

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 91

October 1980

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SACRIFICE AND ACTIVITY

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R.D.P. I have been thinking a little of a verse in Proverbs 14: "Where no oxen are, the crib is clean; but much increase is by the strength of the ox" (v 4). I think we perhaps need to be encouraged, as those who, I am sure, have the thought of increase before us, that we shall see that in God's ways and under His hand the strength of the ox is to be maintained amongst us. Of course we may be having increase numerically, and we thank God for that; it is a great encouragement to the saints; but we would never lose sight of the fact that we look for increase within too. Whilst we may grow outwardly we would also look for a subjective answer in increase in each one of us. Whilst on the one hand it is very good to have additions - and we are thankful for those who are released - if there is to be any answer at all to the breakdown publicly it will not exactly be in numbers but in a subjective state. Paul beseeches the brethren in Romans that they offer their bodies a living sacrifice, and I think that amidst all the gladness that there is over what is additional by way of numbers we would always bear in mind that we need to be preserved in the thought of sacrifice. If Christianity ceases to be sacrificial with us it will cease to be effective in us. We need to be preserved in activity, right activity according to God. I do not think that faith is exactly waiting for something to happen in eternity, but it involves activity day by day, hour by hour, and that involves sacrifice at the present time.

I read in Judges because I think you get an example of it in Gideon, one man in a time of oppression where things were being taken away by the Midianites, and Gideon is moving - one man and his exercises. We might look at the fact that Gideon is active as a result of what came in in the prophetic word, and we need that. The Midianites would suggest an influence - a social influence we have been taught - which, if it is allowed its way, will sap every degree of energy and freshness in the saints. Then in Samuel I think you come more to the public side, the testimonial side, where it is so

easy for us to be just finding our way through in a muddled way, yet I believe there is to be distinctiveness in activity in persons who come forward to show themselves so that there is a trembling, as it says, from God. Finally, in Acts you get activity in Paul and a certain conclusion to his work at Ephesus, and in this closing chapter of his service to the Ephesians he is not so much speaking about the extent of his teaching but how he had been amongst them in devotion and labour; and we need to be maintained in devoted activity amongst the saints.

F.G.M. Do you think then that all spiritual blessing and increase is on the basis of sacrifice?

R.D.P. I am sure it is. We have the great example in Christ of the One who laid down His life. As we think of the greatness of the sacrifice of Jesus, how could we believe that things could proceed in any other way than on the basis of sacrifice? I feel we need to be reminded that, whilst we are now enjoying a degree of prosperity and peace which perhaps some of us have not known, sacrifice and activity is needed constantly that we may be preserved in life and that a good subjective state might be maintained amongst us. I think in Gideon you get a man who listened to the prophetic word and acted on it.

R.L. David said that he would not offer up anything to God without cost (see 2 Sam 24: 4); there is cost attached to it.

R.D.P. I think that is right. We have perhaps just lately felt the need for ourselves to be stirred up in relation to sacrifice and in activity and spending ourselves in relation to the Lord's things. Now Gideon was a man who answered to it. The Midianites had been taking the food and the children of Israel had been forced into dens and mountains and caves and strongholds; it was not that the food was not growing but it was being lost to Midian. We need to take care, dear brethren, that what is social does not sap spiritual strength amongst us at the present time.

A.T. Israel here had not hearkened to the voice of Jehovah, they had neglected that, but there is one man who is listening and wants

to see things on a moral basis, and therefore God is with him.

R.D.P. Yes, one man. As Mr Darby was once told: Make things better by one man. Now that is where we can all start. There is a very restricted area in this chapter, and I think that we all need to be sure that within the compass of our own activities the thing is true of us. It always starts with ourselves, does it not?

A.T. That is where it must always begin. If it is the work of God we cannot see it unless the work of God begins in ourselves, then we can see it in others.

C.G.H. Why is there - I am asking this for the sake of the young people - a discord between what is natural and what is spiritual?

R.D.P. There always will be; "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3: 6) it will never serve God. We will never be able to improve it, and the more we try the worse it gets. But then deliverance has come in in Christ so that we can look away from ourselves and look to another Man. I think what you say is important, especially for those of us who are younger, because we spend a great deal of our time trying to do things, to improve what is natural; but what is for God involves what is spiritual, it involves what is outside of ourselves, it involves faith, it involves the Spirit.

R.L. Paul says he had not known Christ after the flesh (see 2 Cor 5: 16). I am speaking of that carefully, as you would appreciate, but would that not help us from this social point of view, that we are not to know anyone after the flesh? Is that not a stimulus for us?

R.D.P. I think so. One would be careful to say that what we have amongst the brethren by the way of mutual enjoyment, which has come to light in these days, is something which we treasure. What we need to guard against is that which in any way moves into what is merely social and everything that goes along with what is social, because that will rob us of everything spiritual. When we speak about food - if we look at it practically - what we enjoy by way of spiritual food is really connected with the saints; I think the saints become our food. If in any way we slip into what is merely social you will find the saints being lowered in your estimation, so that though

there is food it is not available to you. I think that is Midian. Gideon is one who answers to the prophetic word in relation to it and he acts to secure something. We have had much by way of ministry and much by way of richness but we need to be exercised that it is secured in our day.

F.M.K. The angel of Jehovah here is directing Gideon, indicating what there is with him, not weakness but strength. Would that be a word that we need to take in so that what is natural is rightly held?

R.D.P. I think so, and the angel came to Gideon as he was threshing wheat in the winepress; he was working. The prophetic word had come in relation to what had happened to Israel in their unfaithfulness, and if you study what Gideon says to the angel it is almost as though he had taken note of the prophetic word and is doing something about it. I do think we need that to see that meetings do not just become a pleasant song to us or a time just of enjoyment, but that there is something by way of formation with us. How many prophetic words have we had in Maidstone, in Birmingham, even in the years since 1972? It is a test to me as to whether there is activity on my part that is linking on with something that God can immediately come into and identify Himself with.

E.C.B. What is the nature of the sacrifice that you speak of? Is it the risk of their lives as with the men who went for David?

R.D.P. I think so, and in our day that feature of going at the risk of our lives is something that God is particularly valuing. You get David's honours list at the end of Samuel. Let us young people think of that, that at the end of the day there will be an honours list. When I was at school we used to have an honours board; my name never appeared on it but some did. At the end of Samuel it says "These are the names of the mighty men whom David had", 2 Sam 23: 8. At the end of the dispensation the Lord's honours list will be known. Those three men who risked their lives are especially singled out. There are others who performed exploits - there was a man who slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day - but it says that they did not

attain to the first three. I think that those who risked their lives in relation to David's longings are particularly close to his heart.

