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THE TESTIMONY OF OUR LORD

THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE TEMPLE

THE CHILDREN'S CERTAINTY

## THE TESTIMONY OF OUR LORD

### 2 Timothy 1: 7-14; 2: 19-26; 3: 16,17

E.M.W. I thought the link in these passages with what has been before us is in "the testimony of our Lord" and "Keep, by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted". Then in the next chapter: "those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart", and the last two verses of chapter 3 giving us an intimate link between the Spirit and the Scriptures, which is of all importance in our day.

We have been reminded before that it is the testimony of our Lord; it is not our testimony of *the* Lord but *the* testimony of *our* Lord, it is His testimony. Then Paul goes on to outline what would be a rock for the feet of Timothy in the day of departure, that He "has saved us, and has called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages of time, but has been made manifest now by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ". So that *before* creation and *before* the breakdown God gave certain things to us in Christ Jesus, and in setting out the truth as Paul does in these verses he does not accommodate himself to the conditions that exist, or follow a policy of appeasement to the most who had turned away from him, but maintains the truth on its divine level. So there is no question at all in his mind, and there should not be in ours, of modifying the truth to meet the circumstances that exist. Hence before he outlines in chapter 2 and what follows the serious conditions that will exist in the last days, he settles the mind of the individual in the immutability of God's purpose. It is quite evident that the Lord has not changed His position, and His operations are proceeding; and the Spirit does not cease to dwell in us, and He is available despite the conditions that exist.

Then in chapter 2 we have what has been called our charter, and I think as we follow our exercises with the Lord Jesus as individuals we should go over it time and time again with Him, because it is written to an individual. In verses 19 to 21 he seems to make a simple statement of what is necessary in days when persons

have gone astray, but then he comes back again to addressing Timothy directly when he says "But youthful lusts flee, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart". In the last two verses read there is an intimate link between the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, so we cannot divorce the Holy Spirit from the Scriptures. It has often been said that, if we discard the Scriptures and from our own mental point of view emphasise the presence of the Spirit, we shall possibly fall into imagination and all sorts of ideas of special revelation; if we hold to the letter of Scripture and ignore the Holy Spirit we shall go astray and become legal and possibly form a specialised teaching of our own. I think we can see therefore the importance of carrying through in our minds the great truth of the fact that Jesus has been made both Lord and Christ. He is supreme and He is still operating, and the Holy Spirit is here still putting into effect the truth of the kingdom of God.

A.C.C. If the Spirit is like a mighty river, are the Scriptures like the banks?

E.M.W. I think they would be.

A.C.C. At least for us it would be, would it not, that we keep within the banks?

E.M.W. Yes, we must do that. Then the scripture speaks of the ascended Man having given gifts (see Eph 4: 18); so if you ignore the gifts you are ignoring the Scriptures. Some people say, I must have scripture for everything. Well, they would need to give you a scripture for saying it.

E.F.C. We cannot rightly interpret the Scriptures, can we, apart from the help of the Holy Spirit?

E.M.W. I think that is most important. Therefore we need to be dependent on the Spirit in a meeting like this. It is not a question of any one speaking '*ex cathedra*' as though with infallible authority, but it is an inquiry into the truth.

D.C.J. We need to carry forward the idea of self-judgment so that the Spirit is free within us to open up the Scriptures to us.

E.M.W. I believe that is right; and then as maintained in self-judgment He forms us spiritually and we are not only spiritual in character but we grow in stature. I think we would all have to admit that those men who have served us so well in the past could see so much more in Scripture than we could see, yet when they pointed it out it was simple. You say, Well, of course, when you see it it is simple.

J.Mcl. Would what you are bringing before us make us good subjects of the kingdom? If we are in the gain of what you are bringing before us would there be subjection to the local company that we walk with?

E.M.W. In the sense of state and approach, yes. You might have to hold to the truth, and in a local company be almost alone in holding to the truth, but in doing so you would respect both the truth and the brethren; and your approach is a subject one, I think, in quietness of spirit and dependence upon the Lord. I heard of an incident in the life of Mr Coates when the brethren did not seem to agree with him. He waited on the Lord and approached it in a subject manner and the brethren came round to it. He said, I knew they would come round to it eventually.

J.Mcl. That is very helpful, because in time past I have heard brethren say, I will be subject to the brethren. But we are always to be subject to the truth; is that the point?

E.M.W. I think it is. It emphasises the importance of what was said as to self-judgment. As maintained in self-judgment in the light of the cross it is a question not of obedience to something that may be said in the local company but of subjection in the state of your soul.

J.Mcl. It would preserve us from being freelance.

E.M.W. Yes. One has ventured to say (and everything we say is subject to examination and to the critical faculty of the saints in the temple) that what we need is help as to the kingdom. It is not so

much help as to assembly administration that we need but help into the kingdom of God. There is great emphasis on the Lord teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God. There would be very little trouble, I believe, in assembly administration if we were in the good of the kingdom.

J.A.P. Is the Lord always an example for us? In His first preaching He says "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Luke 4: 18), bringing in the passage from Isaiah. Would that give us a lead from Himself, that He brought something forward as Man by the Spirit, the right passage at the right time, knowing where to stop in that passage for the point of His gospel preaching?

