

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

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B.M.D. Some of us have been occupied recently a little with the Spirit and His service. "He therefore who ministers to you the Spirit" is in the Galatian epistle, as we know (chap. 3: 5), which administration I suppose would include His being sent from heaven by the Father and the Son. It would also involve His right to act on His own account, as we get in Acts 10, and in chapter 19 too (although Paul's hands come into that, which we would not have now). It occurred to me, dear brethren, that we might get help now to enquire a little as to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. John introduces it in the section we read. He says "I baptise with water.

In the midst of you stands, whom ye do not know", and then he adds in verse 33: "he it is who baptises with the Holy Spirit". I thought there would be a direct link with 1 Corinthians 12, where we come into what is already established, as it was at Pentecost; but we should perhaps see that that teaching comes in in a corrective epistle, that is, Paul is meeting conditions. As we know, in chapter 11 he brings in the Supper as meeting certain disorder; what they were doing was not the Supper at all. In the chapter where we read he seems to bring in the organism of the body to encourage spiritual manifestations of which they seemed to be ignorant. That would be abnormal, as in the early days of Samuel when the word of Jehovah was rare and a vision was not frequent (see 1 Sam 3: 1). Then in chapter 14 he brings in the power of the prophetic word. I thought that in that connection it would be helpful to keep in our minds the section read in 1 Samuel 19, where a remarkable matter was proceeding that was a check on evil - a company of prophets, with a certain mysterious working that influenced others for good. David was anointed but not yet crowned, the wrong king was on the throne, and that ensuing struggle, as we all have learned alas! in days gone by in our local meetings and between meetings, is a very searching matter. I trust it is such now that never has to be named amongst us. But what comes out is that there is something happening amidst

that struggle that is a check on evil, and it is an influence for good, so that even Saul is affected though not changed. Indeed he is exposed, he "lay down naked all... that night", it says. I thought that it would be something to enquire into, not exactly the doctrine, of which I guess we would know a little, but how it works out in practice, that there is something operating in the power of the Spirit that will maintain the good and overcome evil, that will overcome evil with good.

A.J.E.W. Would you tell us why you feel the baptism of the Spirit has such a distinctive place in John the baptist's service at this point?

B.M.D. His service would lead to it, would it not? He clearly says "he it is" (that is referring to Christ) "who baptises with... Holy Spirit". He shall baptise with water"; so that the line of John the baptist, the prophet who comes in suddenly in this gospel, brings in a very strong preparation in view of what is to proceed as under Christ.

E.M.W. That is interesting, because the baptism of the Spirit would direct to Christ rather than call attention to his own person.

B.M.D. I think we should see that. It is necessary, of course, to understand the import of John's service because baptism by water is that we are submerged. We go out of sight in that type, and we can hardly be in the merging of the Spirit if we are not submerged first. Is that so?

E.M.W. I am sure it is. Is that the reason for the introduction of the fire, too? It is a question of the total extinction of man in the flesh. I judge you have that in mind.

B.M.D. Yes, that is exactly the teaching which we should understand, that in what is to be introduced in Christ's body, the anointed vessel here - "so also is the Christ" - there cannot be any trace whatever of the flesh or what marks the first man. So it is healthy and right for us to face the somewhat rigorous ministry of the prophet John the baptist.

E.C.B. Does his ministry and the baptism of water have in mind largely what we speak of as negative, whereas the baptism with the Spirit is positive?

B.M.D. It leads into that, does it not? I can see a real danger of accepting the negative side and being left without an object for the affections. That is why I ventured to read on down, to see that those who followed the lord through the effective ministry of John the baptist found an object, and found where He dwelt.

E.C.B. I think that what you have said is very important, that we might pursue what is negative (and in a certain sense the flesh can even like the negative because it ministers to legality), but to be left without an object for the affections is really then to be destitute, is it not?

B.M.D. I think it is a very dangerous position to be in, a vulnerable position, which the enemy will not fail to exploit to our sorrow. Have we not found it so? It is like the house that was swept but unoccupied - a very dangerous position! How wonderful to look round today and think of every heart here as a dwelling place for Christ!

A.J.E.W. Is John's unique experience of import? He bears witness of it; "I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven". That marks off the Spirit distinctly and personally in John's mind and understanding. "And it abode upon him"; that is, this must have been a wonderful transaction of soul for John; but it ends up in calling attention to Jesus: "it abode upon him". That is the conclusion that he reaches.

B.M.D. What an experience! to see one divine Person coming upon Another, if we can speak with deepest reverence. It almost seems as if John is held in rightful awe, if we can thus speak, of such an operation, because he says twice here "And I knew him not". What does he mean by that?

