

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

STANDING BY THE CROSS

SONSHIP

THE CHILDREN'S URGENCY

STANDING BY THE CROSS

John 12: 31-33; Matthew 27: 55,56; John 19: 25; 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5

A.A.B. It is suggested we might consider the Lord's words and their significance. In John 12 we have the Lord's words and the comment of the Holy Spirit upon what He said, the Spirit giving the significance. In Matthew we have a group of persons, women amongst them; indeed, it is said that they were women; and they stood afar off. In John there is a group standing by the cross of Jesus. I thought those two references show how some at least among the first group were drawn to Christ as lifted up. We see it taking place. Paul says to the Galatians "to whom, as before your very eyes, Jesus Christ has been portrayed, crucified", chap 3: 1. It would be a great thing in this reading if something like that came into it, so that we see things taking place. The position in John is, one might say, the full position. It is the utmost reproach, and there were those who identified themselves with the reproach of Christ unreservedly. Then I thought Paul in the section we read in Corinthians is approaching the whole Corinthian position as from that stand· point - standing by the cross of Jesus. I wondered if that would form a basis for our conversation.

E.C.B. I am sure it would, and I am sure that all the brethren would be with you in your counting on the Lord that, as you said, something might happen among us in this connection. I think it has been said in ministry that we do not exactly become morally qualified by standing by the cross, but we have to be morally qualified to stand there. Is that not so?

A.A.B. Yes, I am sure it is, but especially, I think, our affections would be engaged. If there is any movement such as I have pointed to, it would be that the affections of the brethren are engaged with the Person who is there. That is how Paul speaks of Christ crucified. We use the word 'crucifixion'; I do not know that it is to be found in Scripture, but we read of the cross, the cross of Jesus and the cross

of Christ, and it is a question I think primarily of the Person who was there.

E.C.B. So that the cross, and Jesus, come more prominently into view in the verse you read in John 19 than they do in Matthew, where there is actually no reference to the cross or to Jesus in the verse. Would that bear on what you say as to our being drawn increasingly to the Person?

A.A.B. Yes it would. We should notice in these words in John 12 that concurrent with His being lifted up there is something else, and that is the judgment of this world. We rightly and habitually think of the cross in relation to redemption and reconciliation and the work of atonement and all that leads to our salvation and blessing, but concurrent with that is another aspect in the cross of Christ, and that is the judgment of this world; that would be in the saints.

D.J.H. He mentions that first: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out". Does that bear on what was said as to being morally qualified to stand there, that we would need to have that judgment to be there?

A.A.B. Yes, it would fully. I think judgment, in this sense, needs to be re-awakened in every one of us. "Now is the judgment of this world". It is remarkable that, along with the feast of the passover in the households of the children of Israel, the firstborn in Egypt were slain, from top to bottom of the nation. "Now is the judgment of this world" was concurrent.

E.M.W. You have drawn our attention before to the expression that occurs several times in John; "now is". Are you thinking that John, by the Spirit, would give that an immediate effect upon us?

A.A.B. Yes, bringing us up to date and requiring that we should be renewed in our minds constantly. The transformation in Corinthians is by an object outside of ourselves - the glory of the Lord (see 2 Cor 3: 18). The transformation in Romans is "by the renewing of your mind", chap 12: 2. We must think morally. Would that be in your thought?

E.M.W. Yes, that is helpful. If we saw that would there not be the effect in us to which you have already referred?

A.A.B. I feel the need of that. "Be transformed": the scripture contemplates a fundamental change. "Transformed by the renewing of your mind". Now that brings in the service of the Holy Spirit.

A.J E.W. I think it would help us if you would say more about the question of judgment being in the saints. This is not final judgment, is it? It is something which is of current import constantly among us.

A.A.B. Yes, it is discriminative judgment, is it not? I think it is contingent upon the presence of the Spirit, that He will bring demonstration to the world of certain things - "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment", John 16: 8. It is through the saints that the demonstration to the world takes place, and the taking up of the full position of reproach; not the reproach that we have brought upon ourselves, alas, but the reproach of Christ. It involves the demonstration, I think. Would you think that is right?

A.J.E.W. Yes indeed. I just feel the import of it, that the discriminative side that you speak of is constantly active in the Spirit among us.

E.C M. In Galatians Paul says "far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world", chap 6: 14. Does that correspond to your thought?

A.A.B. Yes it does; and the thought of judgment of this world is embrative, not only of the grossness and what the natural conscience might condemn but the finer features. In Hebrews there are some referred to as "crucifying for themselves... the Son of God", chap 6: 6.

J.M. It really relates to the environment in which man morally is and operates. I was thinking of the reference in Galatians to "the present evil world" (chap 1: 4) which may relate to the grosser aspects, but do you think this comes very much nearer home?

A.A.B. Yes I do; the judgment of this world is very embrative. The world of entertainment can come in very quickly amongst us. Entertainment is all right; Matthew knew about that and he made an entertainment; he made it for the Lord (see Luke 5: 29). There are all kinds of entertainment that need to come under judgment: music and the artistic side of things would all come within the range of the saints' judgment of the world.

J.M. Has not reference been made in ministry on the verse in chapter 19 to the development of the culture of the western world, the very environment in which most of us find ourselves day by day? Does it go as deep as that, do you think?

A.A.B. Well it does; and then we need to know the time. We were reminded in this room not long ago about knowing the time. I wonder whether we do know the time, and how near we are to the rising up of the antichrist, the prince of this world, and certain features of antichrist being retro-active, active in men at the present time in every sphere, politically and religiously.

E.P. Does this matter of judgment touch that word in Revelation: "your judgment", chap 18: 20?

A.A.B. Yes it would. Paul says the saints will judge angels. Certain cases will come forward for judgment and the saints will be competent. They will judge the world too (see 1 Cor 6: 2,3).

E.P. What made me ask that was because that word stands related to Babylon, and there are all sorts of refined things embraced in Babylon.

A.A.B. The great balance to all that, the leverage in our souls, is "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth".

E.C.B. We can count on divine protection from the violent side of the world, to which you referred in prayer, and the side of moral disorder, can we not? but the things you are speaking of we can only be protected from by judgment in ourselves.

A.A.B. I think that is the import of this passage, that there should be judgment in ourselves. Paul says "Judge in yourselves: is it comely",

1 Cor 11: 13. But another thing is the voice of the Spirit in verse 33. "Yea, saith the Spirit", Rev 14: 13. What a thing it is to sit as we are, beloved brethren, and hear the Spirit speaking! "Yea, saith the Spirit". He gives the significance of the words of Jesus.

D.E.R. Is it not so, that the judgment of this world was pronounced at the cross, but the sentence is not yet actually carried out? In the meantime the Lord is drawing souls to Himself, and it is attraction to Himself which draws us out of the world.

A.A.B. Therein lies, I think, the importance of what Mr Raven so often stressed, that we should think more of it, not historically merely, but morally. What was said as to the expression "now is" is important, and the Spirit's voice gives significance; "by what death he should die". There are many ways by which persons die. Jacob died in bed, in full control too of his feet: no more wandering; the final product was there, but Jacob died there. Jesus died on the cross: "By what death he should die".

D.J.H. Paul speaks of the world to come "of which we speak", Heb 2: 5. Is that over against this world, and is speaking of it, that is occupation with it, the positive antidote to being occupied with the things of this world? That is the world of which He is the centre.

A.A.B. Yes, that is true. The thing is to have done with it finally. We are speaking in a way of what is elementary, but I trust with a measure of maturity. We can deal with elementary things in a mature way. When it comes to a judgment of the world it is not world-bordering any longer. The thing is finished for you, absolutely so.