E.M.W. That is interesting and instructive. He first says "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me". Earlier it says He "returned in the power of the Spirit" (v 14), which would be the power of His movements as a lowly dependent Man. He was anointed, the Spirit was upon Him, and then as you say, He uses the Scriptures. He is a wonderful model for us in that way.

J.A.P. He did not feel it right to go on to the verse in Isaiah that spoke of vengeance. Would that give scope in ministry for a brother to bring before the saints what might be needed? Someone might say, You are overlooking something else; but the Lord stopped at a certain place because that was what was needed in that preaching.

E.M.W. I think that is right. Of course, when we speak of the blessed Lord we are speaking of absolute perfection. When it comes to ourselves we feel our weakness. So in occasions like this we ask a brother to give a lead, but he is inquiring just as much as everyone. He is not sitting in Moses' seat or anything like that. The brethren respect the anointing, but if a brother is asked to give a lead he is inquiring, he is in the temple. The Spirit of God no doubt definitely helps and exercises the consciences and the hearts of the saints, but we must be very careful not to suppose that a brother is speaking from an authoritarian position. He is inquiring just as much as everyone else. Do you agree with that?

J.A.P. I think that is very salutary.

E.M.W. And where the truth is brought forward, whoever may bring it forward, and there is exercise of conscience and heart and spiritual discernment, the truth carries weight and makes way for itself. It does not need to be forced by human argument.

H.J.G. Does Philip's connection with the eunuch help? "How should I then be able unless some one guide me?", Acts 8: 31. The Spirit was in Philip's words and movements. He took up certain scriptures, but it would be by the Spirit, would it not?

E.M.W. Yes, he was very skilful. The angel spoke to him first and then the Spirit spoke to him. He was very skilful in that he could take up the very scripture that the eunuch was reading. That is not always so easy. I think I might have said, Perhaps another scripture would be more appropriate in these circumstances; but "beginning from that scripture" he evangelised to him Jesus.

C.F.D. As to the matter of a good state in our souls, do you think that if the truth is presented to us there would be a receptiveness on our part? So the spirit of contention is not the spirit that would mark a good state but more a spirit of prepared reception so that the truth becomes our bond.

E.M.W. I am sure that is right. We need to be receptive without being gullible. ·

S.D.K.R. How do you link what Jude says, "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints" (v 3)?

E.M.W. "To contend earnestly" is, in the original, a different word; it is 'agonising', that is with God. The word "a bondman of the Lord ought not to contend" is really that he ought not to be quarrelsome. I do not say that 'quarrelsome' is the precise meaning of the original word, but the idea of being quarrelsome is in the meaning of that word. But contending in Jude is agonising - I take it that would be largely with God - "for the faith once delivered to the saints".

J.Mcl. Paul's word to Timothy is to *convict* - "be urgent in season and out of season, convict" 2 Tim 4: 2. Is conviction what we first

need to enter into things? It says "convict, rebuke, encourage, with all longsuffering and doctrine".

E.M.W. I think that is true. The weakness lies in one's power to do that. I would desire myself to be able to demonstrate the truth from the Scriptures so as to bring conviction, but that must be in the power of the Spirit. Argument determines nothing because you will find that at the end of the argument the two persons arguing are stronger in their own opinions than they were at the beginning. The question is the truth making a way and purity of motive that has the truth unvaryingly in mind. We are so influenced by all kinds of things - family influences, social influences, special friendships and the like - rather than having a motive to be governed by the truth.

L.MacF. Paul's approach in the opening verses of this second epistle is "to Timotheus, my beloved child". Paul is seen here as a father and he is effective in the instructions.

E.M.W. The way in which he approaches not only individuals but local companies is the same. Think of his approach to the Corinthians; "Grace to you and peace from God our Father", or to the Galatians; "Grace to you, and peace". Paul took the place of a servant and he recognised that the persons he was serving were greater as saints than he was as a servant.

C.F.D. That is a very interesting observation, because as you examine the beginning and the closing of the epistles that Paul writes, it seems that he encases everything that he has to say within the framework of grace, because he ends his epistles with the thought of grace. The grace of the dispensation seems to have permeated his ministry, does it not?

E.M.W. Yes; I think he would have apprehended the force of having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father. Peter does not say from God but from the Father (see Acts 2: 33); that is to say, Paul would have understood that that wonderful name of relationship in grace was to permeate the whole dispensation. So while the truth, as we so often say, is never given up or accommodated to the circumstances or conditions in which people may be, yet the whole is

permeated by grace, and fatherhood was seen very beautifully in Paul.

S.D.K.R. Paul speaks of himself and those with him as new covenant ministers. Would that be in line with what is being said?

E.M.W. I think it would. God has made us, he says, new covenant ministers, "not of letter, but of spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit quickens", 2 Cor 3: 6. So you feel that as the Holy Spirit is made room for in our occasions for inquiry there is a quickening of the affections of the saints, and I think the saints quickly respond to the presentation of the truth.

S.D.K.R. I was thinking of what we said earlier about authority in ministry. Would there not be in the spirits of the saints something that would respond and realise that there is divine speaking?

E.M.W. Yes, I think the authority in ministry, which has been so often referred to, is because the person that carries the weight, as men do amongst us, is in the power of the Spirit and governed by the truth, and you find where that is the case there is moral authority. It is not an arbitrary assertion of an opinion but there is moral authority. And hence the maintenance of the testimony of *our* Lord; I think there is a good deal in that simple expression. And Paul adds "Nor of me his prisoner".