E.M.W. You mean that he must have known Him as naturally akin to him, but there is something deeper hidden in what John says.

B.M.D. I believe so. I believe he was consciously in the presence of what he knew to be infinite. For instance: "no one knows the Son but the Father", Matt 11: 27. There is an infinitude that is beyond creature knowledge, which should ever command our deepest reverence and respect, and indeed our worship. I just say that because it is the same Spirit who is with us now, and we need to be careful and fearful in His presence, and we need one another to speak what is right in His presence, to speak of Him rightly.

E.C.M. Is there some significance in what he says: "These things took place in Bethany, across the Jordan, where John was baptising"? Linking on with what was pointed out as to the positive side and our attachment to His Person, does it not lead to what is beyond the Jordan?

B.M.D. That is the whole matter. We find Christ as an object. Can we rest until we are where He is and find out where He dwells? Does He not take particular interest in those who follow Him? "What seek ye? ... Come and see". This is open to every one that loves Him. But we should not too quickly pass over the other side of what was referred to, because the baptism of John is, you might say, foundational. Later in this gospel it says there was plenty of water where he was baptising, and thank God there is still plenty of water to get thoroughly submerged, because we will not get merged until we are submerged.

C.J.H.D. The object for affection is found in Acts 19, where the men have known John's baptism, but they are baptised to the name of the Lord Jesus which is the affectionate assembly title for Him, and immediately the Holy Spirit comes upon them.

B.M.D. It is amazing that they had not heard whether the Spirit had come, because, as we get here, John speaks extensively of the Spirit; but Paul says "To what then were ye baptised? And they said, To the baptism of John". The foundational side at any rate was established, and Paul then immediately brings them into what our brother says is the positive side. And that was Ephesus, was it not? So it is leading us right into heaven.

C.R.B. Is there a spirit of worship as John says "because he was before me"?

B.M.D. Yes, I am sure it would strengthen what we are saying. I think John is held in a profound sense of the greatness of what he has witnessed, and should we not be as we think of this dispensation extending? I understand that the feast of weeks extended; in a certain sense it still continues. Deuteronomy does not put a limit on the feast, and in a certain sense it is still accomplishing; we are still in the time of the Spirit.

C.R.B. There is what is infinite about the understanding that "he was before me"; you can never exhaust that. But it is a matter for wonder, too, is it not, that John can go on to witness "that this is the Son of God"? Do not those references show the need for both baptisms?

B.M.D. Yes. That could be the light coming into this dear man's soul as he is occupied with this profound event: "I beheld the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven, and it abode "upon him" in perfect complacency; in a total sense He abode upon that Person who is the Son of God.

D.J.H. What you say as to how quickly this light came is interesting; it seems that that would be normal in that he refers in verse 33 to his baptising with water, but in the same verse refers to baptising with the Holy Spirit. I was thinking of what you said earlier, that there is not to be any time lag between the negative having been dealt with and then immediately moving on into the positive.

B.M.D. I think what you are saying is strengthening what we were saying a while ago. It is a very dangerous period if it finds any of us without an object, and that object is the Son of God. You see the same thing in chapter 9 where the man was cast out and there he was. Think of it! but he clung to one thing and the Lord found him, and he found in Him an object. That man was safe. He was ready for chapter 10.

E.C.B. According to the synoptic gospels John would have heard the voice saying "This is my beloved Son" (Matt.3: 17) or "Thou art

my beloved Son" (Mark 1: 11; Luke 3: 22). Here there is no such voice but he seems to come to a conclusion in himself as to the Son of God.

B.M.D. Yes, and in looking at Jesus as He walked; and then the earlier verse: "On the morrow he sees Jesus coming to him, and says, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world". It is what he is observing, is it not? It seems a deeper thing than what is just superficial. It is the knowledge of the Son of God.

E.C.B. Do you think we need power to draw conclusions from the activity of the Spirit as to the glory of the person of Jesus?

B.M.D. We do, and that would develop a desire to find out where He abides.

A.C.C. Is there a difference between the baptism of the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit? I wondered whether being filled with the Spirit was more an individual exercise, but the baptism was to baptise the saints into one body, merge them together into one body. Is that right?

B.M.D. I think the word you use is just the word to use; it is a merging into one whole, into a vessel, an anointed vessel here; "so also is the Christ". Think of the glory of so many being merged by that baptism into that vessel! Really, that is what it is all about; it is Christ here. Christ up there: thank God, what an object, a centre for us! But what is down here in testimony has appeared in that anointed vessel. That is what the conflict is all about, to maintain that expression of Christ here in testimony.