R.T. In that prayer meeting in Acts 4 it is the judgment of the disciples that the whole world was there at the cross. It speaks about the rulers who were gathered together against the Lord, and about Herod and Pontius Pilate with the nations and people, all gathered together in this city. The whole world is exposed in their judgment as to Christ.

A.A.B. Yes, that is what we have to arrive at. Paul says "I am crucified with Christ", Gal 2: 20. That is not a doctrinal statement. I

think it is totally impossible to reach this point intellectually. It must be by the affections. "I... will draw all to me". There were those women, not to be discredited at all. They followed Jesus from Galilee and ministered to Him. Many are in that position. Scripture says 'many'. But then there is a further position, and that is taken up in the power of affection.

F.C.M. It was a simple love for Christ, in type, which led Ruth to say "where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried", Ruth 1: 17.

A.A.B. Yes, those instinctive longings and feelings which the Spirit produces. Then of course the question is, when we come under His drawing power, do we resist? "I drew them with bands of a man, with cords of love", Hos 11: 4.

L.A.B. Is it interesting that the Lord in one sense draws attention to Himself, but the Spirit seems to draw attention to His death?

A.A.B. His death. And what death! "And that the death of the cross", Phil 2: 8. No word about burial, no word about resurrection, no word about His ascension in Philippians 2. It is down to that point: "and that the death of the cross". I do not think any of us is safe unless we are fully and unreservedly committed to that.

L.A.B. Does the apostle, therefore, in Galatians really bring out his own personality as related to this. It is interesting the way he mentions 'I' in regard to the effect of the cross: "no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me", chap 2: 20. I just find the challenge in this, to speak practically.

A.A.B. That is it, and is connected with what we referred to just now as to the demonstration. If Paul were to come in you would see that. Here is a man in whom Christ is living, and speaking too: "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me", 2 Cor 13: 3. This is real Christianity.

E.C.B. Does the expression of the Spirit, as you said - "by what death he was about to die" - carry with it the thought (if I could choose my words carefully) of the Lord choosing the means by which He would die? It is not a question here of His being killed,

taken by wicked hands. Does it correspond to "he... bearing his cross", John 19: 17?

A.A.B. There would be that side to it, especially in John. The Lord does everything Himself in John. He is not the victim. But I think generally His being crucified is attributed to the wickedness of man.

It brings in the responsible side: "ye, by the hand of lawless men, have crucified and slain", Acts 2: 23. But the character, or "by what death", I think would relate to what was in the purpose of God.

E.M.W. There are three references in John to His being lifted up: the Son of man lifted up (chap 3: 14), then this reference, and the other, which would confirm what you are saying, "When ye shall have lifted up the Son of man, then ye shall know", chap 8: 28. Does that help forward your thought?

A.A.B. I think so; and who was it who did it? There were the rabble, the mockers, the soldiers; every stratum in humanity was represented; but who did it? The princes of this world.

E.M.W. Yes. The men who have taught us seemed more concerned about the infiltration of systematised religion among us than other things, I have noticed.

A.A.B. Yes. Now what is the connection in your mind with what we are saying?

E.M.W. That "Now is the judgment of this world" seems in John's gospel to be primarily the religious world.

A.A.B. That leads us on to what was in mind as to Paul in Corinth, and the great importance of example amongst us, not only teaching and accuracy in teaching, but example. The infiltration involves the struggle which began before the apostles left the scene, infiltration at Galatia, infiltration at Colosse, infiltration at Corinth. How is that to be met?

S.D.K.R. In the power of the Spirit, according to verse 4. It would not be effort exactly on our part; awareness of the danger, but the power would be in the Spirit, would it not?

A.A.B. Yes, and the Spirit has a vessel in Paul here. He is referring to when he came to them at Corinth, and how he restrained himself. We see Paul deliberately - I do not know that that is the right word - but deliberately reducing himself, contracting himself, because of the state in Corinth. In other passages you see Paul greatly extended: "I have not shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God", Acts 20: 27. But not at Corinth, because of the state.

A.J.E.W. This is a remarkable chapter of contrasts running right through, is it not? Is there not significance in the contrast here: "persuasive words of wisdom" on the one hand; "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" on the other. Do we not get through this chapter the side of what man as such may prefer or give place to, but in remarkable contrast what is of God and what is here in the Spirit to carry forward a line of things which is spiritual and penetrating in the light of the cross?

A.A.B. Just so, and the chapter is educative in regard of our judgment of this world. "This world" had come into Corinth in many ways. There was corruption, moral corruption; there was weakness in different ways; the public behaviour was deplorable in the assembly of God. But what he is dealing with here in chapter 2, I think, is the general condition of the world that had come in, and he is seeking to stimulate and carry forward judgment of this world amongst the brethren there.

E.C.B. In Acts 18 the first controversial part was with the Jews, but then it says "many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptised" (v 8). Is that a moral movement on the same line as this?

A.A.B. Certainly it is. It is just that, but it is not so severe as what we are speaking of. "If we are become identified with him in the likeness of his death, so also we shall be of his resurrection", Rom 6: 5. That is baptism. There is not suffering or reproach quite as there is in crucifixion, is there?

E.C.B. It is interesting how much this line of things does come into Galatians. The scriptures that have been referred to already: "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me"

(chap 2: 20) comes before the statement "Jesus Christ has been portrayed, crucified among you", chap 3: 1.

A.A.B. So that the truth was in Paul before it came out of him. That is a great principle, I think. He is a minister and the Lord allows him to judge what he should know amongst these Christians, his children. They were his children; we could not say that, any of us. That is apostolic. But this is how he was amongst his gifted children at Corinth.

F.N.S. With reference to the infiltration that will come in at Ephesus after his departure (see Acts 20: 29), is there something in that for us, that if we depart from Paul's ministry we get adrift?

A.A.B. That has been demonstrated, has it not? I think we need to come (if I may suggest it) by the individual path like the women in the gospels, take up the position, each and every one of us, and then you see how Paul is in it and what it is, what it involves, how he was among them, not displaying himself, not making a great demonstration in any fleshly way. That would be current at Corinth, but he came in a different way.

E.C.M. What would we learn as to his being with them "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling"?

A.A.B. Well, the issues were so great. Paul was not concerned as to externals. He was concerned as to what is not seen: "we look not at the things that are seen", 2 Cor 4: 18. He is doing it morally. They were so occupied with appearance at Corinth, everything all right outwardly, but what is underneath?

E.C.M. I thought it demonstrated how the thing had worked inwardly in Paul himself.

A.A.B. It is a matter of fear and trembling with every one of us, whether we deny the truth. I do not mean verbally. We would not do that, but whether in some exhibition of what has not yet been judged there should be a denial of the truth. Paul trembled. We need to study his fears. Paul had fears. "I fear", he says, 2 Cor 11: 3; 12: 20.

H.C.H. Do you think there was an answer in chapter 7 of the second epistle? They received Titus with fear and trembling, and Titus was refreshed, and the apostle was encouraged that they received Titus. I thought there was some answer in the Corinthians, which was good to notice.

A.A.B. That is good; it is not to be despised, Paul says "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling", Phil 2: 12.

E.M.W. Would one of Paul's fears, at any rate, be lest he should allow in himself anything which he disallowed in them?