T.E.D. Do the two go together, the testimony and the word? I was thinking of John in the Revelation, "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus, chap 1: 9.

E.M.W. I think that would be included, but "the testimony of our Lord" seems to me to be the light of another order of things altogether, of which Christ is the head and the centre, which is enshrined in the hearts of the saints in the presence of opposing forces. You feel very weak in thinking of it, but it is the light of another world altogether held in the souls of the saints, and it is held here in testimony pending its display publicly in glory later on. But the definite article being used - *the* testimony of *our* Lord - leaves you with the impression of a complete testimony, not just a simple testimony to His Name as we have said - because if someone

mentions the name of Jesus testimony is in it - but this gives the impression of something that is complete and it is cherished somewhere in some person or persons.

T.E.D. Is your concern in our inquiry how the individual is related to that?

E.M.W. Yes, that is a primary point in our inquiry, because he is writing to an individual.

D.C.J. Do we find the testimony of the Lord carried forward in persons that have normal spiritual growth, as Timothy had, knowing the sacred letters from a child well instructed? Was his knowledge of that really the testimony that was carried forward?

E.M.W. I think that would be largely the case, and of course his intimate link with Paul and his having learned from Paul would give him comprehensive knowledge of all that was involved in it. I think one of the first things is to be totally and unreservedly committed to it, however little you may feel you understand it. I am sure the Lord in these days is looking for young men to be totally and unreservedly committed to His testimony.

E.F.C. Would you not commend to all of us the reading of the accredited ministries of the recovery, along with the Scriptures primarily, so that we understand the truth; and how the Scriptures are to be interpreted, as well as our part in the testimony? Do not the great ministries of the recovery play a large part in our being able to understand rightly our position in relation to the testimony?

E.M.W. Yes, I think that is important, and for each person to have a divinely-given conviction of a progressive ministry from the Lord. It is not that somebody with ability rose up and helped the brethren, and then someone followed him and helped the brethren and someone else followed him and helped the brethren, but to have a divinely-given conviction of the progressive way in which the Lord has moved in the ministry of the recovery. If you have not that conviction you will likely fall away from it, because you just look at it as a specialised teaching of a particular group of brethren, and that is disastrous if you think that way.

D.C.J. Unless the Spirit is free in us and we get communications direct from the Lord (although the ministries are very helpful) we may become stoical and quite dry, if it is just kept at that. We need the Spirit free in us to get what is fresh for the moment, do we not?

E.M.W. That is why one has emphasised the two. We quote a good deal, and if you search your heart, why do you quote? You may quote Mr Darby, Mr Raven, Mr Taylor. It is good to help forward the truth but we often quote so as to give some kind of authority to what we are saying, whereas one's own present exercise is to get the gain of the progressive ministry the Lord has given, and to be able, as working it out with Him, to demonstrate the truth of it from the Scriptures themselves. If I may repeat it, when some of us were in the army we were in a kind of miniature Christendom. You would have Buddhists, spiritualists, open brethren, exclusive, Stuarts, Grants, Kellys, Pentecostals, and if you quoted Mr Darby the answer from some was, Who is he? Some would recognise him, but a Pentecostal man - and those men are very keen on the Scriptures - would say, What about the Scriptures? Where do you get that from the Scriptures? And at times we had to admit we were lost; we were relying on the ministry, the importance of which we cannot over-emphasise, but we were relying on it as a specialised form of teaching which belonged to a certain group of Christians, which is not the case. It is the truth which the Lord gave progressively for all the saints, and in fact available for all men. We through sovereign mercy have been brought into the light of it and are therefore more responsible.

T.E.D. Do you think that the expression 'to know where I am and why I am there' is not just to be quoted but that I need the soul exercise to face through and come to an inward link by the Spirit with the Lord as to where the testimony is currently?

E.M.W. That is most important. Of course some of you have been through more severe exercises than others of us on that very point, as to 'where I am and why I am there'. You may say it is an old quotation, but it is still very current.

A.C.C. Had the young man in 2 Kings not made it his own when the axe head fell into the water, but there was grace there to raise it.

E.M.W. Yes, "Alas, master", you mean, "it was borrowed!", chap 6: 5. If you quote from Mr Taylor and someone says, What does that mean? all you can say maybe is, I am sorry but I borrowed that from Mr Taylor. It is a good thing to get your seeds from a good seed merchant - Mr Darby, Mr Raven, Mr Taylor and others - but you want to grow the flowers in your own garden. Do not pick the flowers out of their garden and display them as though they are your own. Get the seeds of the truth and get to work so that the truth is formed in your own soul, and what is being expressed is what you have learned, maybe *through* those men, but you have learned it as coming *from* the Source, which is the Lord Himself.

J.A.P. Mr Darby's tract, 'What do I learn from Scripture' (see Vol. 23, p.127), ought to be read by all the brethren, because Mr Darby quotes more scriptures per page in that tract than he does in other of his writings, to substantiate why he is where he is.

E.M.W. That is good advice, if we can do that. He quotes scripture very widely in his ministry on the Sufferings of Christ. However, if we get something from the ministry, then we should follow it up: I think it is the good teaching, and we should follow it up, inquire into it, search into it, but then find the roots of it in Scripture, make it our own, and then it comes into expression amongst the saints as made our own and it is thus effective. You do not need to say, Mr Darby said this and everybody has to accept it!