E.C.B. I think what you are saying is needed. Mr Stoney comments in regard to the ability to do exploits that it may get you a great reputation for the moment but it is continuance that is needed. Does Genesis 47 bear on what you have in mind, where Pharaoh says to Joseph, Settle your brethren in the best of the land and let them dwell there; and then he goes on to say, "if thou knowest men of activity" (v 6). Do you think some of us may be content to settle in the best of the land and dwell there, but then we need to be tested by the following verse?

R.D.P. Yes, that is very good.

E.C.B. It is all in verse 6: "The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land settle thy father and thy brethren; let them dwell in the land of Goshen". I thought that corresponded to what you were saying about the present day. Then, "And if thou knowest men of activity". They would not be deprived of their dwelling but there was a call for men of activity.

R.D.P. I think so. We value what there is amongst the saints but we may need to be maintained in activity and sacrifice at the present time, that what we have might be secured, because we know in ourselves that some of us are not as deep inwardly as we appear to be superficially, and that if we did ever have a time of testing again it would become apparent. Now we need activity, not fleshly activity but activity in relation to God. We need to be activated more inwardly that there might be something secured at the present day out of all the ministry we have had, all the three-day meetings we have, all the wealth of things that comes to us, and the enjoyment amongst the saints; we need to secure something from that, not just enjoy it but secure it.

E.M.W. From what Gideon said he appears to be a little depressed, but he still goes on in faith. A little later it speaks of certain ones as faint yet pursuing. Do you think that would encourage every one of us, even the least, to be involved in this and not leave it to those who

are called in the Acts "leading men among the brethren", chap 15: 22?

R.D.P. I am encouraged that you say that, because we have had ministry, and we do have ministry amongst us, and we have something by way of personality which we thank God for - what a bonus it is amongst the saints! - but the great wealth is what is worked out amongst the brethren by way of headship. That is where the great wealth and substantial enjoyment of things is. I think what comes out through gift and personality amongst the saints is by way of a bonus; we should not live on it in that sense. What we have in the local assemblies is the most valuable thing we have and needs to be promoted, and that starts with each one of us. Here it begins with one man in his circumstances, a man who as you say did not understand everything; he could not understand why with all God's promises he found himself in such a pass; he could not understand fully, and maybe the young people cannot see, why we seem to speak such glowing things in relation to the truth and to what is past and to the revival, yet they see such apparently small results. Yet Gideon was prepared to answer to the prophetic word as one who had some link with God, some basic link; some affection for Christ we might say; he was prepared to do something and God comes in in relation to Gideon and he is marked out as a special man in the book of Judges.

R.E.T. You were speaking earlier of there being a subject state and how important that is, but now you are speaking about risking our lives. How do these two thoughts go together?

R.D.P. I was thinking of what is subjective which I suppose links with a subject state, but it is a fact that the only answer to what is broken down publicly - and that involves us all - is not exactly that we have had five or six extra brethren added this year, while we thank God for that, but the answer is what there is formed subjectively in each one of us. In other words we could write down - if we sat an examination and there were a series of questions like the children have - all we know about the Scriptures and the ministry and we could probably fill pages, but if we were turned inside out and God

wrote down what there was subjectively formed in us by it, perhaps it would not fill so many sheets.

R.E.T. Gideon is really in a low state, is he not? But he is in a subject state, not a state of cowardice; it is a manly state. But the great thing is to know that Jehovah is with us. Is this the principle of strength? Paul could say, 'he has not been ashamed of my chain' (2 Tim 1: 16).

R.D.P. I think so. You see, Gideon had a word on Tuesday and here we are on Saturday and he is doing something about it. Now most of us had words on Tuesday but how many of us here could say that in our lives since then there has been some positive move in relation to it? Let us be honest with ourselves. We are all very much the same; face answers to face in water. We may say that Gideon was in a poor state but he did something about it. God comes in in a word in the previous chapter; he sent an unnamed prophet - perhaps it was one of the brethren who gave a word on Tuesday - and something came in and he speaks about what God had done in His greatness, and then he says what Israel had done and he leaves it there. You might say it seemed an inconclusive word and yet it was a word from God. Dear brethren, I think we need to answer to a word from God as to the greatness of what God has done, and you may say the way in which we have gone. And then Gideon says within himself, I am going to do something about it but I can only do it in this winepress. I want to secure the wheat, I want to see the saints as heavenly in relation to God and I want to secure it so that there is something available.

E.C.B. It looks as if he started in his own locality. I wondered if that was important, that we recognise our responsibility to our own locality; that is the place where the words are given and that is the place where the answer is to begin, is it not?

R.D.P. I think so, and it was *wheat* he had secured; it does not say how he obtained it but he must have sown it, I suppose, and he must have tended it, and he had reaped it and now he was threshing it and securing it. I think the wheat speaks of the saints as heavenly;

we could apply it that way. What is natural or social would rob us, not exactly of the saints bodily, but of the saints as heavenly. So in his own place he was working to secure something and he was bringing it to fruition. Dear brethren, we do need to make sure that things are secured in our own place, not just a knowledge of ministry or of the truth; and if things are secured it involves what is deep.

E.C. In that regard is it good to see at the present moment that God has continued, and will continue, with what He intends to do? Because here the one concerned said "if Jehovah be with us, why then is all this befallen us?", but he was told to go out in strength and he would secure Israel. Then later on, in the other scripture you read, it says, "perhaps Jehovah will work for us; for there is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few".

R.D.P. Well, I like this approach of a brother who says, I do not know where all the miracles are, I have some impression of Christ and I am working in relation to it but I do not understand everything fully. He is not a brother who glosses over things and speaks in a sort of euphoria about things that perhaps does not identify with people at all. He recognises his limitations and that he does not follow everything; he is a humble man and I think God loves at this point someone who seeks to serve Him and lays out his exercises before Him and says, Where are all the miracles that our fathers told us of? We are concerned as to the generation that is following, and if that generation is to be anything it will be founded in real relations with God; it will be founded, you may say, on real exercises in relation to God's presence, not only what we have said or what our fathers have said, but as one who has some deep conviction as to the great movements of God at the present time.

D.R. So God could draw attention to the might of Gideon: "Go in this thy might". Would that link too with the faith we have for what lies before?

R.D.P. Yes, I think it would link with faith. Say some more.

D.R. We need to use the faith that we have rather than say that we have not any. We may not feel that we have much but it is a

question of using what we have.