A.A.B. I thought that was the force of it. All this goes to show how great the responsibility is among the brethren in any way seeking under the Lord to give a lead, because the saints are going to be influenced. There is nothing more certain than that. We are all influenced by the pressure of the world at the present time. The spirit of the world upon us is not measured generally by us.

[Remark not recorded]

A.A.B. That is right and Peter has a word to say in that connection; "For the time of having the judgment begin from the house of God is come; but if first from us", 1 Pet 4: 17. "From us": that is the starting point, and Paul is here in a sense speaking judicially, he says 'I judge'. "I did not judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified".

A.J.E.W. Another fear of Paul which seems to me to be relevant is when he says "I fear lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craft, so your thoughts should be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ", 2 Cor 11: 3. I was thinking of the way that, in that verse, he traces the matter right back to the root in sin and Satan himself.

A.A.B. That is a most important principle in judgment, is it not? - in discretionary, or discerning judgment, that the thing is traced up, not in its fruits but to its roots. It is how God acts and has acted; the brazen serpent is to show us how God has gone upstream to the very root of the thing, and we have to do that. John 8 is one of the

greatest conflict chapters in Scripture, and the Lord goes right up to the root. He says what they were. Terrible words the Lord uses for certain persons in John 8!

J.M. I was struck with the thought here of the persuasive words of wisdom, which is again referred to in the Colossian epistle: "persuasive speech" (chap 2: 4). It is traced there, is it not, to the very matter Mr Welch has referred to?

A.A.B. It is important to trace things to their source and have the label on the bottle, so to speak, as in Romans 7.

R.E.T. Why does he bring in the word and the preaching? Is this constitutional? Should be, but yet be substantially built up in our souls in relation to what Paul has brought in in regard to his word concerning the assembly, and then the preaching. He speaks of "my glad tidings", 2 Tim 2: 8.

A.A.B. And in all that he engaged in, whether in teaching or preaching, he avoided the use of human means, "persuasive words of wisdom", and then lower down "men's wisdom". He is concerned that things should be on a right moral foundation, that the faith of the saints at Corinth should not rest on a false foundation.

D.J.H. So he says that "the word of the cross... to us that are saved it is God's power", 1 Cor 1: 17. Is that what you have in mind - salvation and power in it?

A.A.B. It is one of the weapons of his warfare; not the only one. "I... entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of the Christ" (2 Cor 10: 1) is another weapon, but not persuasive words of wisdom.

S.D.K.R. Would you say something about the emphatic "him": "I did not judge it well to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified".

A.A.B. I am glad you draw attention to that because it is the Person who was crucified. The Spirit of God through Paul is reaching into the affections of these brethren at Corinth; "*him* crucified". The cross has assumed a certain sentimental place in the calculations of men, in music and painting, and the brethren will forgive the reference, in

the passion play. It shows the sentimental place it has, but it misses the point. The point is "*him*", "*him* crucified", such an One.

R.T. He calls Him the Lord of glory. I thought that would connect with what you were saying about drawing "unto me".

A.A.B. It would, and of course that would be what He is officially, the Lord of glory, the great administrator of glory. But the "*him*", I think, is to touch our affections. Will you take up this position? Some of us can look back over a history personally in which we have not always taken up this position. Every advancement, every advantage which we may have in the world, is away from the cross. We have to be so careful.

C.B. Lower down in this chapter there is this word about the eye and the ear and the heart, and the things prepared for those that love Him. The responsive side from us needs a little stimulating.

A.A.B. It struck me very much that immediately alongside this judicial passage you have the depths of God, nothing in between.

These are, so to speak, the headlands of the truth. One is the reproach of Christ and the other is the Spirit. "The depths of God": you cannot go further than that.

D.E.B. Paul's objective here seems to be that their faith might stand in God's power. Is that an important objective in ministry, and in our relationships with one another, that faith might be strengthened? It seems to me that in the present day there is a danger of faith being undermined and weakened, but our relationships together should relate to the strengthening of faith in view of its standing in power.

A.A.B. The faith of the saints standing in God's power is the objective, so that they would not depend upon anyone, so to speak.

Their faith was to stand in God's power. God's power: you could not have a greater thought. "His eternal power and divinity" (Rom 1: 20), "upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb 1: 3), "the surpassing greatness of his power... in which he wrought in the Christ", Eph 1: 19. The faith of the saints is to stand in that, not in human wisdom.

J.C.E. In that connection what would the testimony of God be? It seems to me that in spite of the conditions outwardly, and weakness amongst the saints at this time in Corinth, the apostle was making progress in connection with the testimony of God.

A.A.B. It is a very wide expression, is it not? I suppose it is the demonstration beforehand of what God is going to do in its entirety, not only in relation to the assembly but the whole scope. The mystery of God is completed: you have that expression in Revelation (see chap 10: 7). It is akin to this, I think. What would you say?

J.C.E. These chapters are so full of God's name, and I thought it was that He was pursuing His own testimony through the apostle, that testimony including of course the witness as to Christ, but it is a very wide and embracing thing. We read elsewhere of the assemblies of God. I wondered whether the great testimony of God would be in living assembly life.

A.A.B. Yes, the demonstration would be there, but God has come into revelation, has He not? The incarnation and the death of Christ really involve the testimony of God. It is the way He has taken in revelation.

E.M.W. It has been said that God Himself has come into testimony. Would it not be the bringing of God Himself amongst men in all that He is in His attributes and nature with a view, as you have already said, to giving effect to His purpose?

A.A.B. Yes, and how that testimony has been expressed in Christ, who is the wisdom and the power of God (see 1 Cor 1: 24). The bringing in of the greatness of what is of God is I think to cut down to its very roots, and uproot, what was there in Corinth.

E.M.W. It is really taking them back to his original entry among them, reminding them of it.

A.A.B. I thought that, Acts 18, all that took place there.

E.C.B. It is to the Corinthians that Paul speaks of "God... all in all", 1 Cor 15: 28. Is not that the height of what the testimony of God brings out?

A.A.B. Yes it is. God is the ultimate.

E.P. Would "the depths of God" focus upon His nature, love? I wondered whether that area of things, as appreciated by the saints, is fruitful, that there was that in the Corinthians that could be appealed to because it was God's work; and do you think that area is fruitful as our hearts are moved?

A.A.B. The affection for Christ which takes this form of bearing His reproach. If we understood the fulness of that there would be far greater entrance, consciously and really, into what the apostle goes on to speak of, the depths of God. As you say, it involves His nature: "God's nature, love without alloy, Our hearts are giv'n e'en now to share" (hymn 88).

E.M.W. Would you say a word on the practical working out of this, because most of us are in comparatively comfortable circumstances. How exactly does the reproach of the Christ work out amongst the saints in these days?

A.A.B. I do not think it works out in any way in the sense of exploit. I think it brings into range the whole of our pathway responsibly here. Take a common thing, like advancement in the world: all around us are engaged in the pursuit of it in some shape or form, but that for us must be viewed in relation to the reproach of the Christ. It is not that advancement should not be accepted, but you may have to say 'no'. Many have. Many have given up more than we know for Christ's sake, and still are doing so.

C.C.I. It says in relation to circumcision that the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. Would that fit into this exercise of judgment of the world, and link on with the love of the Father over against the love of the world?

A.A.B. That is right. The reproach of Egypt: that is worldly features attaching to us which are a reproach to us. That is met by circumcision which is an allied thought to crucifixion.

C.C.I. Do you think we are much more tested by the things that are of the world than by the world itself?

A.A.B. I feel that, and as was said earlier, it is a question of judgment. The young men in John's epistle have overcome the world. How do they do that? The word of God abides in them (see 1 John 2: 13,14). That is how the judicial process is maintained, the word of God abiding in us, operating there, living and operative.