A.J.E.W. So that the unity, which is named as "the unity of the Spirit" (Eph 4: 3), is to be kept.

B.M.D. That is very good. I think it involves our affections, the closeness of our bond as merged; and it really takes us to 1 Corinthians where you get the distinctions of gifts and the same Spirit. In fact the Trinity is interwoven in that vessel. I think we should go on to that but just get a touch as to this: it says "They went therefore, and saw where he abode; and they abode with him that

day". I would just suggest, dear brethren, that that is normal to Christianity.

D.E.R. It is a very blessed thing to know the Lord in our circumstances - piety would help us as to that - but how much more blessed to be with the Lord in relation to His circumstances and His house, His affairs. Is your exercise that we should understand that the baptism of the Spirit would help us into that?

B.M.D. I believe so. I suppose this is the individual side, but it is leading into the merging into a vessel. I believe, from my own simple observation, that that is where we need so much help. I do not think we can be merged consciously and intelligently and affectionately into that vessel unless we have found Him as a sole object for our affections.

P.S.W. You referred to the anointed vessel: how would the baptism of the Spirit relate to what we speak of as the anointing of the Spirit?

B.M.D. Mr Clapham was referring to a similar line of things. I think it would run very closely, only the baptism seems to stress the idea of being merged into a vessel. The anointing would be in view of its function, I suppose. Have you something in your mind?

P.S.W. I think what you said as to the merging in the vessel is most important, but the vessel is to function and for that the anointing of the Spirit is in evidence.

B.M.D. Well, that is it. In 1 Corinthians 12 we get "But there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are distinctions of services, and the same Lord; and the same distinctions of operations, but the same God who operates all things in all". You can see how the Trinity is entering into it (I do not know the word to use, it is more than putting its stamp on it, that would not be enough; it is interwoven). What would be the word to use?

E.C.B. I think we would understand the word 'interwoven'. What you have in mind is in a sense the Trinity in relation to the body, which is formed by the baptism with the Spirit.

B.M.D. The impress of the Trinity would be inter-woven in this marvellous organism which we speak of as the body of Christ.

Similarly it will come out in the display of the city coming down, which is said to have the glory of God (see Rev 21: 10). It is a luminous vessel. It is more than a reflection; a substantial formation in which the attributes of God will shine.

E.C.B. The scripture is quoted in different ways, but the word the scripture uses is 'with': "baptises with the Holy Spirit", meaning, as Mr Darby interprets, 'in the power of'. It is not exactly 'baptism of the Spirit', it is "with".

B.M.D. That is right.

E.C.B. Involving His power, as if He is the means to a divine end.

R.T. Does that involve the dignity that the Spirit brings with Him, that is superior to everything else? 'Baptised with' implies the idea of resource and a dignity that has come in that should impress us, that we do not resort to the level of other thinking and other ways, but we are maintained in this dignity. It is interesting that often it says that He came from heaven.

B.M.D. He certainly did. He came from heaven, and He was sent from heaven, and He brings the dignity of heaven with Him. If we could just get an impression of that today, the dignity of this vessel in the light of which we seek humbly to walk. Its expression can be found even in the twos and threes. We should keep in mind that Paul in this corrective area is bringing this forward with design to meet certain conditions.

J.M. It helps us to see the assembly as entirely outside of, having no reference to, any human organisation whatsoever. It is entirely of God, is it not? "The assembly of God... in Corinth", chap 1: 2. This is the way in which we practically come to that.

B.M.D. If we understood that, it would meet every question of separation. We would not need a rule book any more. Really it comes from within. We tried it the other way and it did not work.

Separation stems from my attachment to the Son of God. Do you agree with that?

J.M. It bears on what was just said, that there is a certain dignity about the assembly, the tremendous resource that it has as able to represent God and act for God in any circumstance in which it finds itself. I think baptised in the power of the Spirit into one body helps us to see that it is entirely independent of human resources.

B.M.D. So you can get a Jew and a Greek perfectly merged. Could any human recipe do that? - bond or free, direct opposites naturally. I suppose we are, many of us, awkward sort of people, but the power, the dignity of this that our brother refers to, can merge us into a vessel which is the expression of Christ here; no, more than that, it is Christ here.

D.J.H. In referring to what is corrective, would it be right to say that no correction or adjustment has less in mind than this as an object?

B.M.D. I believe we do not understand the truth properly unless we look at it in its normality. Things were not normal practically in Corinth as we know. Therefore Paul brings forward the truth in its normality to bring about the adjustment. You do not help a person by telling them what they are not. The teaching remains and we must approach things from the top.