R.D.P. I think so, I think we underestimate faith. If we had faith as a grain of mustard seed we would not need to worry about anything on the earth or in the world any more; if we have that much we are all right. We seem to think we need great quantities of faith, which I suppose we would be exercised as to, but the Lord says that faith as a grain of mustard seed in a sense is greater than anything in the world any way. We do need faith to go on at the present time.

W.E.E. Is it important that heaven takes account of what we may be doing? In verse 11 it says "And an angel of Jehovah came" - small 'a' for angel - and then in verse 12, "And the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him" - capital 'A' - and then verse 14: "And Jehovah looked upon him". It seems as though heaven is taking account of what he is doing.

R.D.P. That is very interesting; there seems to be progression, maybe even in Gideon's appreciation of the appearing.

W.E.E. I was speaking enquiringly but I wondered whether an angel (small 'a') would relate to the providential ways of God, when you come to the capital 'A' for the Angel whether the Spirit's operations might be particularly in view, and then it says "Jehovah looked upon him". It would perhaps show the interest of divine Persons in relation to anyone who is seeking to maintain what is for Him.

R.D.P. I am very interested in what you say, that what is providential seems to come first; it is possible to rest in that. We get a certain amount of comfort or help in relation to things here and we may settle in that. There seems to be a very great progression in Gideon's experience of the divine presence; it goes on through the chapter and leads on to sacrifice and to maturity. So I would encourage all to be on the line of securing things and prove that heaven will come in. You may not be able to do much, you may say I am only thirteen or fifteen years old, but I would encourage you to do what you can, whatever your hand may find to do, do it with your might and do it in relation to Christ. So if someone needs a bit of help, some old sister needs a bit of garden digging or something like

that, and you can do it, do it with all your might. If you are older and you have a car and able to drive the brethren from place to place, do it with all your might, because you are doing it as to Christ, and you are concerned to be securing the wheat from the Midianites, especially in our local settings. I think we need to value our local meeting, and if in any way we regard another local meeting as better than our own, there is something wrong, because our own local meeting is where we have been placed and where we are to work with all our might.

E.M.W. We have often been reminded that Mr Taylor started in his committal to the Lord's interests in his own locality in New York. That influence, that committal, spread to the benefit of all of us, did it not?

R.D.P. I think so; and brethren locally know us well, not only our weekend face but our day by day face, and they know our weaknesses as well as our apparent strengths. You go back home, if the Lord will, after being invited to come here and the local brethren know you and that is the place where we will grow; and if we grow at all we grow in relation to what we are. We need help as to working things out in our local places; seeing something of the distinctiveness of what is local, and I think Gideon brings it out here; he finds a place locally, a little area where he can work, and he starts to work and ultimately it is for the salvation of Israel.

C.G.H. You mentioned that sometimes we as brethren speak in meetings euphorically, and you said it does not identify with people. Would you say a little more about that because, after all, when we come together we are supposed to be present for profit. I take it that that could mean that what is said is intelligible and finds its mark, so to speak.

R.D.P. I think so. I would wish to be careful but what I have in mind is that sometimes we have standard expressions to describe a meeting; we may say, We had a wonderful time this morning, or something like that, and you often find that the next generation down has not exactly found that. Now that does not mean that they

are right and you are wrong but I think what is real must find its way through so that there is an identification with the exercises of the saints. The enjoyment of the truth is a wonderful thing and we would like that to be maintained amongst us, but at the same time along with it is the need for the resolution within souls of exercises like Gideon's; he says "where are all his miracles that our fathers told us of... ?" and maybe they are still speaking of. Where are they? He said "Did not Jehovah bring us up from Egypt? And now Jehovah hath cast us off. These were exercises in Gideon's day and they may be exercises in our day. All I mean is that if each one of us was concerned more as to what was subjective, we would perhaps use less glowing expressions than we do, and perhaps confess to being searched more or adjusted more.

P.S.W. Paul says somewhere that he was not going to beat the air (see 1 Cor 9: 26). Some of the remarks that we may make would almost be like that if we are not really touching the situation as it is.

R.D.P. I think so. We do thank God for those who are able to open up the truth with a measure of experience and depth in their souls, but I suppose we have to see that there are many grades of growth amongst us, starting from the very youngest in spiritual things and going on to the very oldest. The highest things of God are to be known in reality and in actual experience by the Spirit's power, but it also involves that we start right. Am I saying what is right?

E.M.W. I think it is becoming a very great concern amongst the brethren. What you are saying is needed, and the reality and the experience of these things of which we speak is becoming a deeper exercise.

E.C.B. Following on what was said, do you think that sometimes when we are having to do with the messenger that we find quickly that we are having to do with God Himself, rather like Hebrews 4?

R.D.P. Say some more about that please.

E.C.B. I was thinking especially about what you were saying about the prophetic word. The Angel of Jehovah is used, of course, as a title for God or God in activity, but the idea of an angel is a

messenger, is it not? I wondered if we sometimes do not find, or should find, as we listen to a messenger, say on a Tuesday night or on any other occasion, that it has passed from that to our having to do with God Himself, and whether it is that that will bring about the reality.

R.D.P. Yes. I do not think it quite means that something comes in on Lord's day morning, or on Tuesday night, and we keep repeating that verse of some verse that has that word in it; but it may be, as a brother says something and you are listening, that something else entirely different comes into your mind which is linked with the great movements of God; it may not be the same word, but something comes in which leads on. I think there is always progression in divine things. It is not necessarily that having had a word on Lord's day morning, for instance, that on Saturday you are still saying the same word. I think there is always progression in divine things; and if we find that there is not progression we may find that we are following things in a religious way. The purpose of the knocking (in Revelation 3: 20) was that they might progress on to the voice, but there was no progression. Now how often we abide with the knocking, in our circumstances perhaps, and miss the voice or the next step of the progression.

V.E.W. Each of these men would have had experience of the divine presence. Gideon, Jehovah was with him. Then Jonathan wrought with God that day. Then Paul received from the Lord Jesus. It would all tend to reality, as you were saying.

R.D.P. Yes; if we are going to touch the best - and God has the best for us, it involves that something is formed in me which is Christ; and the only way I will know the best is in that way. Let us each one ask ourselves whether we are really going in for the best or whether we are just with the brethren. Now are we really set in ourselves and in our localities for the very best which God has? Are we set in relation to that line of things which will culminate in David's honours list at the end of the day, men whose activities will not be posted on the world's lists but who have considered for Christ in the time of His rejection?

C.G.H. When the word of God has had its effect with us we find that the word of God is God Himself.