E.C.M. I thought it is a point in our histories when we esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. He had respect unto the recompense. There is a recompense.

A.A.B. That is a good reference, because that is quite distinct from the reproach of Egypt. The reproach of Christ; we commonly quote Hebrews: "Let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (chap 13: 13) and for the most part I think the brethren have some kind of public position in mind. There is that side in testimony, but there is something underlying it: "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me".

D.J.H. I have often noticed that it does not say 'going forth without the camp to him', but "go forth to him"; that is the first thing.

A.A.B. Yes, keep the Lord prominent in your affections, live with Him daily. We have not all done it, but that is the secret of Christianity.

E.C.B. Does John 21 bear on that question, the Lord searching Peter as to love?

A.A.B. That is a big subject! Peter is, I suppose, a man of God. "That the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work", 2 Tim 3: 17. That is Peter in John 21.

E.C.B. John does not close his gospel with such questions as "Have ye understood all these things?". He closes it with the question "Lovest thou me?".

A.A.B. Peter is before the judgment-seat of Christ in principle, and the Lord is not saying, This is a big matter, we must have an investigation. He says, This is a very simple matter, Peter; do you love Me? There is nothing more discriminative, more sensitive, more acute, than love.

D.L.S. Paul in Philippians counts all loss for Christ for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

A.A.B. I thought of that in relation to how he appeared amongst the brethren. Philippians 3 is the cutting away of all that is accessory in the servant, but not his gift; you might say he was a man of parts and he is dispensing with all his spare parts so that he becomes serviceable, and I think there is a great deal in that because it involves the secret side, the renunciation of everything that would be an advantage to you naturally.

D.J.H. He speaks of earthly things in that chapter. Can you say how that relates to this, as distinct from the world, if it is distinct from the world?

A.A.B. "Who mind earthly things" (v 19). If he said that to the Corinthians you would understand his reason for saying it, but he says it to the Philippians.

D.J.H. And he says "enemies of the cross of Christ", persons who mind earthly things.

A.A.B. There is a trend in Philippians. The first thing he speaks of is "all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ", chap 2: 21. Relatively harmless, you might say, but not so; very dangerous. The next step is "who mind earthly things", "enemies of the cross of Christ". We need to study these moral trends and understand where they lead, and have a judgment of them.

E.P. Would there be a connection with the Lord saying "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me". Well, we could say, We are still here. It must be moral, must it not? It is not physical, because we are sitting here.

A.A.B. That is right. We use the word moral, and it is a very useful word. It generally involves the discrimination between good and evil.

(Revised by the Editor and not by Mr. Bellamy - with Christ 18 February 1981).

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Key to initials

A.A.Bellamy, Buckhurst Hill; C.Beale, London; D.E.Burr, Redbridge;
E.C.Burr, London; L.A.Barlow, Bexley; J.C.Evershed, London;
D.J.Hutson, London; H.C.Hatcher, London; C.C.Ikin, Southend;
E.C.Muggleton, Croydon; F.C.Mutton, Redbridge; J.Mitchell, Bexley;
E.Palmer, London; D.E.Remmington, St.Albans; S.D.K.Roberts,
Croydon; D.L.Stewart, Edinburgh; F.N.Stickland, Redbridge;
R.E.Turner, St.Albans; R.Taylor, Barnet; A.J.E.Welch, London;
E.M.Walkinshaw, Gillingham

SONSHIP

2 Kings 4: 1-7; Matthew 17: 24-27

P.v.d.B. The Lord might help us in our enquiry together, in the current condition of things, as to the liberty of sonship and how we can be maintained in a way in which obligations can be met and the testimony proceed in liberty. Sonship involves liberty. It is the greatest privilege we have, to be associated with the Son of God.

Union is another matter we experience involving the Spirit of God. It is a great matter that the service of God should be sustained, beloved brethren, at the present time, and that there are the conditions in which it can proceed and what is for God may be maintained in the Spirit. I think we need to realise what infinite resources we have in the blessed Holy Spirit. In Matthew 17 the Lord anticipated Peter as he might have brought the situation into bondage. Matthew is the administrative gospel and shows us how the testimony will go through and how the Lord is able for any situation that arises amongst us. The Lord is never to the wall in any matter. The word to Peter is "Then are the sons free". I think we need to discern the things that are not related to the Spirit of God giving rise to the creditor to make claims, and to see the resources we have in the Spirit of God and what is related to the Spirit, and how that sets us in liberty. I thought the Lord might help us on those lines.

E.C.B. In both these scriptures persons do not become sons as a result of the transactions that take place but they are sons and are to be brought into the fulness of the blessing and the liberty which sonship implies. Is that right?

P.v.d.B. That is right. I think we need to be concerned about this being maintained amongst us so that the sons may not be taken away. If the creditor comes in God will be robbed of His portion.

You see it in Galatians how because of certain things the creditor came in and made claims, but the answer is in sonship and in the

Spirit. It says "because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father", Gal 4: 6.

E.M.W. Just before that he says "ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus", chap 3: 26. That would confirm what Mr Burr said earlier. But is your concern that we should be brought into the affections and liberty that are proper to sonship?

P.v.d.B. Yes. The prodigal son was a son all the way, but he was not in the dignity and in the enjoyment of what his privilege was until he was brought into the father's presence.

E.P. Why do you think it is that the woman speaks of her two children but the man of God speaks of the sons?

P.v.d.B. There has been a history in the revival; many generations have preceded us and there has been piety: "Thy servant my husband is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant feared Jehovah". There has been much in the way of piety amongst the saints. I wish there was the same piety today that there has been.

Mr Stoney complained in his day that with more light there was less piety, and I think we need to be concerned, in view of the continuation and completion of the testimony at the present time; that we take account of what there has been in the way of piety amongst us. Here the servant died, but then there is no reason why things should not go through, and the answer is in the Spirit, the Spirit of sonship, the Spirit of adoption.

H.A.H. Is it interesting that in the last part of John 4 the father, the courtier, and the servant refer to the child, but the Lord's word is "Go, thy son lives" (v 50)?

P.v.d.B. Sonship is the great thing that relates to God's purpose and we need the sense of what our privilege is in sonship and in union, for, in meeting any situation in responsibility here, it is in view of the service of God; "Let my son go, that he may serve me", Exod 4: 23. God is to be served in liberty.

A.J.E.W. It is very attractive how, after those references that you spoke of in Galatians, the end of the letter seems to contemplate

active relations with the Spirit from our side. So you have the expression "Walk in the Spirit" (chap 5: 16); then "If we live by the Spirit, let us walk also by the Spirit" (v 25), and then in the next chapter sowing to the Spirit. Those are matters that arise through divine grace on our side in our relations with Him, and it seems to bring out, does it not, the way in which the demands, the just demands of the position, are to be filled out and met?

P.v.d.B. I am sure that is right. It would be related to living on the rest, would it not? "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy sons on the rest".

J.M. Does the reference in Romans 8 to the Spirit of adoption show that there is more than the title; there is really the enjoyment of it; "whereby we cry, Abba, Father". That is in a chapter that follows the moral exercises of that section and the righteous requirements of the law being fulfilled in us by the Spirit. I wondered if that is the way through to the enjoyment of sonship.

P.v.d.B. That is right; you get fulfilled responsibility there. It is by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that we are set free from the law of sin and death, and that involves glorious liberty.