E.P. Is it right to say that the teaching, and particularly this section, is in view of experience? If it is just teaching we might be informed, but do you think the reality of the Spirit's presence brings us into the experience together?

B.M.D. We certainly need the teaching; to persevere in the doctrine is most important, but if it does not lead into the experience, what is its worth? In a way a tremendous responsibility rests on us because of the light to which we have been recovered, and unless we hold it in the energy of life, maybe we should be better without it. That may be a bit strong, but you get the point, as following what you are saying.

E.P. I was thinking too of what you said earlier about baptism - baptism is not teaching exactly, it is an experience. We have to have the teaching, but then it is to lead to the experience and the experience is a very real thing.

B.M.D. Not many of us remember the literal thing because we were baptised when we were babes in the faith of our parents. Thank God for it! We need the teaching, particularly our younger brethren, as to what was done in the faith of their parents. It is teaching that leads to intelligent and affectionate committal to the place of experience.

A.J.E.W. It is interesting that he returns in the first verse of chapter 14 to spiritual manifestations. That seems to confirm the point of experience that we are at; he is filling in the essential teaching, leading on in chapter 13 to the reality of active affection; but the first verse of chapter 14 shows what is really in the back of his mind, that there should be spiritual manifestations.

B.M.D. That is right. In chapter 13, "but have not love": he is scathing in what he says when there is no love. "Let all things ye do be done in love", chap 16: 14. It would be normal to the operations. First of all there is "distinctions of gifts". This is not exactly the gifts as set in the assembly. We would understand that separately, would we not? These gifts would be the impression of Christ that each has, and each one essential as merged into the body to form the vessel. And that impress is by the Spirit. Your impression is not mine, mine is not yours, but we perfectly fit into the anointed vessel. What myriads there will be, with their own distinct personalities and impress of Christ, that will fill out that wonderful vessel.

R.D.P. Is there a certain widening out in those three things, the gifts, the services and the operations? Do you think that we do not want to miss that today, beginning with what you said but widening out to the operations?

B.M.D. Well, the services are under the Lord, that is the second one, the things to be done, and the services are under the Lord, under Christ. The operations would be the Father; He is presiding

over all; He is in that position of supremacy and presiding. What operations there are!

C.R.B. Are you distinguishing between the gifts in verse 4 and what God sets in the assembly in verse 28?

B.M.D. Not exactly, but in the setting in which they are presented here it seems as if there is the perfect merging into the one vessel of those gifts. But then the gifts are sent from an ascended Christ, and their service is far wider than Corinth or what is local; they are set in the assembly, not in the body, as we well know. That would seem to be the Lord's own prerogative to do that, but I suppose the impress of Christ in the gift would be the same. Is that as you understand it?

C.R.B. That is very interesting. So that these references from verse 4 onwards, including the manifestation of the Spirit to each, and so on, are to help us all to merge in the body as understanding the distinction of each and yet merging as a result of that.

B.M.D. That is what I thought. The exercise of gift as set in the assembly is to produce it, because that is extended in the Ephesian letter.

E.C.B. In the scripture in John 1, when they went to see where He abode, they say "We have found the... Christ". Do you think, transferring the expression to Christianity and Paul's teaching, Paul is seeking to help the Corinthians to find the Christ?

B.M.D. And now he is helping us; and we find the Christ in a meeting like this. Something comes in, you might say almost unexpectedly, maybe from a quarter we did not expect, something happens in a meeting. You know what it is. And you say to yourself, That is the assembly. It could be in any meeting as we gather in the light of the assembly. I believe as we are exercised for a spiritual manifestation the blessed Spirit will not fail to furnish it.

E.C.B. So that, as you said, this chapter is in a corrective setting itself, but "so also is the Christ" is something treasured in Paul's heart in relation to the local assembly.

B.M.D. I think so. Paul must have had a very distinct impress of this; that would have entered particularly into his gift, and he labours to produce of its kind.

E.C.B. You remarked, in regard to the gifts and the services and the operations, as to the Trinity being closely involved with them all.

Paul then goes on, as it were to concentrate his remarks on the Spirit. From verse 7 it is "the Spirit", "the Spirit", "the same Spirit", "the Spirit", "the Spirit", and so on, as if the recognition of the Spirit in the Trinity is essential for arriving at what you have in mind.

B.M.D. Ten or eleven times the Spirit is mentioned in that section, and that would not be without some significance, that what is proceeding now is in the power of the same Spirit. I think it particularly works in a meeting like this temple-wise, when we are sensitive to one another. In a way we need to try to learn to listen as we speak.

C.R.B. Is it the functioning of the body that preserves the spirit of enquiry in the temple?