D.C.J. We need to be concerned to have a deposit, something that we have ourselves that God can take account of and which is going to last.

E.M.W. I feel that is of the utmost importance. What one fears is a lack of balance in emphasising the Scriptures and ignoring the good teaching, or becoming thoroughly acquainted with the good teaching and ignoring the Scriptures. We are in the position, I think, where, because we have the teaching, we are in danger of taking a sense to a scripture rather than getting a sense from it. Now I think the Lord

would help us about this because I believe the roots of all the good teaching can be found in Scripture, and the man that is in the gain of the good teaching and the knowledge of the Scriptures will be able to demonstrate the truth from the Scriptures.

R.A. In John 16 the Lord says "he shall receive of mine and shall announce it to you" and "whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak" (vv 13,14). Is that how we get the current heavenly things.?

E.M.W. I think that would be so, so that we are kept in touch livingly; but it is very evident that the Holy Spirit would not say something today that would contradict something He said fifty years ago. And we must allow for fallibility in man. We need to be very watchful lest we unconsciously put any man in the place of the Spirit of God. More than Mr Darby, more than Mr Raven, more than Mr Taylor and more than Paul is here; the Spirit of God is here in the assembly.

H.C. John says "if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another", 1 John 1: 7.

E.M.W. Yes; you have a point there?

H.C. Yes, what is current; the light is always shining, it never dulls.

E.M.W. Yes, that is so; "if we walk in the light as he is in the light"; God has been completely revealed. If you look at that scripture there is a good deal of ministry on it, and I think the Lord would help us to understand the scripture from the ministry, but at the same time to see that the roots of it all are there in the Scriptures. He has used and uses the gifts from Himself, ascended on high to open up the truth to us. Some people say, I go by the Scriptures, I do not take any notice of these teachers and so on. But you are ignoring the Scriptures if you speak like that.

J.Mcl. I was interested in your bringing in the thought of growth agriculturally. Scripture speaks as to the good ground. Should this be our exercise in preparing the good ground within ourselves in order that what is in the Scriptures might grow in us?

E.M.W. Yes, it speaks of "an honest and good heart" (Luke 8: 15) which receiving the word brings forth fruit with patience.

G.T.McC. There is a salutary word in Proverbs: "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well", chap 5: 15. What you have pointed out is that we value what these men have said, but unless we make it our own we just become repetitious.

E.M.W. That is one of the difficulties, I think. Difficulties arise and people with a variety of opinions fly to the ministry and all quote it to support their own point of view. We are all likely to do that, but where there has been a following up of the good teaching with the Lord, and following it up in the Scriptures, the thing is built into the soul. When Satan attacks there is a constitution and intelligence by which the Lord helps the person to face the difficulty that may lie ahead. For myself, wherever possible when difficulties arise, I try to avoid any kind of quotation and seek to use the Scriptures.

S.D.K.R. Would you say a word as to putting an application of an injunction to Israel in the Old Testament over against, or giving it predominance over, what the Lord may have said to His assembly, or Paul may have said.

E.M.W. Well, you must be cutting in a straight line the word of truth. Now that is not easy, because Paul says to Timothy "Strive diligently to present thyself approved to God, a workman that has not to be ashamed, cutting in a straight line the word of truth", 2 Tim 2: 15. It is quite clear that the Old Testament is God's word, and equally so with the New Testament, but if I wanted to learn something about the tabernacle system I would not go to the book of Revelation, I would go to Exodus. If I wanted to learn something about the sacrifices I would not go to the gospels, I would go to Leviticus. If I wanted to learn something about assembly administration I would go to Paul, because the administration of the assembly was given to him, and it is nothing new to say that the last word on assembly administration was given to Paul. It is all illustrated and opened up in detail in typical teaching, but assembly administration and the truth of the assembly's relations with Christ where Christ is, or the working out of administration in localities here, was given to Paul. This would not be the first time it has been said; it was said I think by Mr Taylor. I

am using him again to give authority to what I am saying, but Paul is the man to whom it was committed.

E.F.C. Paul draws heavily on the Old Testament when writing to the Romans in the light of the nations and how they fit into the purpose of God, and then very heavily when writing to the Hebrews as taking into account the Jewish brethren to whom he was writing. So he followed up what the Lord said, "the scripture cannot be broken", John 10: 35.

E.M.W. I think that helps immensely. If you take your example of the Hebrews, he is writing to people who would understand the whole of the tabernacle system. He speaks of Christ as "minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched, and not man", chap 8: 2. He speaks of the "Holy of holies", they would understand all that; but as you say, he draws on the Scriptures to illustrate it.

H.J.G. And also, when it comes to regulation in the local assembly, when he writes to Corinth he says, Let him that is spiritual "recognise the things that I write... that it is the Lord's commandment", 1 Cor 14: 37.

E.M.W. That is where our difficulty lies. One feels for one's self that "the spiritual discerns all things" (1 Cor 2: 15) is a test. It does not mean that he is omniscient; that is to say, he cannot see inside persons; you cannot see what a brother is thinking, but he has discernment. So Paul says, so to speak, If you think you are a prophet or spiritual you will see very plainly that this is from God; this is the Lord's commandment and you will not need to be forced to do it.