E.C.B. Does the thought of "profit from the Christ" in Galatians (chap 5: 4) enter into what you have in mind? If you are circumcised you are debtor to do the whole law; then he says negatively "Ye are deprived of all profit from the Christ as separated from him". Does the positive side of that, "profit from the Christ", enter into our apprehension of sonship?

P.v.d.B. I am sure it does. We see sonship in a supreme way in Christ Himself; He is the Son. I was struck this morning by that early reference in Matthew: "Out of Egypt have I called my son", chap 2: 15. It is remarkable that the Lord should be called out of Egypt. The scripture in Hosea where that is quoted from brings out how Israel was called out of Egypt. The things of the world tend to bondage, that is Egypt, and they are a great hindrance to the enjoyment of sonship. God could not be served in Egypt; Israel had to be brought out of Egypt.

R.T. Is there something distinctive about sonship in our time that exceeds every other dispensation? You were saying that God called Israel "my son", but in our day, God having been known in the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is there power now to fulfil the responsibility you spoke of, so that the relationship should be enjoyed in a steady, even way?

P.v.d.B. That is right. We need to know more about the communion of the Holy Spirit and understand what the Spirit is related to - sonship, union, eternal life, and the truth also. Anything that is not of the truth cannot be related to the Spirit and makes way for the creditor. I think we need to have discernment as to what can be related to the Holy Spirit, and what it is that brings the position into bondage as not being related to the Spirit of God.

A.A.B. Is it some voice to us that it is the woman who raises the cry? What you are suggesting is really an intensely subjective matter. It is not only the light of sonship, to which, thank God, we have been recovered, but your references to the Spirit involve that a certain state is needed to meet obligations. I wondered if the woman, in that sense typical of the assembly, does not bring all of us into this matter. It is a crying matter.

P.v.d.B. Yes. She evidently did not think much of what she had. She said "Thy handmaid has not anything at all in the house but a pot of oil". But she had *everything* in the pot of oil. She had a goldmine there that would meet every debt; the creditor could be met and they could live on the rest. The testimony, as related to the Spirit, will continue to the end, and there is an infinite supply in the Holy Spirit to meet matters here.

A.A.B. Linking with what was said a moment ago as to sonship in the assembly, it is an exceedingly precious matter in that vessel, is it not, in that family? The Lord in Luke 7 gave the youth back to his mother.

P.v.d.B. That is important. We do not want to make young people a distinct class, I know that we should all be taking it to heart, but I think there is a great need for more liberty, and things that are

hindering this liberty should be detected. We should come to it whether a thing is related to the Spirit of God or whether it is not. If it is not it will just hinder spiritual progress and it will hinder our liberty in the service of God. I think we need to rise to the dignity of our place in sonship in the presence of the Father in association with Christ.

F.C.M. "Shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons": is definite, decisive action to exclude all that would impede the Spirit?

P.v.d.B. That is right. So this is exclusive, and I think there are a good many things that we need to shut the door to; if we do not shut the door we are in danger of being robbed of the liberty of sonship.

J.C.E. Is the matter of vessels an indispensable one? Some of these may have been quite small and some larger, and when she returned the vessels, those from whom she had borrowed them would be interested to hear what she had to say, would they not?

P.v.d.B. I am sure. So there was no limitation on the part of the oil; the limitation was on the part of the vessels - what is available in the testimony at the present time. I think we need to be concerned to be filled with the Spirit. There is the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, a supply that will sustain the testimony in a day of small things.

There is nothing that tests us so much as responsibility, and we need to see the resources that are available to meet matters of responsibility.

D.J.H. You get the reference at the beginning of Romans 7 to the husband dying, then that is leading on to being to another. Is that like this, crying to Elisha, the one who has the spirit of the man who has gone up?

P.v.d.B. That is very good. There is ministry in the power of the resurrection, the power which wrought in Christ when He was raised from among the dead, and it is towards us. The testimony is continued in the power of His resurrection, and Elisha's ministry is the Spirit's ministry in the light of the risen and ascended Man.

D.J.H. Being to Another involves our drawing from the resources that have come by way of His going there and the Spirit coming?

P.v.d.B. That is right. The Spirit is here in relation to a glorified Christ.

B.W.W. Do we need to appreciate the dignity connected with the idea of sonship, and see that anything the Lord has introduced is to be maintained, and there is the power in the Spirit to maintain it, notwithstanding reduction in numbers and that kind of thing which we know?

P.v.d.B. Quite so, and there is every resource to meet matters in responsibility, the Spirit helping us to be in the conscious gain of our place in sonship in the presence of the Father.

C.R.B. Would there be some link with the woman in John 4? Much that had come in by way of moral issues had to be faced, but the Lord draws out from the woman some understanding that the Father was seeking worshippers; really she is brought into the liberty of sonship, is she not, by the Christ?

P.v.d.B. I think that is a beautiful illustration of the way that the creditor was met. She was under the claims of the creditor because of her way of life, and the Lord sets the position free in the Spirit, "the water which I shall give", and she was set free from the vessel that was connected with a life of sin, now to be a vessel available for the service of God.

D.E.R. For the power of the Spirit to be proved there has to be empty earthen vessels, "that the surpassingness of the power may be of God, and not from us", 2 Cor 4: 7. Elisha stresses the fact that they are to be empty vessels.

P.v.d.B. Yes. Well, we need, in the ways that God has with each one of us, to come to our own nothingness so that there may be nothing of self to hinder and that the vessel may be empty, and that we may come into this wonderful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

D.J.H. The hymn helps us as to that, does it not?

"O keep us, Love divine, near Thee,,,"

That we our nothingness may know (No.87)

It is not by self-occupation, is it?

P.v.d.B. No, it is in relation to what you said before, being to Another. It is being occupied with Christ where He is and then to come out in His features in the power of the Spirit here.

D.J.H. John the baptist had not the advantage we have but he said "He must increase, but I must decrease", John 3: 30.

P.v.d.B. Ah, that is wonderful, when Christ is in the ascendancy, Christ is all. God has Christ before Him.

R.E.T. Is there something in regard of the widowed position? Christ is ascended, He is not here, and if we get the gain of the widowed position there would be more empty vessels, would there not?

P.v.d.B. That is right. We are here in the absence of Christ, and that is where the testimony is. We get many widows in Luke's gospel, pointing to the assembly here in the absence of Christ; but then the Spirit of God is here and we enjoy our relations with Christ by the Spirit. It is by the Spirit that we enjoy our privileges, our relationships, even the forgiveness of sins.

C.C.I. You referred to being filled with the Spirit. That comes into a very interesting section in Ephesians 5 which culminates in giving thanks to God the Father for all things. Would that imply the enjoyment of sonship with the Father in the service of God, and then the fear of Christ, the place that Christ has as controlling the whole matter in the service of God?

P.v.d.B. That is right.

E.C.B. Following the comment about the empty vessels, what a remarkable thing it would be actually to have a whole neighbourhood of empty vessels. That is what there was here.

P.v.d.B. So in John 2 there were empty vessels; the Lord says "mine hour has not yet come" (v 4).

E.C.B. We perhaps little grasp the potentiality if the vessels in a whole locality were empty vessels in the sense which has been

referred to, and it is no doubt something remaining in the vessel that does not belong there, in each one of us, that hinders sonship being enjoyed in its fulness.

P.v.d.B. That is right. So we have the Holy Spirit as the earnest of the inheritance. How much do we know of the inheritance? How much do we enjoy the inheritance? What an incentive it is! There is nothing that could bring us into bondage if we were in the gain of our inheritance, if we were in the gain of sonship, if we were enjoying eternal life.