R.D.P. That is very good. I think it links with this progression again. Let us develop in our exercises and impressions. This word 'impressions' has gone through many years now, but let them be impressions that may start with a word and finish with an ascription of praise and worship to God.

R.L. Is that not the way we prove the working out of what the Lord says as to the water springing up within? Is that not a constant matter which leads on to these things if that is made way for?

R.D.P. That is right. The woman in John 4 kept bringing her waterpot but what the Lord had was to become "in her a well of water springing up into eternal life". So every individual saint would become a source of interest and great value to heaven.

In Samuel it is a different sphere really; I think it is more the testimony, and that is also a sphere where we are tested. Again it is easy to coast along. Saul here was sitting under the pomegranate-tree and he was making very great statements and very great resolves of heart, but he was not doing anything. When we are at work or at school it is very easy to lapse into going along in the general run of things. All Saul's men had taken to the ground; in the previous chapter they had all hidden in the caves and thickets and cliffs, strongholds and pits again, and it may be that that is the way some of us are in the testimony. Here is a man of faith, a man who says "perhaps Jehovah will work for us". There comes a point where you may say the Philistines are everywhere, but one man moves in faith, he risks his life in relation to there being a representation of what God really is in the testimony. I think perhaps we are tested in the testimony as to whether we spend more of our time in the caves, thickets, cliffs, strongholds and pits than we do in active faith.

E.M.W. How can we get out of that?

R.D.P. You start us off please.

E.M.W. You spoke about progression, but I am interested in what you say as to the testimony, because I have felt for myself that I have not been marked by the aggression of grace in the testimony, perhaps not redeeming the time, not seizing good and favourable opportunities to confess the name of the Lord and so on. Is this parallel with what is in your mind?

R.D.P. Yes. I speak these things as one who is very tested by the practice of them, because we get into our places of work, school, or whatever it may be and what is our testimony? I believe there is something which is to be seen. It may not be in hundreds of thousands of people but it is going to be in persons, there will be something seen, and here they showed themselves. I think that is the answer, but they had this formidable array before them, they had these two crags "between the passes by which Jonathan sought to go". I took the liberty of looking up a concordance to find out what these names meant; one means 'shining' and the other means 'thorny', and that is the two characters of things we face in the testimony. You face the shining side of man that is always doing good for his fellow-man and who cannot understand why you do not join him, the man who has his charities and human ideas and all this; and on the other side you have the thorny atheistic, no-time-for-God, character. The two peaks stand each side and are between the passes where Jonathan sought to go. I think he overcomes these two disadvantages to him in going through in faith, in activity.

R.E.T. You get the thought of regulation coming in in regard to persons being stabilised as being kingdom men, men that have been hidden but ready to show themselves. Would that be Romans 7 coming out into Romans 8?

R.D.P. Well, that is good. You get here that they showed themselves, and then the Philistines said we have *something* to show you. The young ones at school and at work will know something about this; we have *something* to show you. They have all sorts, an array of things at school, their television and their programmes and their developments and their special lessons and all this kind of thing. How things have changed at the schools even

in the last twenty years. You find things called humanities developed, evolution and all this kind of thing is brought in - we have *something* to show *you*, and the answer to that is simply that we have nothing to show them except ourselves, and ourselves as wrought upon by God and moving in faith. The man of faith here can go right through the rank of the Philistines and can start something which God will finish. That is what you get in this chapter. All that Jonathan did was to slay twenty men of the thousand, but God finished it, and He will finish it in the dispensation.

E.C.B. Do you think that we should apprehend or perhaps recall ourselves to the fact that we must face this proving ground? Because in relation to what is in the meetings it is unfortunately true that you can get a very long way on your memory, but you cannot get far on your memory when the Philistines are holding a strategic position.

R.D.P. Yes. We may as well be transparent, how many brethren here before the reading just pick up Mr Coates or the index of Mr Taylor and look up the book and find enough there to be able to talk your way right through the meeting? I am not decrying it, but how many of us do it? How many of us, on the other hand, get down and pray before we go to the reading? How many of us go in dependence - and I am not saying that we should not take advantage of the teaching - but how many of us just pick up a book and go. The development of manhood spiritually involves the displacement of what I am inside and the recognition of my weakness, and then the moving on in relation to God, in faith, and especially in the testimony. Is that right?

E.C.B. Yes it is. I think we often mistake memory for formation, but it is only formation that will help you when, as I say, the Philistines and all they represent are holding the strategic ground.

R.D.P. Yes, and the Philistines would be the mind of man, as we have often been taught, in the things of God, and they are not so far away as perhaps we think. If I look up ministry in relation to the meeting and then come determined to push through that

interpretation, I may be guilty of a Philistine mind. I must be dependent in the meeting. It is easy for me to say this because most of the things I say I suppose come from the ministry, but I think the brethren can see what I mean, that we must always be ready for something that will come in which is the fresh speaking of God to us at any time, and it may be that we will go right away from what we may have preconceived.

E.C.B. It may be interesting, bringing this up to date, that the way Jonathan conquered here is rather like the way Wolfe took Quebec; the French held the high ground and unexpectedly in the night he took his men up the cliff. The result was the Dominion of Canada for a long time.

R.D.P. That is very interesting because we must face it that young people at work, especially starting work, have formidable obstacles to face. They have a whole array of 'what we can show you' at the present time, and the only way through is not to try and match it, or to sit under the pomegranates like Saul did, or to hide in the thickets, but to move, maybe on hands and feet like Jonathan, but to move in faith.

C.G.H. This act of faith on the part of Jonathan, his armour-bearer being with him in his heart, is an illustration of the truth that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but are mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.

R.D.P. That is very good, and he proved it. There is a great shortage of weapons in the previous chapter; that is something I have never quite understood, to find that the testimony had got into such a state of disadvantage that the only persons who had swords in the land were Saul and Jonathan. Yet Jonathan goes with another weapon, he goes with faith. Do you know that nothing on this earth can stop a man who is moving in faith? Maybe our faith fails at a crucial moment and we may suffer a temporary set-back, but Jonathan's faith is maintained; he says "perhaps Jehovah will work for us"; he does not presume on God that He will but perhaps He

will. It is like those men in Daniel: "our God... is able to deliver us... But if not... we will not serve thy gods", chap 3: 17,18.

D.R.G.M. Should we always have a sense of victory and not defeat? Sometimes we find this goes wrong and that goes wrong and things do not work out the way we thought, but it says here that "Jehovah has delivered them into the hand of Israel"; they had the sense of victory.

