of whom we have read, and of others. It says that they did not receive the promises, but they saw them and embraced them. By faith they had the benefit and the motive power in their souls to live here in a path pleasing to God in whatever circumstances He ordered for them, and they themselves had the substantiating of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. The scripture speaks of the elders and then of us.

It says "we apprehend that the worlds were framed by the word of God". I would just say to the children that they must remember that this is the truth of God in a very few words brought forward here, and they are to understand it by faith. Whatever developments of learning might come in, these words stand in order that we should know that the things that are seen do not take their origin from the things which appear.

Then we get these five great personages, and might wonder why these are brought forward and not others. Adam must have known what faith was, but first of all we have Abel, then Enoch, then Noah, then Abraham and then Sarah. I think in Abel we learn what acceptance is with God, in Enoch acceptability, in Noah salvation and in Abraham pilgrimage, while in Sarah we see what strengthening is. So these features coming into the path of faith would lead us, I believe, to be in it and running the race with endurance, reaching out to the goal set before us.

Both Cain and Abel came before God. It is remarkable that Abel should have the name he had; we do not know how long he lived but he was called 'Breath'. Every time anybody said his name

they would say 'Breath'. How he must have felt how short, in a way, life could be, how essential it was that what there was of it should be rightly used and rightly devoted. We breathe somewhere about twenty times a minute. Think of what one breath is! So Abel would correspond, I suppose, with the weakness and frailty of our human nature - as James says, "what is your life? It is even a vapour", chap 4: 14. A man like that is a man who appreciates what it is to be accepted by God Himself by virtue of the sacrifice that he brought, and to have the testimony of it. It says he "offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained testimony of being righteous, God bearing testimony to his gifts, and by it, having died, he yet speaks". This scripture does not develop, of course, the line of Cain which can be looked at with profit; a kind of negative study, and yet necessary because scripture brings it in in its place.

These two both had a desire to approach God, but one was accepted and the other was not. The acceptance of Abel is dwelt upon here, and the excellence of his sacrifice. So I think it is vital for us in the path of faith, as the first element, that we should understand that as believers coming to God in the worth of Christ, and in the virtue of the shedding of His blood, we come as persons who are accepted by Him. And it says, "God bearing testimony to his gifts". We know from the scripture that he not only brought of the firstlings of the flock but also of the fat thereof. In other words he came with the understanding that he must offer an offering to God; doubtless it was a blood sacrifice from the flock and not that which he himself by his labour had produced. He brought it to come as it were between himself and God, but he brought also the fat, which was his gift. In other words, he brought what would speak to God of the excellences of Christ. How much he may have understood those things we do not know, but that is what the teaching is for us. So we find that the offerings in the book of Genesis take the character of burnt offerings, that which ascends to God as pleasurable to Him, and, as we know, later He reserved the fat for Himself. As we come in to God we come in as accepted by Him in the excellence of Christ.

A further step in faith is to be acceptable. I may know and understand very well that I am accepted by God in the Beloved but am I *acceptable* to Him? Is my state always such? Enoch I think sets this out. It says elsewhere that he walked with God and it appears that he walked for three hundred years, comparatively a short life for those times. I suppose each day he got nearer to God, and the more he walked with God the more he understood God's thoughts. You or I might say, I wish God would walk with me, that is what I would like; and our circumstances as far as we are able should be ordered in such a way that He can, and that is piety. But then Enoch walked with God, desiring to enter into His thoughts and mind. He had his normal daily life as well, "he begot sons and daughters" and was not abstracted from the ordinary things of life.