A.A.B. Would the descending mind mark an empty vessel? I was thinking of the hymn we sang together at the beginning of the meeting relating to the One who emptied Himself.

P.v.d.B. I am sure that is so because we find that we are just in the way ourselves in many things, and the Lord has His own ways with us to empty us of the things that hinder. We do not want to give an occasion for the creditor to come in and make claims.

E.P. How encouraging it is that, as we are helped by the Spirit to take up this matter of the emptying, it says "when the vessels were full". Do you think that that is the secret, that it is full vessels that provide a way to know the liberty of sonship.

P.v.d.B. That is right. Stephen was filled with the Spirit, and what a testimony he gave! what an answer he could give to the creditor! The creditor had nothing to say. We need to see currently what there is that cannot be related to the Holy Spirit, hindering what God has here in the light of the assembly.

J.M. Would the moral aspect of circumcision as it comes into the book of Joshua bear on what you are saying? It is the rolling away of the reproach of Egypt there as though there is a deliberate cutting away of all that is in ourselves to which Egypt will minister.

P.v.d.B. That is very helpful. Paul says "we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God... and do not trust in flesh", Phil 3: 3.

W.J.R.B. Is that why the Lord says "Fill the water vessels with water", John 2: 7?

P.v.d.B. That is right, that was water. I think it is the application of the death of Christ inwardly so that there is no room for self, 'All thought of self is now for ever o'er': can we say that ? I cannot say that. I find it may go out from the front door, as Mr Stoney said and comes back through the window, but we need to refuse that line of things; it is Hagar that brings us into bondage; the maidservant and her son are to be cast out, and then you can celebrate the supremacy of Christ. Well, can we be here, in our company, in the enjoyment of sonship, in the fulness of joy that is prepared for us in the Fathers own presence, in the sense of the best garment and the ring and the shoes, the liberty of sonship and all that is ours in privilege? We shall not find it difficult then to answer anything that is on the line of the creditor.

W.J.R.B. "If therefore the Son shall set you free, ye shall be really free", John 8: 36.

P.v.d.B. That is right, and the truth will set you free (v 32). Anything that is not of the truth leads to bondage. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth and the truth will always set you in liberty; things that are not related to the Spirit may have a very nice appearance as in Galatians, but it was only gendering to bondage, depriving them of the liberty of sonship, and the creditor came to take the sons away.

That is what Paul is combating for in his epistle to the Galatians. What was of man and what the Spirit of God could not be related to was having a place there, and it was rendering the situation into bondage. There are problems amongst the saints through things that cannot be related to the Spirit of God and it is on the line of the creditor coming to take away the sons, but the Lord is never to the wall in any situation, as we can see in Matthew 17.

L.A.B. There is a need all the time to recognise the Spirit, not only subjectively but objectively; that is to say, the truth is coming to us and we need to recognise that it is the truth, and then to work it out in the power of the Spirit, do you think?

P.v.d.B. That is right. We may be feeling very weak in giving a word or being in a meeting like this, at least I do. If only you knew how one felt! But it is a question of what is here in the Spirit, and that we have a divine Person, the Holy Spirit, *with* us, guiding us into all the truth, involving the objective place that the Holy Spirit has. It was quite a turning- point when the truth as to the objective place of the Holy Spirit was brought into relief.

S.D.K.R. Would you say something about using the Spirit. There is the pouring out in a practical way so that we can pay our debt.

P.v.d.B. Well, it is by the Spirit that we mortify our members. We can use the Spirit in that way. As has been quoted, "If we live by the Spirit, let us walk also by the Spirit" (Gal 5: 25), and that is liberty. The Lord said in Bethany "Loose him and let him go", John 11: 44. Lazarus had no kind of after-treatment. The Lord said "let him go", and that is just what the Lord would do and what He did in Matthew 17, He set the position free: "then are the sons free". Peter would have brought the situation into bondage and the creditor would have come, and they would have been in bondage. In Matthew's gospel we have the Lord with us in power in the administrative position here and He will see to it that the situation is preserved in the liberty of sonship so that the testimony may continue.

D.J.H. We referred to making use of the Spirit, availing ourselves of Him as in Romans 8, but then there is the reference that you gave us in Philippians: "We... worship by the Spirit of God"; would that be the highest level at which we use the Spirit, if we may use that expression? and is that in view all the time?

P.v.d.B. That is right. So we have the reference "the mind of the Spirit (is) life and peace", Rom 8: 6 - the way we think, the way our thoughts are controlled. You find that there is that in us which gives room for the creditor to come in; hence the need of deliverance.

S.D.K.R. Would it help us to rise to our calling? It speaks about the vessels of the sanctuary being for pouring out; that is what I am, we are constituted that; and as we do it we get into liberty.

P.v.d.B. That is right. The vessels will thus be available in liberty as fixed in relation to Christ. If the Son sets you free you will be free indeed.

A.J.E.W. I was just turning over in my mind the unique title that John uses: "another Comforter", John 14: 16. There is always the side of what the Spirit is to us individually and personally, but there is the side of what He is as with us, and "another Comforter", which involves surely not only the bearing of His thought towards us positively, but the resource which will never be found wanting in any respect at any time. Does that come into what you are saying as to this section?

P.v.d.B. I think that is very helpful.

E.M.W. You have spoken several times of what hinders our enjoyment of sonship. In this chapter in Matthew we get "*This* is my beloved Son"; I think you referred earlier to sonship in Him. The man beneath the mountain says "my son". Do we see illustrated there what hinders and how what hinders can be dealt with to bring us into the liberty of sonship?

P.v.d.B. I think that is very helpful, to see the glory of Christ and to hear the voice from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son", and then how the situation down below is met and sonship is maintained; conditions met from that position of glory. I think we need to proceed from the level of the service of God in matters of responsibility, to come down from what we enjoy in privilege in His own presence as on the holy mount in the presence of the excellent glory. The Lord had to say to them that "this kind does not go out but by prayer and fasting" (v 21). Prayer is bringing God in and fasting is shutting the flesh out, and that was what was in the way in meeting the matter down below. Then in the end of this chapter we see how in the testimonial setting the Lord comes into this situation. He anticipates Peter and He sets the position in liberty. He has the resources of the depths to meet every matter whatever it may be.

F.M.K. Have you some thought as to why Jesus anticipates him as he was coming "into the house".

P.v.d.B. I think "the house" involves the assembly in Matthew. The magi came "into the house", and in Matthew 13 it is as going "into the house" that the Lord explains things and brings out the matter of the treasure and the pearl, and the net with the fishes. It is a closer environment than what is public at the sea. We get light and help as we come together; the Lord is not rebuking Peter publicly but it is as coming "into the house" that He faces Peter with the matter.

P.S.W. I suppose Peter would have been more used to using a net for fishing, but he is called upon to use a hook. We have to get down to what is specific perhaps in some matters.

P.v.d.B. That is very interesting. This is line fishing. The Lord has what is available to meet the situation in the testimony. This matter was not to bring a reproach on the testimony. He says "But that we may not be an offence to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up".

A.A.B. Does Jesus anticipating him in the house correspond a little in character with the Father's voice on the mount, bringing out the sensitiveness and wondrous skill of adjustment, how divine Persons adjust us, so nothing is lost but everything is gained?

P.v.d.B. The Lord had His own way with Peter and Peter was not lost; he was secured.

C.C.I. Do you think we may be so occupied with testimonial matters that we may miss the great point of Christianity and its association with Christ in the realm of life and sonship? Is that what is in your mind?