R.D.P. That is important; that line of things will always look for Christ. Later, as soon as David comes up from slaying the Philistine, it says "that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David", chap 18: 1. He is a man whose outlook is always towards Christ. If there is to be victory for us it means Christ is before us.

R.L. God encourages Jeremiah on this line. He felt his weakness and his youth but God said to him "Say not, I am a child; for thou shalt go", Jer 1: 7. Is it not when we move, and not until then, that we prove the support and the help, as we commit ourselves to go?

R.D.P. That is right; and yet we can get so comfortable in these thickets and cliffs and caves and strongholds and pits; you sit there in your pit. When you go to work you may sit there in your pit; they know you are a bit unusual and you do not do this, that and the other thing, but they do not know too much else about you, and you are in a little pit, and you are not much of a force to be reckoned with. But a man of faith is a force to be reckoned with because Jonathan and his armour-bearer in a half-furrow of an acre of land slay twenty men. He has to do in his own area with the great movement that God is in when He will overthrow all this Philistine line of things ultimately Himself. Later on in the chapter Jehovah saved Israel; it does not say Jonathan saved them.

F.G.M. Is that faith contagious? I was thinking of this armour-bearer; "behold, I am with thee according to thy heart". He finds another of faith too, do you think?

R.D.P. Yes. I think we might well find that the enemies of Jehovah are not as widespread as we thought. If you move in faith you might well find more sympathy in relation to divine things than you ever

suspected. Let us go in faith, dear brethren, and as being prepared to take a step in faith we may find someone else ready to move with us.

As to the scripture in Acts it is important to see that, along with the great truth that came out in Ephesus, there was a tremendous amount of labour with Paul. I do not think he speaks much in this chapter as to the height of the truth, except as to the responsibility of it, but what he does bring before them is the way he had laboured and toiled with tears and temptations and lowliness, and how he had been with them. I think what you get here is Paul's devotion. We see that, along with the unfolding of his ministry and his apostolic power, there was a line of toil and labour in relation to the saints, most of which we are told little about but which is essential, first of all to the way in which that ministry was established, and secondly it is the key to these elders of how the truth of it was to be maintained.

E.M.W. Paul says in this chapter "I have shewed you"; he not only taught but showed in himself the thing that he taught and was concerned that it might be effective in them. Now that would be in line with what you spoke of as subjective, would it not?

R.D.P. Yes, I think so. It is not only a question of knowing the terms of the truth at the present time but knowing the way that Paul laboured, and the way that the truth has been established from house to house, from day to day, from night to night, in tears and temptations. That comes back to what we have in our local places, that there is a lot of arduous work that we need to do, not in the limelight but in secret, that things might be established amongst us.

F.M.K. Would these needs bring in more power and reality in the meeting for prayer? Do we need to have the vital testimony in the locality and all that springs from it more in our prayers rather than the circumstances of the saints?

R.D.P. The prayer meeting is one of the meetings that tests us; there is a certain range of things we usually pray about, and from time to time there are additional things which we can pray about, but one is concerned to reach God in the prayer meeting and I think that

involves a widening out in each one of us, leading to an increase in richness in the meeting.

E.M.W. It is a wonderful thing to be conscious that God is listening to you. It is easy enough to say He hears everything, He must do, but to be conscious that He is listening to you is a very great thing. John speaks of it.

R.D.P. Yes. Well Saul inquired of God ; the priest said "Let us come hither to God. And Saul inquired of God" (1 Sam 14: 36,37), but there was no answer. Saul is not deterred by that, he just goes on; you may say he had had the formality of his prayer meeting, but he seems to have no sense of loss in that there was no answer from God; he was prepared to go on without it. I think what you say is right, that one would desire to have more sense of being in God's presence.

E.M.W. John says "And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him", 1 John 5: 15.

R.D.P. It is a very interesting line of things. We would all be searched as to it. I think too that the prayer meeting needs to be marked more by the golden altar character of prayer, God's interests on a wide scale and the greatness of what God is and what is before Him. It is not only our needs and our wants, or even our thanksgivings, but a widening out in the presence of God in relation to the whole scope of His interests. Who of us can rise to it?

E.C.B. Is there not much more need among us for depth in the prayer meeting? I very much agree with what you are saying about taking account of the breadth of God's interests. I think we rake the surface a lot in the prayer meeting, but the depth that corresponds to this lowliness, tears and temptations is needed because the prayer meeting has to be a source of power. It is not an occasion of repeating an agenda to God.

R.D.P. I think that is a very important thing. The idea of an agenda is something we may have been led into at one time, that if we had a list of things and went down them it served and sufficed. It does not

suffice; "he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out", Heb 11: 6. It may be a different setting but I think there is always to be that sense when you come near to God.

E.C.B. Do you not find yourself tested if you are praying late in the prayer meeting?

R.D.P. That is interesting.

E.C.B. It is a very practical point because we are all inclined to say in our minds that everything has been prayed for, the meeting tomorrow night and on Wednesday, and then we think of Thursday and those who will be together on Friday; then we think of the fellowship meetings, and so on. Then we pray for the sick and the brethren in America, those in isolation and the brethren in smallness; then, all that having been prayed for, what are you going to pray for?

R.D.P. Yes; we would understand that some of the young ones amongst us are concerned to pray for things such as you have mentioned, and we are very thankful to see young persons prepared to break through and speak to God in the prayer meeting however initial that may be; yet sometimes they have been known to enquire what else can be prayed for. Perhaps they know that one and another will always pray for these things you mention and they will always be first and there is nothing left. It is a good exercise for things to develop; what can we say to God when the normal day to day things have been prayed for by someone else? Is the prayer meeting a reality to us, dear brethren, or is it just a meeting on the calendar and that is that? Is there any sense with us that we are drawing near to God, or are we just fulfilling a duty?

R.E.T. Should we not come into the sense of praise and worship on every occasion? Has not Mr Stoney helped us in regard to this, that on every occasion we come together there should be a fulfilment of the praise of God at the end? Is that not the blessing that God would bring upon us?

R.D.P. I am sure you are right, and that that line of things is to be touched, but let us touch it, let us go in for it, let us see if we can be

exercised privately that our prayer meetings and the way we are amongst the saints are enriched.

R.E.T. We would not be hindered if we prayed last surely.