T.E.D. How would Aquila and Priscilla have shown the way of God more exactly to a man who was both eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures (see Acts 18: 24,26)?

E.M.W. I think he was a man in the good of John the baptist's ministry. I should think he was a subject man and consequently was prepared to be taken and to be shown. He was not a self-important

or selfopinionated man, was he? But how they did it? I shall have to wait until I see them to ask them!

T.E.D. I was wondering whether what you touched on yesterday, the link with Christ in glory and the Spirit here, was expressed in them in their own manner and way of life.

E.M.W. Yes, that would be right, I think, and they would be the exponents of the truth, would they not? But I am more than ever convinced that where we need help in these days of dreadful lawlessness in the world - every man doing what is tight in his own eyes - is to be in the good of the kingdom. It is kingdom truth that we need; and I think when we are in the good of the kingdom it is normal to be in the assembly. There is no room in the assembly for selfopinionated people.

E.F.C. The substance and essence of the kingdom is what Paul says in Romans 14: 17: "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit". The Holy Spirit will not tell you to go to this place to gather and myself to somewhere else to gather. He will tell us both the same thing, will He not?

E.M.W. That raises a very vital question: Where is the testimony of our Lord cherished. The testimony of our Lord, I think would be cherished by persons in the good of the kingdom. And the consequence is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. It would not lead us in opposite directions and it would never alienate us from each other.

G.W.S. Would "Do ye not know this parable?" - that is the parable of the kingdom - "and how will ye be acquainted with all the parables?" (Mark 4: 13) fit in? The Lord would give us to be more acquainted and understand the other things that come in as we are subject men of the kingdom.

E.M.W. That is a very good reference. If you do not understand this how will you understand the other? That reminds me of the Lord's words to Nicodemus which are somewhat similar; "If I have said the earthly things to you, and ye believe not, how, if I say the heavenly

things to you, will ye believe?" John 3: 12. So it is really a step by step matter.

J.A.P. Another matter referred to in the kingdom, in Matthew 13: 52, is that "every scribe disciplined to the kingdom... brings out of his treasure things new and old". I also am going to quote, that Mr Taylor said the new was first, and that what has been revealed to us in Christianity must govern us in our outlook; the gospel and the assembly have come in, and that is what governs us in our outlook on the Scriptures.

E.M.W. I would not suggest that we cannot bring in what these men say, but it is better to bring it in having worked it out yourself. In any case the Lord says "brings out of his treasure things new and old"; so we must be governed by the full revelation of God.

C.F.D. Therefore do you think that the opening up of things, in Paul's ministry especially, has helped us in taking a backward view as to the Scriptures? We really understand the Old Testament as we have things opened up to us as they have been confided to Paul.

For instance, as to the man and woman, how could we understand the type of the man and the woman in the beginning of Genesis if we really did not have the opening up of the truth of that in Paul's ministry? Therefore do you think that what has been opened up in Christianity, especially by Paul to whom it was given to complete the word of God (see Col 1: 25), really throws light on the whole of Scripture?

E.M.W. Yes. He says to Timothy "Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things", 2 Tim 2: 7. He does not say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in what *I* say, but the Lord will give thee understanding in *all* things. Paul's ministry is therefore a certain centre of all things. I think you will find I am right in saying that Mr Darby had the light of the Head in heaven and the body on earth, and the light of Paul's ministry, before he opened up in the wonderful way that he did the Old Testament Scriptures.

Because everything is to be read, it seems to me, in the light of Christ and the assembly.

C.F.D. Therefore immediately following where you have quoted he says "Remember Jesus Christ... of the seed of David", and he brings in the thought of His death and resurrection, does he not?

E.M.W. Yes, "raised from among the dead... according to my glad tidings". So that everything must be read in the light of Christ; that is why specialised prophetic students go astray, because they do not read things in the light of Christ.

C.F.D. I wondered if "according to my glad tidings" would be that what was brought in or entrusted to Paul as to the glad tidings put a peculiar glory and finishing touch on how Christ would open up His thoughts to us.

E.M.W. Yes, I think that is really the deposit to which he refers: "Keep, by the Holy Spirit... the good deposit entrusted". There is the "testimony of our Lord". Now I do not know whether we can locate where that is. "Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner". We have spoken to exercise one another, not in any dogmatic way but to exercise one another as to locating the Lord; that is, locating Him in testimony. Where is He maintaining *His* testimony? Quite apart from His sovereignty, doing what He will, where He will, through whom He will, it should be an exercise with us to locate Him in testimony.

H.W.J. Does what you read in chapter 2 help us to locate where the Lord is operating in testimony now? If I work through the exercises of chapter 2 personally, individually, the Spirit will work with me to help me locate where the testimony is really being held. Would that be right?

E.M.W. I think that is how the truth stands. So, to use your expression, you work through it. Now many of us sitting here have been brought up amongst the brethren. The question must therefore arise as to whether I am there circumstantially or as having worked through this passage morally with the Lord.

H.W.J. The Lord, I believe, brought us to a point nine years ago where we had to face this matter practically. We knew of it in the ministry, and understood the light of 2 Timothy 2, but we were forced

by circumstances to work through this matter practically, and I believe some had perhaps not this light in their soul and were not able to stand on that account.