P.v.d.B. That is quite right and is what I had in mind.

H.A.H. Is the thought of anticipating him as he entered into the house the Lord's way of indicating that there is an area into which this element is not to be introduced?

P.v.d.B. Quite, where the door is shut, and I think that is an important matter. We may be getting obsessed with certain things that happen but the Lord has His own way in the testimony. At the same time we need to have spiritual sensitiveness as to what can be

related to the Spirit of God and what is of man, because what is of man, natural feelings and the like, are often operating in such a way that it brings the creditor in and consequently the position is brought into bondage.

C.R.B. Does the Father's word, "hear him", involve the recognition of headship? "For me and thee": does that preserve the distinctiveness of Christ in headship?

P.v.d.B. I think that is helpful. Mr Darby makes the remark that individually we speak to God as Father in relation to our personal matters, but in church government we refer to the Lord Jesus because He is the Head of the assembly (see Vol.26. p.28).

E.C.B. Are our liberty in sonship in what we speak of as privilege and in responsibility equivalent to each other? So that more cannot be claimed in one sphere than exists in the other.

P.v.d.B. I think it is very helpful to see that, and the more we realise what we are in sonship in relation to God the more there will be the practical working out of what is from God in the testimonial sphere here. The assembly is a vessel in which there will be glory to God eternally; that is to God, but then there is in the heavenly city what is from God in administration here, and it is equal.

E.C.B. You have spoken of hindrances; if I were hindered in my part in the service of God, then I would be hindered in my relation, you might say, with the other sons. If I was hindered in my relation with the other sons I could not then say I was free in the service of God, because sonship is indivisible. Is that right?

P.v.d.B. That is right.

D.E.B. Does this involve the acceptance of the position of being strangers here? One of our hymns refers to 'strangers below and citizens above' (No.284).

P.v.d.B.. That is it; the sons are free. The Lord was from heaven and the sons are associated with Him in heaven. They come out in responsibility here, and I think that not only do we need the spirit of sonship, but also we need the sense of union in matters of

responsibility in administration. I think union is basic to it. Do you think so?

E.C.B. I was just hoping you would say a little more about it. There is of course one view from which union is necessary for entering into sonship. What about union in relation to responsibility?

P.v.d.B. The fact is that the assembly as the bride of Christ is qualified for the administration of the world to come; but that is not just future in its bearing.

E.C.B. Would you suggest that "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2: 16) implies union, although that is not a side that is exactly developed in the Corinthian condition?

P.v.d.B. That is right.

A.J.E.W. I was thinking that Saul of Tarsus came into touch with this side remarkably: "Why dost thou persecute me?", Acts 9: 4. The Lord is really claiming the assembly there in union with Himself in the administrative area. Is that right?

P.v.d.B. Very wonderful! So he was to go into the city, he was to find the street called Straight, and it says "it shall be told thee what thou must do" (v 6). There was an administration in that place that the Lord would trust.

F.C.M. So the care meeting should be a display of bridal features, should it not?

P.v.d.B. That is right. The bride of Christ, I think, is rightly connected with privilege, and the wife, the Lamb's wife, is connected with responsibility; it enters into the administration of the world to come, and it enters into administration now. We have it in the end of Proverbs 31 in the virtuous woman, the way she takes care of the interests of her husband in his absence. We are entrusted with things and I think we need the Spirit in relation to sonship, the Spirit as the One by whom we experience union, and the Spirit of truth to govern us; we are not to be governed by anything that is not the truth. The moment anything of man comes in, by way of natural feelings and the like, it cannot be related to the Spirit of God and it

makes room for the creditor to come in and bring the situation into bondage. The Lord will see to it, however, that the position will not be brought into bondage, as we learn from this chapter.

W.E.E. Would you say then that whatever is brought forward at any time should be based on Scripture?

P.v.d.B. It should be based on Scripture, and the Spirit of God will never say anything that is contrary to Scripture, and we need to be in unity and in the sense of union in the working out of things here. If for instance a person is accepted in one locality and refused in another locality, that is the end of common action and unity. (See J.N.D. Letters, Vol.2, p.213). It could not be, the assembly is one; what is true and what governs one locality governs every locality.

E.C.B. I think the practical question which arises very much in what you are saying is our being able ourselves, and in ourselves, to distinguish from what is of ourselves, what is of the Spirit of God, because we very easily think that what we think is what the Spirit thinks; and it may be so, but it may not. Now, can you help us on making that distinction?

P.v.d.B. I think we can learn from the epistle to the Galatians and from what has already been referred to in relation to Paul's conversion, that when the Son was revealed in him he took not counsel with flesh and blood (Gal 1: 16), and that is the secret. My natural feelings may take account of persons and I may just make a mistake as to whether it is the truth that governs me or whether it is persons that govern me in my judgment. What governs us is the truth, and the Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

E.C.B. That is very testing to us all, because we all speak with one another about matters of concern of whatever kind they are and it is very easy to fall into taking counsel with flesh and blood in doing that. The necessity for our communion with one another being in the Spirit is of cardinal importance, is it not?

P.v.d.B. It is very important. I do not think there is any meeting that has not difficulties and exercises, and I think that the Lord has humiliated us in His own ways, so that the element of man should

have no place amongst us, in order that He might have His way, that He might have His supremacy in the locality, as we see it in Bethany.

E.C.B. So that we might readily think (I think most of us might think) that one of the tests of the present day is in government, but we may tend to look for that by way of gift when we ought to be looking for it in the manifestation of the Spirit of God.

P.v.d.B. I am sure that is most important, and that there should be an unworldly state of things amongst us so that the Spirit of God may not be hindered in what He is doing and that no ground may be given for the creditor to come in and rob us of the liberty of sonship.

J.W. Does the question raised as to whether we know what we say is of the Spirit, raise the question of what we know of the presence of the Lord? Peter here was in the presence of the Lord and he was adjusted as to his thoughts.

P.v.d.B. I am sure it is very important that we should have a sense of being in the presence of the Lord when we come together.

Individually, too, we should be in the presence of God, with a true estimate of ourselves. If we are really with God about things self would have no place, we would find out our own nothingness. It is not that we are not very much, but that we are nothing at all, and then there will be the empty vessels so that the Spirit can come in and meet any situation.

D.E.R. What you are saying would help us to be governed, not by sentiment or by persons, but by divine principles.

P.v.d.B. That is what governs us. At the same time, it has often been in the history of the recovery that certain errors in administration were only a point the Lord used to bring out a certain state of things; it is the state of things that the Lord is drawing attention to, not so much the administrative error. Why is there no power to meet things which go on for so long?

J.M. Do you think this goes back in its origin to new birth? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit", John 3: 6. Do you think that we need to raise exercise with

one another that we might locate and discern what is of the Spirit, and that that should be cultivated in us?

P.v.d.B. I think that is most important; and what tests us is spiritual discernment, that we discern where things are. David says to Abigail "blessed be thy discernment", 1 Sam 25: 33.

C.B. In the first scripture it is a question of the creditor, but in Matthew here it is a question of offences: "that we may not be an offence to them". The Lord says too that they will come, but "woe to that man by whom the offence comes!", Matt 18: 7.

P.v.d.B. Yes. Well, we want to see to it that the creditor can lay no claim, and that as born of God we have the sense of the manifestation of Christ in our comings together, and rise to the great thoughts of God in relation to the assembly. The house of Aaron represents the assembly.

A.A.B. "Let them have dominion" (Gen 1: 26) is one of the great thoughts of God. Does that embrace what you have referred to as the state of union, consciously in us, in relation to administration?