B.M.D. I am sure it would. I think that is very helpful. It maintains a sensitive spirit of enquiry.

J.M. You said that the gifts are set in the assembly; I think Mr J Taylor said that is to stress the administrative character of the vessel. But do you not think that the truth of the body as underlying that is the great preservation against anything that is official?

B.M.D. I do not think a gift could operate intelligently or rightly or effectively without that sensitive, feeling knowledge of what the body involves. That would preclude popular evangelism. Not that we discredit any one; we thank God for those who preach the gospel, and thank God for souls being saved, but let us cleave to the foundation, the anointed vessel that is Christ here. That is somewhere that souls can be led to, where they can find their life and satisfaction in normal Christianity. Publicly it is not normal; we have just to hang our heads as to that. Oh, how humble we need to be! We cannot look at the breakdown at a distance as we used to perhaps. We are it. Some of us have to say, I am it. We cannot

escape it. Nevertheless the light of the precious truth of the assembly remains and hades' gates will not prevail against it.

E.M.W. If we have the function of the body in our localities, is it not just that that sets free the gifts that the Lord has given? I am thinking of the atmosphere necessary in order that gifts that the Lord has given might be free in their operation to nourish the body, but if the body is not functioning in our localities it seems to me it would hamper the exercise of gift.

B.M.D. Antioch?

E.M.W. Now you open that up, please.

B.M.D. I would think there were very fine conditions in that local assembly. Would you not think so? In the way the names are given, with Saul at the bottom of the list, there is a perfect merging in affection; but then the Spirit speaks: "Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them", Acts 13: 2. It would be exactly what you are saying, would it not? It is in that background of normal assembly life that the services proceed, but we must remember that the gifts function as under Christ directly.

E.M.W. Antioch is a good scriptural illustration of it. Do you think it is possible to reach these conditions today?

B.M.D. I will turn that back on you.

E.M.W. Well, I can only quote Mr Raven's axiom, that what has been is an evidence that it can be.

B.M.D. That is very encouraging. I think really we could stop at that, because we could not get any further than that. It will give us an incentive to reach something that answers by way of experience to what the assembly means as an organism.

E.C.B. Some of what we have been taught as to the characteristics of a remnant would help us in the public condition you remark on, would it not? We do not speak of a remnant of the assembly, but the remnant is that in which are treasured all the characteristics of what belonged to the whole, and what belonged to its best day.

B.M.D. Yes, the whole idea of the assembly is cherished by assembly-minded persons, though it may only be "two of you", Matt 18: 19.

C.J.H.D. In that connection, is the expression in verse 11 very attractive - "the one and the same Spirit"? Paul says elsewhere "if... ye get a different Spirit", 2 Cor 11: 4. It is the same Spirit that descended on Jesus, and therefore the same results of His power must be in evidence today, must they not? They can be.

B.M.D. That all tends towards this idea of organic oneness - the same Spirit. In a certain sense it is His Spirit. I know it is getting back to the individual again, but "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit", 1 Cor 6: 17. That is earlier in the same epistle, where again the apostle is meeting a moral condition. It is important, since you brought it up, that it should just be referred to, because "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit". That precludes any immoral link.

He is dealing with fornication, and in the day we are in, with the dreadful lowering of moral standards, we do well to exhort one another that the lifeline to preserve us is "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit". But then to stay that way - yes, but such are merged to find life and enjoyment in that vessel. That is why that section in Samuel seems somewhat to fit in to what we are saying. Persons are affected in spite of themselves. It brings us again to the thing operating; it is in function mysteriously. How did it happen, this company of prophets? There is no apparent arrangement, although it says Samuel presided over them, which would be a certain authority, I suppose, and control. David is with Samuel, and then these messengers are sent three times, and all come under the positive influence of a prophetic ministry.

E.C.B. Is that the character of the prophetic ministry in 1 Corinthians 14? "He is convicted of all, he is judged of all; the secrets of his heart are manifested" (vv 24,25).

B.M.D. Like king Saul.

E.C.M. Saul had many advantages. This seems the final advantage for him, to be among the company of the prophets prophesying, but

as you said, Saul is exposed, as if it was something like Hebrews 4: 13, "And there is not a creature unapparent before him; but all things are naked and laid bare to his eyes, with whom we have to do".

B.M.D. Yes, it shows the importance of the prophetic side of things.

We need the teaching, we need the apostles' doctrine, but we equally need the application of the word through the prophet. We do not have apostles now, but we have the prophets.

E.C.M. "By a prophet was he preserved", Hos 12: 13. There was every opportunity for Saul here, but he was fully exposed.