E.M.W. I think that is the truth, and that is why so many have gone astray. That is my own impression; some were there because their family was there, in effect for the same reason that a Methodist was a Methodist. He was brought up a Methodist and he remained a Methodist, or he was brought up a Roman Catholic and he remained a Roman Catholic, or he was brought up an exclusive brother and he remained an exclusive brother. But when the Lord brought the test in, this had not been faced.

H.W.J. It is a very exercising matter to talk to believers who have no light as to the recovery about our position, and how the truth has been recovered and for them to say to you, Yes, but you have been born in that and you have been raised in that and you are just like any other Christian born and raised in the system in which they are found. It is a testing thing to answer.

E.M.W. That is the very thing one has had to meet one's self. Maybe most of us here have had to meet that. You are there because you were born t here.

J.Mcl. We are reading locally in Ruth, and we were much encouraged by Ruth's committal. She begins with "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (chap 1: 16), but that was the committal that she was prepared to work out. She says "Do not intreat me to leave thee", and Naomi "saw that she was steadfastly minded to go with her". Do you think this is the ingredient we need, to be steadfastly minded to link on with the truth?

E.M.W. Yes; Naomi represents for us, I suppose, the testimony in its outward weakness, in widowhood. What is there to offer? What is there to offer a young man or young woman? Outwardly there is nothing, but Ruth was steadfastly minded. Young men and young women, the Lord is looking for you to be steadfastly minded and committed to His testimony. Now, such persons He will not leave in the darkness as to where it is.

J.Mcl. We were exhorting our young people to be prepared to link on with that which may be outwardly weak; but then there is great wealth lying in it if they pursue in relation to what you have been saying.

E.M.W. And see what it led into for Ruth.

K.A.O. When we work out these matters, do you not think that we need to be in dependence and in subjection to the Lord and waiting upon the Spirit to show us where the testimony of the Lord is?

E.M.W. That is right. Now you will have noticed, I expect, in this passage that in the first instance it is "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity", that is verse 19; but when you come to verse 22 it is not those that call upon the name of the Lord but those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Now a pure heart would be one, as you have said, in simplicity and absolute subjection to Him.

K.A.O. That is exactly what I had in mind. He brings in those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, and that would indicate subjection and simplicity to what the Lord would be having you to do.

E.M.W. If you follow that, the Lord will help you personally and help me personally to locate where "the testimony of our Lord" is cherished.

S.D.K.R. Would one evidence of that be that His rights are fully acknowledged?

E.M.W. Yes, that must be so.

S.D.K.R. If His rights are not given full place, or are abrogated, would that be iniquity?

E.M.W. Oh yes, because the word 'iniquity' here simply means what is not right; that is the meaning of the original word as over against righteousness. Of course there is always the grace and patience for forbearance with one another in seeking to work out the truth, because one test that I have found is not doing what is right by sometimes being in the darkness as to what is the right thing to do.

S.D.K.R. But if His rights are not publicly acknowledged, whether in relation to the general assembly or a local assembly, is that iniquity?

E.M.W. Yes. We sometimes get confused as to this word 'iniquity'.

Men speak of dens of iniquity and they are thinking of moral corruption and the like, but this is primarily, although not exclusively, ecclesiastical iniquity.

D.C.J. Do we need to keep in mind that no matter what company or association we are with we need to be overcomers in it? Even amongst ourselves conditions may not be just right, and we need to be overcomers.

E.M.W. I am sure that is right. We need to be overcomers in it because the tendency is to settle into what we assume is a right position, and we need to be stirred up to be overcomers all the time. Now the question arises - and without provoking arguments or the like it must arise - as to whether it is possible for there to be two companies of those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. A number of companies take that ground, but is it a moral possibility for two companies alienated from each other both to be "those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart"?

S.D.K.R. In a matter like that would the origin of a company have to be looked into, as to where the rights of the Lord were acknowledged?

E.M.W. That is right; one has looked at the origin of the company of those with whom one walks, and as our young brother has said, we do not want to take things for granted, we need to be overcomers.

Now, was the origin of the company with whom I walk in a defence of what was due to the Lord, or was it in a relinquishing of what was due to Him?

G.T.McC. What did you conclude?

E.M.W. While exercise continues all the time because you cannot disregard the exercises of others, the conclusion I have come to is that there was a firm stand for what was due to the Lord. That is the conclusion in my own soul.

S.D.K.R. And where that stand was made you would support it.

E.M.W. Yes, quite so.

G.T.McC. To "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" would be a constant thing, not just something that is arrived at once. Is that not the point of your challenge to us? You said, Can the Lord be with two companies or can two companies who are opposed to each other call upon the Lord out of a pure heart? What I am getting out of that is that you are challenging us as to whether we are calling upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

E.M.W. Yes, you pursue each of those things at one and the same time. While righteousness is the leader, yet you are pursuing righteousness, faith, love and peace, each of those things all the time, and you are pursuing energetically. That is the point of our brother's remark, I think, as to an overcomer; but it seems very evident to me that two companies alienated from each other cannot possibly be pursuing righteousness. It is impossible.

D.C.J. These are exercises by the way, but as far as what we are going to take into eternity, all these things will fall. Our exercise should be to have a deposit, something that we are going to learn from the Scriptures that can be taken through into eternity, is it not? We need the state in ourselves for reception of the word, and the Spirit free in us to grow in these things.