Nevertheless he walked with God, and that means that he maintained a state whereby he was continually acceptable to God. It says "Enoch was translated", which means he was taken away, as another has said, as if God said, 'We have been together so long now, you come and be with me for ever'. That is how it will be with us. When the Lord comes we shall be translated and go to another place; we shall be the same, only we shall be different, that is what translation means. If you translate something into a foreign language it looks different but it is the same. Enoch was the same but he was translated, they could not find him here; that will be so with the assembly, the body of Christ, those in whom the Spirit dwells. They will not be translated because they cannot get on here any longer, even if it does mean dens and caverns. It will mean that the assembly is translated because of the Lord's pleasure in it. As with those persons who were in goatskins and sheepskins, the world was not worthy of them, so it will be with the assembly and so it should be now. Enoch sets that out; I expect they looked for him but he was not there. In another sense we have already been translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love, that is a somewhat different thought, but it means really that what God will bring in in actuality He brings in now in the power and enjoyment of the Holy Spirit into our souls, so that we have what these persons looked forward to themselves, and we have it in the Spirit. If we are to be

acceptable it is I believe by the unhindered activity of the Holy Spirit in us.

Then Noah comes before us as one who was saved and his house. He was obedient to God and was moved with fear. It is a good thing to be moved. We might have said that it is a poor moral reason just to do something through fear; but it is not so, this was fear of God leading to obedience to God's word, and it is good if we are moved by God's word at all times. I have felt for myself how much I have listened to and read; and have had to say at the end that I really have hardly been moved at all by it. Noah prepared an ark for the saving of his house; therefore this matter of salvation is an important one. He did this by faith and we know that, as to household baptism, parents are concerned to bring their children on to the ground on which they themselves are and have faith as to the working of God in their souls, so that they also should take their place in the path of faith. It is important that anyone should remain in the path of faith and not get out of it. One would not want to go out of this ark and try to enjoy oneself because it was judgment all around. There is judgment on the whole world's system, and we are to beware not only of the world but of the things of the world as well which are more insidious. God shut Noah in; on His part He saw to it that Noah was safely there. Noah condemned the world, but he did not set out exactly to do that. I do not suppose he preached condemnation while he was building the ark; he preached righteousness, the word of God. He preached what was coming because he believed it, and we preach what we believe. Noah condemned the world because as far as we know nobody said they wanted to go into the ark. Indeed it is a remarkable thing that only few, that is eight souls, were saved. Then he became the heir of righteousness which is according to faith. So there is an inheritance to be obtained, an inheritance which is necessary to the believer in the path of faith, that he has the righteousness which is of faith. Abel had it, I have no doubt Adam had it too; and it has come all the way down to us, the righteousness "which is by faith of Christ". Think of having an inheritance like that! Have you taken it up? In business I

have had to write to people to tell them that they have had an inheritance. They write various letters in reply but you can always read into them that each person asks, How soon can I have it? Well, it is a good thing if that is uppermost in our souls as to these things of God. We might think that the righteousness of faith is a very basic and elementary thing, and so it is, but it is very far reaching, otherwise it would hardly speak of Noah as being the heir of it; it might say he was the heir of something else such as the new world, which I suppose he was in a way. His inheritance was the righteousness which is of faith.

Abraham is commended as one who obeyed and went out not knowing where he went. A person of the world would say that was folly not faith. But in a way Abraham did know where he was going, not in detail, but God had said to him "Go out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to the land that I will shew thee", Gen 12: 1. In other words Abraham attached his faith to what God had said, that God had a place for him, though when he got there he did not actually possess it. Marvellous faith there must have been with that man! Perhaps he was slow starting out, but he went on from stage to stage as one to whom God could come and commune, not only as to the things that He would give to Abraham but what He would be to him. Right down the centuries he saw the coming in of Christ after the pattern of Isaac, the blessing of the nations with Israel, and the world to come. Abraham, as he was dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, knew what it was to be a pilgrim, and that is what I feel we need to learn more of. The material things that we have and enjoy are not to be grasped and reached after for their own sakes, but to be enjoyed on account of the One who has given them to us and whose they are.

The things that really do belong to us are the spiritual things that God gives to us so freely. Abraham was ready to wait. It is interesting that it says, By faith *Abraham*, because he was *Abram* when he was called out; his name was changed after that. I like to think of every believer as it were having a change of name. We have the name that is called over us in baptism and let us not forget

that it is called over us in close conjunction with the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and with the name of the Lord Jesus. But I like to think of a name being given to us in connection with what God's work is in our souls, and what He purposes to reach in us. Abraham was known by his new name. I think God would look upon us and know us by our new name.