B.M.D. Yes. I wonder if you would repeat again what you said; you quoted Mr Raven.

E.M.W. Just that what has been - that is what has actually existed in fact - is an evidence or proof that it can be; and that should encourage us, should it not? that if God has reached something amongst His saints at one time, then it should be a proof to us that He can do that, and we should set ourselves to reach it.

B.M.D. Yes, let our resolves be that way. Do you not think so?

E.M.W. I am sure that is most important. I was thinking that in your first scripture, if I might just refer to it, the Lord's first utterance in John's gospel is "What seek ye?" It would be a great thing if the result of this meeting is exercise with us such as would cause the Lord to say to us "What seek ye?".

B.M.D. Yes, and then His invitation, "Come and see ... and they abode with him that day". Unforgettable, would it not be? We can have as much of the company of Jesus as we want. There is room in His bosom for every one of us. Would that we knew it more!

LONDON

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Key to initials

(all local unless otherwise stated)

C.R.Byng; E.C.Burr; A.C.Clapham, Manchester; B.M.Deck, Motueka;
C.J.H.Davidson, Dorking; D.J.Hutson; E.C.Muggleton, Croydon;
J.Mitchell, Bexley; E.Palmer; R.D.Plant, Birmingham;
D.E.Remmington, St.Albans; R.Taylor, Barnet; A.J.E.Welch;
E.M.Walkinshaw, Gillingham; P.S.Warren

STABILITY

B.M.Deck

John 18: 1-11; Exodus 3: 1-6, 14; Hebrews 13: 8

I thought that the titles in these scriptures would help us in the stability we so need in the days in which our lot is cast. It is easy to allow a certain element of weakness and depression, whereas I think

the Spirit of God would help us to see that there is a system operating, centred in Christ glorified, to which we could never attach breakdown, and it is maintained here in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

This title, "I AM", takes us back into the contemplation of what is really quite beyond us, into the essence and blessedness of a Being whom we know as God. To us in this wondrous dispensation, the greatest of all, God is revealed in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This title, 'I AM', attaches to each Person equally and inscrutably, and the essence of that Being is infinitely one, yet what a supreme privilege, beloved brethren, that we in affectionate and responsive and intelligent love, can speak to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. It seems to me that the way God has come into this wondrous unfolding of things which we speak of as an economy will leave its own impress on every part of His work. The wonder and the glory of His grace is that we should be chosen, even before the world was, to have part in that. It has been well said that it was the Father's glory to choose us, the glory of the Son to redeem us and the glory of the Spirit to form and fashion us in Christ's likeness, to come out, not only in the display, as it will be, but to be the fit consort of that heavenly Man. Beloved, let the greatness of these things afresh come into our affections and our minds today. It will result in an ever deepening committal and a resolve, stemming from affection for His Person, to be here fully identified with His testimony.

What I want to bring out if I can is that from the divine side there is no weakness. That there are forces against it we admit.

The Lord says "on this rock" - that is the confession of Himself - "I will build my assembly", Matt 16: 18. Oh! the appeal is to us to furnish something that is His in the days of breakdown, to give Him the joy of a possession, without our assuming anything or claiming anything. But even "two of you", as we were saying, two assembly persons, can furnish for the heart of Christ what He loves. It is an appeal to us.

I want to say something as to these passages I have read, although I feel unable to enter into the depth of this title. When the Lord Jesus said "I am he" His opposers were powerless in the presence of that utterance. The disciples were with Him because they went with Him. Oh beloved, how far can we go? Is not this the Ark? "When ye see the ark" (Josh 3: 3): is this not the Ark going forward to meet the awful power of death, when the Jordan overflowed all its banks? Does it not say here that it was a torrent? We do not get that in the other gospels. The torrent: it is the awfulness, the power, of all that was brought against Him at that time, but which was powerless in the presence of the One who went forth to meet death and overcome it and become the mighty Victor. "What ailed thee, thou sea" - is that not what the Psalm says? - "that thou fleddest? thou Jordan that thou turnedst back? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams? ye hills, like lambs?", Ps 114: 5,6. Think of the spiritual triumph in the mighty power of the I AM in the presence of the forces that lay between His reaching the full object of the purposes of God.