E.M.W. I think that is right; nevertheless this that we are considering is the avenue into privileges that are proper to the assembly.

C.F.D. And would not the pursuit of these things and the privileges to which you refer all be contributory to the building up of our own souls and the building up of formation in us? Exercises, concerns, pressures, as gone through with the Lord - as David did, when he said "in pressure thou hast enlarged me" (Ps 4: 1) - are productive, are they not, of spiritual formation?

E.M.W. Yes, I think so. As we face these things we are enlarged, and as enlarged we are able to appreciate and enjoy those things

that are ours eternally. But "in pressure thou hast enlarged me": these exercises that are raised all promote with us the knowledge of God, which is the most priceless possession that any one of us could possibly have.

E.F.C. Saul of Tarsus in the beginning said "What shall I do, Lord?", Acts 22: 10. That was a very simple inquiry, and would not that help us all the way along in our spiritual pathway as to where we should go and what we should do at any time?

E.M.W. I am sure that is right. "What shall I do, Lord?"; he started there. Then, of course, he was told that he must suffer; but *calling on the Lord* suggests that the Lord is the object before you and there is implicit subjection. I think these are very real exercises for all of us, because we must be careful not to presume, and the Lord does not let us off. At the same time we do not want to weaken the fact that this way is the avenue into assembly privileges.

E.F.C. You said previously that a company of saints that is not functioning in the light of the assembly would not be a safe company to link on with. There must be right assembly function. The Lord's supper is the centre of our gathering, is it not?

E.M.W. Yes, if there is no one in the city walking in the light of the assembly you could not say the assembly was there.

C.F.D. Maybe you would say more as to that. I know it has been said but maybe we do not understand it. Does it require that there be the expression of the assembly in the place?

E.M.W. Yes, the light of it, and I think you must have what in character and substance is of the assembly. Every believer on the earth of course belongs to the assembly, but you can hardly speak of the substantial existence of it if there is nothing there in character or substance that answers to it.

D.C.J. There is much we have to leave with "The Lord knows those that are his", is there not? We are thankful for that; it is not up to us.

E.M.W. That is very comforting, and we do know that through grace, despite the exercises that exist, none will be overlooked when He

comes. It is a tremendous comfort in days like these to know that side of the seal; "The Lord knows those that are his"; but he then says "Let every one"; it becomes intensely individual.

L.MacF. Is the word in verse 15 as to diligence important? "Strive diligently to present thyself approved to God, a workman that has not to be ashamed, cutting in a straight line the word of truth". It reminds us again of the individual side and the need of diligence, and of having divine approval in oneself in the light of what we are saying.

E.M.W. That is needed all the time. It is surprising how often this word 'diligence' and also 'strive diligently' is used in Scripture; it is used in connection with prayer too. To present thyself approved to God: you do not seek to present yourself approved of God to the brethren, but to present thyself approved to God. It is not the approval of the brethren, but as you say, in the consciousness of your own soul you would strive diligently to present yourself approved to Him, "a workman that has not to be ashamed, cutting in a straight line the word of truth".

A.C.C. Would these exercises lead to separation, and separation to holiness? While righteousness is prominent, to have to do with God you would need holiness, would you not? Is separation a kind of basis for holiness?

E.M.W. That is right, and it says in chapter 1 from which we have read, He "has called us with a holy calling". Paul in his teaching never weakens or lowers the standard to accommodate his ministry to circumstances that exist. You will find in this second epistle to Timothy the embryo of all his ministry. For instance, you can trace Ephesians and Corinthians in chapter 1, can you not? - God's purpose and the glad tidings, life and incorruptibility. His purpose turns you immediately to Ephesians 1; life and incorruptibility to 1 Corinthians 15, and so on. You will find the embryo of all is compressed by the Spirit of God into this epistle.

**TORONTO**

**21 July 1979**

**Key to initials**

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**THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE TEMPLE**

**F.E.Raven**

**John 2: 1-25**

There are two thoughts in the chapter in connection with Christ to which I should like to draw attention. One is the Bridegroom and the other is the Temple. The one would not be much good to us without the other. Everything that is for God must be established on the ground of resurrection. The third day involves the thought of a resurrection day. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up". There again is the thought of resurrection. The sentence of death is upon man, and it is only on the ground of resurrection that God can do anything for man. The resurrection day is the day in which Christ can set forth His power. Resurrection to life has been brought in consequent upon redemption, and it is therefore on the resurrection day that Christ can exert His power on behalf of man.

But I wish to speak of the Bridegroom and the Temple. What comes out continually on the part of man is weakness and will. Man can hold nothing that God has given him. He could not hold the fishes, the net brake. That has been the history of man all the way along. He could not hold all the benefits God conferred upon him.

The weakness of man came out in that way, although placed under the most favourable conditions, as on the marriage day for instance, the wine ran out. Man is incapable of availing himself of that which

God has placed within his reach. No doubt it is because death is upon him. Israel could not avail itself of God's benefits because of death. Man may be in honour but he does not continue. There are gods - mighty men on earth - but they die like men. The will of man comes out in the latter part of this chapter. Christ cleanses the temple and the Jews challenge Him for a sign. He answers "Destroy this temple". That is the way in which man's will came out. They killed Christ. "Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us!", Ps 2: 3. The lawless spirit of man says this, for the will of man is hostile to God. The very fact that man has morally a will proves that he is wrong. Man's will is bound to be antagonistic to God. God Himself has not free will, He is controlled by His nature. He cannot do evil. Man's nature and will are prone to evil. We know that in regard to our children. God has imposed checks on man; conscience, for instance, steps in between the conception of sin and the act. Man cannot help or control conscience, therefore man's will is not free.