P.v.d.B. Quite so. The Lord will have the assembly with Him in the administration in the world to come and we are being qualified for it in the present time.

A.A.B. In reference to the care meeting again, we have been helped to see that it is deliberative in its character, but the assembly is final in relation to everything, in the administration and the dominion as to any matter.

P.v.d.B. That is right; therefore we need to regard the assembly, whatever the state of things might be in a place we need to regard the assembly. There may be opposition; you may find conditions there that are very humbling; but you will never be helped if you do not regard the assembly in ministering amongst the saints. You need to hold on to the great thoughts of God in relation to the assembly, and what the saints are in dignity according to the mind of God. I think that is your power, in ministering in the state of things as it is.

C.R.B. Does that involve being on a high mountain apart with God?

P.v.d.B. I think that is most important, and to see the Son of man coming in His kingdom. That will be so in a day to come but that has a present application.

J.C.E. I thought it was encouraging that the Lord is always ready to hear us and to instruct us about a matter, as He was here with Peter, and in the earlier scripture the man of God is given that title. I wondered if that showed that there is always an element that will help us and put us right.

P.v.d.B. That is right. We need the prophetic word, prophetic ministry. I think the prophetic meetings afford an occasion for the Lord to bring in His mind. If the word is from God it governs the assembly; that is divine guidance.

D.J.H. Does that relate to what was asked earlier as to discernment? I was thinking of the reference in Hebrews to the word of God (see chap 4: 12). It relates to discernment, but almost there is a personification of the Spirit Himself. "All things are naked and laid bare to his eyes, with whom we have to do" (v 13) would bear on the prophetic meeting, would it?

P.v.d.B. Very much, and the prophetic word would not come to us in such a way that it becomes the creditor; it opens the doors of supply in relation to the pot of oil so that things can be met.

S.D.K.R. Did you say that the prophetic word does not become a creditor? Would you make that a bit clearer for us.

P.v.d.B. You may give a word that lays such claims on the brethren that they will be put into bondage. Hebrews 4 goes on to "Having therefore a great high priest" (v 14). It brings in the priesthood of Christ that comes in aid of anything that we need on our part; it brings in the pot of oil. You have a pot of oil in Croydon.

D.J.H. So it is a question of how we answer to the word, is it not? We do not seek to answer to the word according to the flesh but draw upon the divine resource to answer to it that there might be a result for God.

P.v.d.B. That is right. We need to be preserved from legality.

Sometimes it is not so easy to discern whether it is legality or whether it is the word of God. I think the word of God will always bring in the pot of oil so that we are directed to the answer; the Lord is bringing this matter to a wealthy completion in what was found in the mouth of the fish.

D.E.B. So the stater is very relevant to what is being said, because one coin is given "for me and thee". Whatever is given or presented involves the Lord equally, does it not?

P.v.d.B. It does. It covers the whole matter; it sets the Lord free and it sets the saints free.

E.M.W. As to prophecy, as Scripture says, "he that prophesies speaks to men in edification, and encouragement, and consolation", 1 Cor 14: 3. That would bring no-one into bondage.

P.v.d.B. No, but I think you know what I mean, giving a word in such a way that brethren felt they were brought into bondage.

E.M.W. You would hardly call that prophecy; it would not be the mind of God, would it?

P.v.d.B. No.

A.A.B. That would be like the staff in the hand of Gehazi, would it not?

P.v.d.B. Exactly.

A.A.B. But the prophetic word involves the prophet himself, great intensity and depth of feeling, and the result of his service is "Take up thy son".

P.v.d.B. That is right. The matter could not be met by a word from a distance. When the staff was laid on the lad there was nothing in the way of response, but when the prophet came in he identified himself with the child; he put his eyes on the child's eyes so that it would see as he saw, and his hands on the child's hands so that it would act as he acted. It was not a word from a distance, not a letter written, but personal identification, and he shut the door on them both. The

Galatians needed to have the door shut to the elements that would bring them into bondage, and I think we need to have our door shut to that too.

F.C.M. Is it not encouraging then that as the doors are shut on all that would intrude and hamper, the doors are opened to divine resources. The Lord says "go to the sea"; is not that an area of infinite divine resource?

P.v.d.B. Quite. I think you can see the wealth of that. The Lord has given us an opened door in the day in which we are, and it will be so if we have the door shut to the other things.

W.J.W. That is where the Lord manifested Himself, where the doors were shut.

P.v.d.B. That is very good. He stood in the midst, it says, (see John 20: 19), that is the assembly.

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Key to initials

A.A. Bellamy, Buckhurst Hill; C.Beale, London; C.R.Byng, London; D.E.Burr, Redbridge; E.C.Burr, London; L.A.Barlow, Bexley; P.van den Berg, The Hague; W.J.R.Brodie, Ealing; J.C. Evershed, London; W.E.Ellis, London; D.J.Hutson, London; H.A.Hutson, London; C.C.Ikin, Southend; F.M.Knappett, Maidstone; F.C.Mutton, Redbridge; J.Mitchell, Bexley; E.Palmer, London; D.E.Remmington, St. Albans; S.D.K.Roberts, Croydon; R.E.Turner, St. Albans; R.Taylor, Barnet; A.J.E.Welch, London; B.W.Ward, London; E.M.Walkinshaw, Gillingham; J.Wright, Redbridge; P.S.Warren, London; W.J.Woolley, London

THE CHILDREN'S URGENCY

It is quite natural for you as children to feel that you have a lifetime before you, without wondering whether it will be long, short or even very short. If, however, you should hear your elders speaking about 'moral matters' you must not think that, whatever these may be, they can be safely left to the distant future. Scripture does not itself use these words but it really explains them in the warning "And take great heed to your souls". Thus, although your sins may not in childhood seem like a heavy sack-load on your back, yet the very near coming of the Lord Jesus for all His redeemed ones makes it very urgent that you should know Him now as a personal Saviour.

When quite young some of us have in a restless, lonely night become so anxious about our souls that we have got up from bed to see if our parents may have already been called away! A scripture to remember is "the same Lord of all is rich towards all that call upon him".

When Jesus preached in His home town of Nazareth He announced "the acceptable year of the Lord". This was the Jubilee, a Hebrew word meaning 'ram's horn' or 'trumpet' which was sounded to proclaim liberty. The scripture read was from the beginning of what is now chapter 61 of Isaiah's prophecy and, in unrolling the scroll as far as this text, Jesus would have passed over other passages concerning Himself, notably the words of chapter 53 which are engraved on the mind and heart of every true believer. What holy emotions must have filled His own heart, knowing that Calvary's

cross and all its woe must be endured to give a righteous basis for the freedom proclaimed! He did not go on to read of judgment but there is urgent need now to get the blessings of such a gospel since the present year of favour may close at any moment. It is as if every leaf of the Jubilee calendar read 'Today' and every clock and watch showed 'Now'.

When in Jersey we once visited a small bay in the centre of which is a tiny island with a ruin known as Janvrin's Tower. The history is that a sea-captain of that name had brought his small ship safely home to Jersey from a distant voyage. Unhappily the plague had broken out on board and the ship with all hands had to remain at anchor in this little bay. In spite of some help the crew perished one by one and at last Janvrin himself died at the spot where the tower is now. It was particularly sad for him as his cottage home, his wife and children were barely a mile inland in a sunny valley. Whether or not Janvrin knew the Saviour is not known but as regards his circumstances he was almost home - but LOST. Can you read the warning?

J.C.Evershed