R.D.P. I think what Mr Burr says is the experience with some of us anyway, because I know I have felt that. Maybe you are a bit jaded after the day at work, and you sometimes sit there and you think, what can I say? You feel like the disciples when they said "teach us to pray", Luke 11: 1. I think we often echo that feeling in our hearts if not publicly, teach us to pray, teach us to be able to draw near to God. I think what you say is right, we should not be at a disadvantage. But what we are speaking about is the practice; what do we prove? I do not think there is going to be any progress in spiritual things until we face matters as they are with us. Let those who are younger here be encouraged that, even though in their exercises they may feel far adrift of what some of the older ones say in their expressions, let us see that God will link on with them and will bring them through to His end.

E.M.W. In connection with prayer you will not mind me quoting Mr Darby. He says, Private prayer must always precede public prayer; then he adds, God always answers private prayer. I have not bottomed that yet so please do not ask me to explain it.

R.D.P. Well, maybe that is something we should leave with the brethren. I am sure you are right; there is to be more with us privately than there is publicly. There is more to be done in us than by us, someone said; that is certainly true of me.

R.L. Do we need the sense of bringing God in when we pray? Hezekiah said "Incline thine ear, Jehovah, and hear; open, Jehovah, thine eyes, and see", 2 Kings 19: 16. He sought to bring God in in relation to His interests.

R.D.P. Yes, very good.

MAIDSTONE

26 November 1977

Key to initials

E.C.B. - E.C.Burr, London; E.C. - E.Croot, London; W.E.E. - W.E.Ellis, London;

C.G.H.- C.G.Hitchcock, London; F.M.K. - F.M.Knappett, Maidstone;
R.L. - R.Lawrence, Maidstone; D.R.G.M. - D.R.G.Morris, Canterbury;
F.G.M.- F.G.Mav, Maidstone; R.D.P. - R.D.Plant, Birmingham; D.R. - D.Roberts, Gillingham; A.T. - A.Thomas, Gillingham;

R.E.T. - R.E.Turner, St.Albans; E.M.W. - E.M.Walkinshaw, Gillingham;

P.S.W. - P.S.Warren, London; V.E.W. - V.E.Wraighte, Gillingham

GOOD THINGS

W.Dickson

Judges 9: 10,11; Ephesians 5: 9; 3 John 11

The testimony which Caleb and Joshua rendered after their mission was that the land was "a very, very good land", Num 14: 7. I think that after our experience these two days we would agree that, to be in an environment which is totally different from what morally exists in the world, is very good. So, as following up what has been much in my mind this week, I want to speak of what is *good*. It is a great comfort in a world of evil to have a link with a God who is the source of good. Everything that He administers in grace to His people is good. Younger brethren, I exhort you to learn to love what is good. The Holy Spirit which indwells you will develop in you a love for what is good, not only publicly in companionships or in other walks of life, but a love for what is good for its own sake. A feature of a person being near God is that he unvaryingly loves what is good. We are here at this time because we love what is good and hate evil. The Spirit of God has shown us that the evil in this world is on account of the rejection of Christ. So we have a judgment about it and we love what is good as it is known in the circle of God's people.

In this parable of Jotham every part is interesting, but I have chosen that part which deals with the fig because what the fig tree says is "Should I leave my sweetness and my good fruit". In the reference made in the reading to the basket of figs at the time that Jeremiah wrote (see chap 24: 1-10) there is a deep moral lesson. The armies of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonish king, encompassed Jerusalem. He had come as the instrument of God's chastisement on account of the idolatry and departure of the people, and the basket of good figs represented those who bowed to the divine government and forsook the city and went into captivity. The bad figs were king Zedekiah and others who chose to remain in the city and defy the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Now the moral lesson in that is this, that in the sight of God it is good to bow to His

government. The position in Germany today is division of government. The worldwide scattering of the saints is governmental and any attempt to overcome these governmental circumstances by breaking down the path of separation and opening the door to open principles is to ignore God's government. The teaching of the Scripture is that if we humbly bow our heads in the light of what has come in we have God's promise that He will restore us again to the land. Jeremiah said "In this place they shall buy fields and land and possessions". So I would say that any attempt to overcome the governmental situation by seeking the fellowship of those not walking in the path of the truth will meet with God's disapproval.

This fig tree said "Should I leave my sweetness and my good fruit... ?". It was fully satisfied. Brethren, are we fully satisfied? I do not mean self-satisfied, but do we find our deep satisfaction in the things of God? If Ahab had been satisfied he would not have wanted Naboth 's vineyard. The gift of the Spirit to the believer means that he is perfectly satisfied in what God has given him in His grace. Are you satisfied in your local meeting? Do you think you would get on better in another place? The fig tree says, Should I leave my sweetness and my good fruit? It was satisfied. O beloved brethren, there is great gain in developing the inheritance in our own place. So we should not leave any situation in which God is manifestly blessing us spiritually. To be blessed materially is in itself no indication of God's favour. The thought of the fig-tree is that you are satisfied spiritually. So a dignified answer is given to the suggestion that he should become a king. Who wants a king's place in this world? The King is coming - the King of Kings. The Lord of Lords is coming and we shall have a part in that kingdom. Who wants to be a king in this locality? Is it not far better to be among the brethren and enjoy your good fruit? Younger brethren, the service of God is greater than any service man-ward. I know that we sometimes measure things by platform service, but seek much grace to realise that sonship before the Father is greater than any place in service. So do not let us leave our good fruit.

In the verse read in Ephesians it says that "the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth". It is remarkable that goodness comes first; that is a reminder to us of the standard of walk that befits believers who have the highest light that the Lord has been pleased to give. This chapter, in verses 11 and 12, speaks of evil things and it also speaks of unfruitful things, but we should manifest the fruit of the light in all goodness. I want to speak of the great value of influence amongst the brethren. It is an expression that is often used - an influence for good. Beloved younger brethren, seek the help of the Lord that you are always an influence for good in every way in which you move in the circle of the saints. It is not that you need to exhort or preach to your companions. Influence is a very subtle thing, and I use the word 'subtle' in a good sense. The effect of a good influence permeates the saints. So the fruit of the light is goodness and involves a standard of conduct that reflects God.