Now I want to show you how Christ is presented in contrast to all this. The first point is the Bridegroom. Take man with all the promises of God; his weakness becomes manifest, he was under death, he had to pass away, but the promises were left behind. Moses, Aaron and David did not continue; the wine ran out. In contrast to that we get the Bridegroom and the third day, the resurrection day, and He has kept the best wine until now.

Man can hold nothing for himself, but Christ can effectuate everything for man. He can take up every thing on the ground of resurrection and so make it effectual for man. All the promises are yea and amen in Christ, for glory to God by us. "Thou has kept the good wine till now". In connection with every bit of joy in this life there is an element of disappointment. It cannot continue. Let your joy be in the Bridegroom. We mourn on account of His absence, for in Him nothing can fail. He is in heaven rejoicing as a strong man, as a Bridegroom, for us. The blessing of Abraham has in Him arrived at the gentiles that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. The water of purification, by the death of Christ, is the

means of separation from the world system, but as you apprehend the Bridegroom and delight in Him, He can bring you into the joy connected with Himself. The Spirit of God presents Him thus in contrast to the weakness of man. He has brought in the third day. He has kept the best wine until now.

Now read verses 13 to 21. The Bridegroom would not be any good to us without the Temple. The background of all blessing is the revelation of God; that is in Christ's body - the Temple. In Him all the Fulness was pleased to dwell. How little people understood that in that lowly Man there was all the fulness of God! All the works, all the words, were of the Father, carried out in the Spirit of God, but this brought out the will of man. They were prepared to stone Him, and so far as they could they destroyed the Temple. He therefore became unavailable for man so far as man after the flesh was concerned, but He takes all up on the basis of resurrection. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"; and the revelation of God in Christ is still available for man in spite of man's perverseness and will.

"In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2: 9); that is, that it may be available for man. God is brought into touch with man, because all the fulness of God dwells in a Man. The testimony of the gospel comes out in the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. All the counsels of the Father, the grace of the Son, His work, and the power of the Spirit, come to light in Christ. Christ throws down the challenge: "Destroy this temple", but I will triumph over it. He is now the Head of every man, the author of redemption and the forgiveness of sins. What is the background of this? It is the Temple, the revelation of God in Christ. To enter into these things you must be prepared to accept the resurrection day. You are risen with Him. In spirit we want to have done with the days of this world's history, and in our souls to apprehend that we have come to the resurrection day.

Are you wholly taken up with business and the interests of this world? There is nothing of the resurrection day in all that. What is set forth in the resurrection day is the best wine, the counsels and

promises of God, the blessed substance of the revelation of God in Christ. We want to be in spirit outside this world system and to be occupied with the Bridegroom and the revelation of God. There is more than the mind of man can take in, but the Spirit of God can reveal them to you, they are illimitable. The Bridegroom is coming again to take up every right of God here, but we get the present gain of the fact of the Bridegroom having come. It involves the break-up of this world system. "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me", John 12: 32. He becomes the point of attraction.

**HALIFAX**

**July 1901**

## **THE CHILDREN'S CERTAINTY**

The gospel of Luke was addressed to one man in order that he should "know the certainty of the things" that he had been taught.

No doubt the evangelist expected that by writing to a person of influence he would reach a wider circle of people who wanted to know more about Jesus as "the Word". Evidently the Lord had become known to believers by this name since in Him is the fulness of what God has to say to mankind. Children will know that in this gospel-record the birth, infancy and childhood of Jesus are given to us in more detail than elsewhere and it has therefore a peculiar interest for them on this account.

As to the certainty of the truth it is striking that the two words "full assurance" are found together three times in the New Testament. The expression means that any doubt about the matter in question has been completely removed. Thus, for instance, when we draw near to God in prayer or praise or thanksgiving we should come boldly with the "full assurance of faith". Young people, and older ones too, often confuse faith with feeling. Many think, in effect,

'If I could only feel suited to God's presence, then I should be fully assured'. But our being accepted by God depends upon what Christ is to Him and our obedience of faith in the work of atonement, so that we may approach with confidence.

Then besides the matter of faith there is the "full assurance of understanding" and the "full assurance of hope". Perhaps these may all be looked at in the following way although illustrations always fall short of the truth. Suppose that, say a century or so ago, a young man, brought up in the backwoods or the bush is hastily called to go to a distant city to see a loved one. He is quite unfamiliar with railways but a friend tells him to go to a certain station where he will board a train and in due course arrive at his destination. Taking his friend at his word he sets out on his journey with absolute confidence. This is something like the full assurance of *faith*. Whilst in the train he talks with an intelligent fellow-passenger who tells him all about the engine and train, the track and many details of railway work. He thus learns to appreciate this great means of transport about which he had been ignorant. To him this would be the full assurance of *understanding*. Meanwhile he is thinking too of the purpose of his journey and looks forward with ever-increasing joy to the prospect of seeing his loved one. This is the full assurance of *hope*. Is your hope of seeing the Lord Jesus a living one?

**J.C.Evershed**