Now this section does not give us the detail we get in the synoptic gospels, nor do we get the extreme pressure that Luke gives us - His sweat as great drops of blood falling to the ground. In a way we can hardly contain at one and the same time who this Person is in the glory and greatness of the I AM, and the infinite blessedness and moral perfections that attach to His humanity. Both call forth our worship. It is food for us, dear brethren, food for the mighty. The gospels are infinite; they are profound. In a sense we go back from the epistles to learn the gospels, and in a way they are unsearchable. "The Spirit searches... the depths of God", 1 Cor 2: 10. Oh that something like this should come into us as we speak and as we listen, as we are together in it, as the assembly is here, the temple, the light of the truth. Let it come into us as it no doubt in some sense came into these beloved disciples. They would say they were not equal to it, and so should we. How could we penetrate into the depths of those holy feelings as He contemplated the cross and the power of death? It could never overwhelm Him. The waters

went back, went back in a heap, it says, as far as the city Adam (see Josh 3: 16). The whole matter was resolved in the irresistible power of that Person who is no less than the I AM. I wish we were able to hold the whole scene at once, but I do not think we are equal for it.

Think of the awful pressure on His spirit as He took the cup, not from man but from God, from the Father! "Shall I not drink it?" But what that meant! Who could understand the depth of those feelings of His holy soul as He contemplated what was to be resolved on the cross in those three hours when He was made sin? "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor 5: 21. What infinite depths of almighty love flowed at that wondrous divine transaction when He met the whole power of the enemy to make a way through that we can be with Him where He is in His own abode. Beloved, these are wonderful things. They are things we know, but let them come into us afresh. I suppose these beloved disciples came to it later. They would remember and say, Why did He say to us "Thus ye have not been able to watch one hour with me?", Matt 26: 40? What a tender rebuke! Beloved, are we watching? Can we be true in the face of these things, in what is still the time of His rejection and His absence, the time of suffering? Can we watch one hour? How much time is left? In the few moments that are left let us be committed to following. That is what He said: "Follow thou me", John 21: 22.

Now much enters into this; Judas knew the place, it was a place to which Jesus often went, and it was a garden and there was a torrent. It is as if the whole matter heaped up in its awfulness as He went forward to meet the power of the enemy, but all was powerless in the face of the I AM. When He said "I am he, they went away backward and fell to the ground". What a sense of triumph! Let the joy of it, and the strength and stability of it, enter into our souls, to see that the power of death has for ever been broken and annulled, and that there is a way through on dry ground, resurrection ground, to find our place with Him where He is.

I did not want to extend it; not that I would be able to, nor is there need to. These things are food for our souls to contemplate.

No doubt these beloved disciples would have gone over this many, many times. Peter would say, Why did I cut off that bondman's ear? Why did I do that? And the Lord does not heal it in this gospel; He did, according to Luke. Why did He not heal it? I venture to say He left it that way to keep Peter humble; and I would suggest He has left plenty among us to keep us humble. He humbled Himself.

Wonderful! "Emptied himself", Phil 2: 7. That too is food. Most of us have had to be humbled; and let us stay humble, let us bind it on if it falls off (see 1 Pet 5: 5). Beloved, the public position as I see it is one of extreme humility, but that in no sense detracts from the inward enjoyment by the Spirit of where He is leading us. I have a feeling that at the close of the dispensation there is something special. We were saying here the other night that there may be something yet as to eternal life which we may learn. I do not know. I do not want to be fanciful or anything like that, but I believe there is something emerging at the present time that is in keeping with the atmosphere of heaven. Let it develop. Let us prosper it. Let us get a taste of it, and we will not be content with what is less, or accept a lower standard. Oh no! Let us see that there is a stable system of things centred in Christ glorified and the Spirit here that is going through.

Now you may wonder why I went back to Exodus, to Moses. You might say this is a long way from the Jordan, but it is that all has to be gathered up, nothing is left behind. Do not forget Christ our passover or the Red Sea and the lessons of the wilderness. I do not mean that we live in history. No, no! but we learn its lessons and we hold to the truth of the conflicts, the wars of the Lord. Do not let us give them up. What spoil and spiritual territory has been secured through faithful men. Let us cherish these fruits of battle and not give them up. There was vital truth involved in every conflict. Now Moses represents the formation of the servant, and we are all servants. As having the Spirit there is something in love's obligation to be filled out. Standing at the desk really means nothing. It is the Lord's matter. The ascended Man has to do with these things; we respect it. My matter is humility. This front row of seats

means nothing, but what mean everything is my place in Christ. I read a profound thing - do not, please, ask me to explain it, but I pondered it - to understand Christianity it is necessary to understand a man in Christ. I think it bears a little on what we have been saying. We need to understand things from the top. Paul was caught up there. He did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body: a man in Christ (see 2 Cor 12: 2). Maybe it was at a time of extreme pressure and suffering. It may be. He did not know, and he heard things not lawful to utter, but it coloured his whole course of service. I believe we want more and more to find that secret place alone, away from all influence, alone in the divine presence, to get heaven's assessment, heaven's view of things here below, and come back in the provisional scene to be a witness for Him.