Perhaps those are the names that are written in heaven. I think that what the Lord was pointing to in speaking to His disciples as to their names being written in the heavens was that, however great it was to overcome evil spirits and so on, yet to have a peculiar place of his own or her own, in heaven according to the measure of God's work and purpose for us, is what is to be rejoiced in the more by us.

Well, there is much more spoken about Abraham because he waited for a city which had foundations. He failed as we know and scripture does not hide the fact, but the course of Abraham viewed in the Scriptures is a steady one; it was not an unhappy one because it says that Abraham exulted. So his path of pilgrimage was not unhappy because he saw Christ's day - therefore it says he exulted.

The special feature of strengthening comes in with Sarah. It says she "received strength" for something which naturally speaking was impossible. We might even get to circumstances like that where it really seems impossible to continue in the path of faith and have the right issue that is expected of it. Sarah "received strength", she must have got it from somewhere, and she got it from God of course. In the beginning of Luke it says that nothing shall be impossible *with* God, it does not say to God although that would be true. Elsewhere I believe it is similar, all things are possible *with* God. That means that persons are at the receiving end of the things that are impossible. Sarah was a very great personage of faith, not only on account of the fact that she became the mother of countless numbers and was a setting forth of what God could do to one who was already as dead, but because of this great matter of receiving strength in the path of faith. Scripture is very reserved as to the ages of women, and I think Sarah is the only one whose age is definitely given; she was ninety at this time and when she died it

says she was one hundred and twenty-seven. So that in the Scriptures Sarah is unique in being brought before us as one whose years were counted by God and repeated in the word (see Gen 23: 1). God is able for every year, He is able for every month, every week, every day, and He is able to impart strength where it appears to be impossible.

All these died in faith, it says, with the exception of course of Enoch; they confessed to being strangers and sojourners. And I believe in the light of what God presents to us as to His thoughts and what is open to us we should be prepared to regard ourselves as strangers and sojourners on this earth, but belonging to a commonwealth which has its existence in the heavens, whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. May we be in this spirit continually, for the Lord's Name's sake.

MAIDSTONE

24 August 1974

THE CHILDREN'S REST

The believer on the Lord Jesus Christ has the great and precious privilege of resting on the atoning work of the Saviour. It was after He said "It is finished" that He bowed the head and delivered up His spirit. The psalmist speaks in a prophetic way of the time when He will lift up the head in the day when evil is banished from the world. His earthly people will be glad then to offer praise and to rest in His sway over the whole world.

There can be no rest without righteousness. We can of course understand a mother forgiving with a quieting word and a kiss a naughty child who has said 'Sorry, mother'. It is right that she should do so. God too must have a righteous reason for remitting sins. Before He could print the kiss of forgiveness on the brow of a single sinner the mighty work of Calvary was a necessity. Old Testament saints had the benefit of it beforehand. Scripture speaks of Jesus as having "found an eternal redemption". Thus the work of Christ has met all God's claims as regards sin, has shown His abhorrence of it and freed Him from any charge of tolerating it in His universe. What a joy it is to the sinner who rests on that finished work and learns the value that God attaches to it! The rising from among the dead of Jesus is the great proof and our souls rest where God Himself rests.

The name Noah means 'repose'. Every time his name was used there was a prophetic reminder in a restless, wicked world that rest would be known in his lifetime. The fulfilment was in the burnt-offering made by him on a cleansed earth and which God smelled as a "sweet odour" or, more exactly, an 'odour of rest'. The many details given in Scripture concerning Noah and the ark are of great interest. For instance, the word "pitch" used in connection with its protection - as also of the river cradle of the babe Moses - means 'atonement'. Also the day of the year on which the ark rested is the equivalent day of the resurrection of Jesus, allowing for the fact that the seventh month became the first or Passover month. Does your soul rest on a risen Christ?

J.C.Evershed