In John's epistle 'beloved' is one of John's favourite designations. It is good to think of and address the brethren affectionately. He says "do not imitate what is evil". The imitation of evil is more readily done than the imitation of good, and anything which detracts from the rights of Christ is not good. If there is a lowering of the standard of the truth, it does not come from God who is the source of good. We are not called upon to imitate what is evil. We must adhere to a standard. In the second epistle of John the question arises as to a person who comes to the house not abiding in the doctrine of the Christ. What do you think John would say if someone were to say to him that it would be good to have that man in the house? Would he say that was good? No, he would say "Do not receive him" (v 10). Love is not incompatible with maintenance of the truth. Is there a brother or a sister with a difference one with the other? Take the opportunity to imitate God. What did he do? He forgave us. What a line to imitate! The pattern of assembly life in the character of our meetings is a good thing. We want to imitate everything that is good in the assembly. Assembly customs, if they are not local customs, are good things and should be imitated. He

that does good is of God. There is sometimes a charge laid that we are not very evangelical. Well, there was a little maid in Naaman the Syrian's house and all that she did was good because she learnt through the prophet that God was good. She was evangelical. I do not accept the suggestion that the saints are not evangelical. There is abundant scope for evangelical work in personal contact, in giving out tracts and in the open-air preaching, each of which is good. There are examples that could be quoted from the New Testament, one of which is that Andrew first finds his own brother. That is a fine place to start, first finding your own brother. What influence for good have you in the home, that you can bring your brother to Christ? He that does good is of God. In a corrupt world the saints of God are like the salt of the earth. Salt is good but if the salt has lost its savour wherewith shall it be salted? The trend of the meetings these two days is to alert us to the fact that the salt must not lose its savour. The great preservative of the gospel is the people of God themselves going on with what is good. "He that does evil has not seen God". How do you see God? That is a big question. It is not with physical eyesight. You see God morally in the death of Christ. You see the solution of good and evil on the cross, and if you do evil you ignore God's judgment at the cross. If you do good you bear testimony to the triumph of good over evil. Remember that God is the source of good and let our time be filled out here amongst the brethren and amongst men in the pursuit of what is good. For His Name's sake.

ENDBACH

24 May 1980

PREACHING

C.J.H.Davidson

John 8: 51-59; Philippians 2: 6 -11; Revelation 21: 4-6

The eighth chapter of John is one of the most solemn chapters in the Scriptures, with the most wicked suggestions against the Saviour that man could throw up in His face; at the beginning of it there is that Saviour having mercy on the poor sinful woman, and at the end of it the persons surrounding Him sought to destroy Him. In the course of the chapter they say to Him "We are not born of fornication" (v 41), and again they say, "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan" (v 48), and then they add "and hast a demon", and still that Saviour, without whom I cannot do - and you too, if you rightly sense the position - went on through it all to the cross. What a story it is! The world has not improved since then; if He was here, walking in lowly gentleness among men, they would say the same kind of

things and would seek to destroy Him, and yet think, if you think rightly at all, of who He was. They say to Him "whom makest thou thyself?" What a question to put to the One of whom Paul said, He is "over all, God blessed for ever", Rom 9: 5.

Men are always busy making something of themselves. I am not exempt from that, the same hypocritical character is in me as it is in men in this world. I am not charging you with anything, but I am saying the fact is that from the time we are born our one struggle is to make something of ourselves. This Man, the only man that has ever been like it, made Himself of no reputation. He had good cause to make something of Himself; think of what was announced at His birth! God made something of Him. Of John the baptist his father Zacharias said, "And *thou*, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest", Luke 1: 76. You cannot make anything greater than that, it could not be. Think of John, beloved servant of God (I am looking forward to meeting that man and asking him more of what he thinks of Christ), prophet of the Highest; he said "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3: 30); that is the sign of a converted man. "Whom makest thou thyself?" - it was no good saying that to John the baptist; they said to him at the beginning of this gospel, "Who art thou?" chap 1: 19. He was not making himself the Christ. "Art thou Elias?" No. "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the path of the Lord" (v 23). And here was the One of whom John the baptist preached. "The burning and shining lamp" is what the Lord called His servant John the baptist, burning inwardly with love for Christ, shining outwardly in the most beautiful testimony to the One the Father had marked out to John as being the Son of God, and marked out by John seeing the Holy Spirit descending as a dove upon Him. What folly then to raise such a question in this chapter; "Whom makest thou thyself?". O, if you would only believe, beloved friend, if you would only believe that this is He! There is no-one else. Miss Havergal knew that alright: 'I could not do without Thee' - what lovely words those are! Another of her hymns is a favourite of mine - 'Thou art coming O my Saviour, Thou art coming O my King'. She looked out, as I look out tonight, eastward - the sky is bright. The

west - the testimony is not going to peter out, the light of the gospel will go out in one moment. There will be no twilight of the gospel; it will go out at the height that God intends it to be at, as at this moment.

So what a chapter it is. You may say it is a black chapter, but think of what follows! In chapter 9 a man gets his eyes opened to see beauty in Christ. Could anything be lovelier than that? "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" (v 35). "And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him?" Do you use language like that? Do you want to believe tonight? That man did; the dark chapter 8 gives way to the full light of the Son of God shining before a man who did homage to Him. That man did not say "whom makest thou thyself?" He said "I believe, Lord". If you want a result from the preaching tonight in this place, those words are sufficient - "I believe, Lord" and he did Him homage.

Then that there should be something for the young people here, in chapter 10 it is a Man who is the good Shepherd of the sheep. You know what He does with lambs - He leads sheep but He carries lambs in His bosom. I have been carried like that, I have wandered many times, but He has brought me back. I was carried like that as a tiny child; I remember that time. The gospel preaching is a wonderful time; Mr Coates said the saints need the gospel for by it they renew their own youth, and I can go back to a time when Mr Catterall preached on the scripture as to David and the committal of David's men to himself when they said "Thine are we, David, And with thee, thou son of Jesse", 1 Chron 12: 18. Mr Catterall said - and I took it in at nine years old - that we should say, 'Thine are we, Lord Jesus, and on Thy side, Thou Son of God'; and I found that the lambs were carried in the arms of the Shepherd. So chapter 10 is beautiful; how much there is in this area that Paul would go over! He had contact with John. John's writings are the last of Scripture, but Paul had contact with this man and loved him, loved him because Christ loved him.

Paul fills this out in that passage in Philippians 2 - O the blessed lowliness of Jesus! He could truly say "Before Abraham

was, I am". Paul said, "by God's grace I am what I am" (1 Cor 15: 10) - *what* I am; he could never say, as God can say, "I AM THAT I AM", Exod 3: 14. Paul could pick up the beauty of the lowly graciousness of Jesus in the second chapter to the Philippians - He made Himself of no reputation. Mr Darby has a lovely bit that is buried within me: 'a lowly Christ humbling Himself from Godheadform down to death, is the spring of lowly graciousness; an exalted One sought in glory, the spring of energy which counts all to be dross and dung to win Him' (see in Synopsis on Philippians 3). These are beautiful words, exemplified in that beloved servant - why? only because he was like Christ. No servant is worth speaking of unless you couple what comes out in him with what is seen in full perfection in Jesus. So think of it in a world which is as they say 'on the make'; that is what they say in this world, and some people are caught up with that. "Who makest thou thyself?" They want to make a name for themselves; they did at Babel and they have been doing it ever since. Mr Darby says that the spring of lowly graciousness is in the knowledge of that Man who humbled Himself.

Those steps down in Philippians 2 are very affecting: "emptied himself" - the great ministries have indicated that He emptied Himself, or made Himself of no reputation, by these downward steps. He took a bondman's form. "Man acquired me", the prophet says, "as bondman from my youth", Zech 13: 5. Never was that better exemplified than in Christ Himself - a Man that was available to a sinful woman in John 8, a Man that was available to a blind man in John 9, a Man that is available to all the sheep and the lambs in John 10. So we have a bondman for Saviour. He could have glorified Himself but He counted on His Father to do that, and the universe will yet see that Man. Miss Havergal says in that hymn I referred to, 'Oh, the joy to see Thee reigning, Thee my own beloved Lord! ... Vindicated and enthroned'. What a time it will be! The Father is delighting in the near approach of that time. How near we do not know, but we see all the signs of it around, and the Lord said in His teaching in Matthew's gospel, "when ye see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors", chap 24: 33. Ah, the doors of

heaven are going to be open soon, and that Saviour is coming forth, the trumpet of God, the assembling shout of Christ. We shall enter in, the doors will open to the King of glory a second time, and He will come out of heaven with the hosts that He has redeemed following Him. What a sight for this world it will be! This is the one of whom Paul says, "taking his place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross". Have you ever thought that Christ never needed to be humbled at all? I have needed it scores of times - shame that it should be so! - but the innate pride of man's heart is with me as it is with you, alas. But to see One in the likeness of a bondman, and yet One who could say in the language, of Psalm 50: "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee" (v 12). Think of the all-sufficient God humbling Himself to observe the things on the earth! He is so great, yet that One, Jesus, looking down even on a company like this, looking down on the children here and loving them and wanting their committal to Himself and to hear them say "I believe, Lord". But down here in manhood He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and then Paul adds those words "and that the death of the cross". Paul did not suffer martyrdom by crucifixion, Peter did, but Paul, as a Roman citizen, had the right under Roman law to be beheaded, and so he went obediently to his martyrdom at Rome, but when he thinks of his Saviour he says "and that the death of the cross". It is not only, friend, the agonising character physically of that death, but Paul is thinking of what was demanded because of his sins, coming down in wrath on the head of his substitute. How marvellous that all my sins, past and (let it not be, but it might be), future, were known by God and laid upon the head, the suffering head, of that Man who had become obedient even unto death!

And so that blessed story of God's grace goes on. How thrilling the result is when you think of nearly 2000 years of the preaching of Christ and the revenue from it for God! He has put the sickle in many times; it will not be the sickle in the end. He loves to take His own work into its true garner when it is completed - the blade, the

ear, the full corn in the ear and then the sickle - but when He puts the sickle in, the soul that is taken never sees death. Somebody has said that there is no water in Jordan, and another I heard say as I stood by his death bed, I can see Him visibly coming down, I can see Him. Not death: think of the grace of it that the Saviour who has saved you will manifest Himself to you when the sickle is put in, but it will not be the sickle at the rapture. In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed. That is what we look for beloved, the sky, eastward as I said, is bright and His coming is about to dawn. The sky, not the grave is our goal. O how lovely the gospel is in its result now through the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the future before the Christian, of which, as Mr Darby said on his own deathbed, There is no future for the Christian but glory.

The Man that made Himself of no reputation is the Man that is going to make all things new. That verse that I started at in Revelation always thrills me, for you cannot wipe away tears without a hand, and it will be the hand of Christ that will do it, the same hand that He showed to Thomas, doubting Thomas, who wanted to see the mark of the nails. It is God who will wipe away all tears, but it is the hand of a Man that will do it. That God will do so comes three times in the Scriptures, so emphatic is He that we should understand the character of His simile, the character of His heart - once in Isaiah, twice in Revelation, and the last time is here. And it is the last time that we are in, the last opportunity to take the water of life freely. He is soon going to say, "It is done". There will be no more appeal then, no choice will remain. I can say, as Joshua of old did, "choose you this day whom ye will serve", Josh 24: 15. Even the children can say, as loving Jesus, that they want to be here for Him. In that day when he says "It is done" it will be done and no evil power in the universe will give Him any cause for delay. There will be no trade union power to come against government in that day because the government will be upon His shoulder. So that is the Man that is presented by the Holy Spirit in the glad tidings. Is He great enough for you? He was great enough for Paul, He is great enough for so many here, let Him be great enough for you, so that

you say truly 'I cannot do without Thee, O Saviour of the lost'. May that be your portion -'with Him - O, with Jesus! ' - for His Name's sake.

STREATHAM LONDON

24 February 1980

THE CHILDREN'S WITNESS

Thankfully, many children in many lands have heard of the Lord Jesus and have looked up to Him for salvation. They have proved for themselves the scripture that "every one whosoever, who shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved". But the question then arises as to whether His name has been confessed as well as called upon. A wartime incident of many years ago will illustrate the point. On a battlefield lay a wounded soldier likely to die of his injuries. He noticed a surgeon-officer passing nearby and was able to call out to him for help. The doctor dismounted from his horse, attended to the man giving all possible relief and undertook to have him taken to hospital. On being asked his name the surgeon replied 'O, no matter'. 'But, doctor', said the wounded man, 'I want to tell them all at home who saved my life'. This was a sign of real gratitude and does not the Lord Jesus deserve as much from you?

The martyrs are a great example of the way in which witness to the Lord was able to spread the truth at a time when to many it must have seemed hopeless. But they were really the victors and indeed were more than conquerors through Him whose personal love they enjoyed. There was all the power of God to support their testimony. No doubt the stoning of Stephen prepared the conscience of Saul of Tarsus to bow to the will of the Lord Jesus, with untold gain to the testimony. Hundreds of years later a martyr, looking on the crowd around, exclaimed, 'Behold the harvest! O Master, send forth Thy labourers!'.

The world is morally a very dark place and Christians are lights in it when Christ is their life. The life is the light. Travelling by train on a dark moonless night we can tell that we are passing by a village because we can see the cottage lights which are a witness that life is there. At this time of year many young people will have new associates in the office or workshop where they need to make a stand for the Lord Jesus. It is an encouragement that Jesus said that "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men. I also

will confess him before my Father who is in the heavens". Is your name amongst these?

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