Now Moses is in the process of being formed as a servant, and we all are; so long as we are here we will be learners. Do not let us think we have reached the terminus. Far from it! Some of us have had an awful lot to unlearn, and maybe more yet. Let us be sensitive to what the Spirit is saying to us. Moses is arrested by what he sees here, why this thorn-bush was not being consumed. Now, ordinarily a thorn-bush would not arrest much attention; it is a worthless plant.

The fact was that it was being burnt but was not being consumed.

Ah, if we could get a view of what is going through like this, right through the whole history, and is not being consumed. He is arrested by the sight and God sees that he is interested. I hope everyone here is interested; if you are, God will take account of it and He will lead you where you will get an answer to your interest.

Beloved younger brethren, be interested. Get your minds and your affections interested in the things of God. Get into those books and read them, and read the Scriptures and read the notes, and the more you do so the more you will want to do so. I suppose Moses' history is not too much different from that of the rest of us. It begins with him weeping - the feeling side in the babe in the river. Then he does things and makes a few mistakes; who of us has not? He began to slay those Egyptians one by one; he would still be doing it! God can deal with them; I have to slay the Egyptian in myself. Then he goes

on and finds rest at the well, and sits there, and he helps those women feed their flocks. Oh beloved, let us just take on what the Lord gives us to do and be content. It says he tended the flock. I believe there was a tenderness and affection that he was beginning to learn, and he sees this great sight. He says "Let me now turn aside and see this great sight, why the thorn-bush is not burnt. And Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, and God called to him out of the midst of the thorn-bush". What it would be to command divine interest by such a committal, to see there is something going through that is impregnable, that life and incorruptibility have been brought to light by the glad tidings (see 2 Tim 1: 10). Beloved, everything is contained, or may we say encased, in the glad tidings: the mystery, the assembly, everything is in the glad tidings; and life and incorruptibility are brought to light in the glad tidings. It is remarkable that that comes in the second epistle, when outwardly it would appear that things were going to pieces, with all Asia turning away from Paul! How much there could have been that depressed him! No, he is not depressed. He commits that good deposit to Him who is able to bring it through, and so He will. Life and incorruptibility: let us see that our testimony, beloved brethren, is marked by life and marked by incorruptibility.

So the title comes out here again. "God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM. And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I AM hath sent me unto you". What a credential! Not in his own strength; oh, no! He had to learn that that staff could become a serpent; he had to learn that what was in his bosom could be leprous. Let us *never* trust the flesh. The flesh can never be trusted. Let us see that the cross has dealt with it judicially. The whole man has been set aside. My sins - yes - but the man who sinned has been judicially set aside at the cross. JOh then to make way for the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit's power for witness and testimony, and service, because Moses led the people through. What a man he was! Beloved, the quality of committal is no different today. Can we rise to it and see what the Lord is seeking in the few moments that may remain before we hear His shout?

Now I turn to the word in Hebrews. Much has entered into this epistle. The feelings of the writer (though his name is not given it is clear who he is) come out. We all have the tendency to slip away.

Oh, let no one slip away! Where would the slippage reach? What we should be alerted to is that the apostasy has come. We would not say that as to any person. No. The Lord knows those that are His, but the character of it is all around. It is where the light once was so bright. That is what the devil attacked. In the skill of the writer he gets them back. We get here the speaking in the Son. If we do not rally to the voice of Jesus, where are we? He goes over the ground in terms they knew. We know the terms that most of us have been brought up in from childhood. Thank God we have. From a child Timothy had known the sacred letters but that in itself will not do.

Only one thing will do, and that is an attachment to the Person of the Son of God. So he brings in this title, 'the Same', the ever-existing One, in order to bring them back to the strength and the foundation of what rests in the Person of Jesus Christ Himself. It is "Jesus Christ... the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come". Who would want Him different? Would any lover want Him different? As He sat just as He was at the well - would anyone want Him different? When they took Him into the ship, just as He was - would anyone want Him different? No! Let us be committed to Him, "the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come". There is no change, save in His condition. He came into flesh and blood to terminate that condition. He could have gone back alone, but He would not go back alone. The Corn of wheat falling into the ground; that is the way He went, through death, that we should have part with Him where He is, in the risen, ascended, glorious position that He fills. The writer is lifting these beloved brethren out of the tendency to droop. Do we not know it? Are we not sympathetic with one another? How easy it is to droop. Who of us has not? We cannot afford to droop. Let us keep in the life line, the things that lead us to what is above, where Christ is. Set your mind there.

At the beginning of this chapter it says "Let brotherly love abide"; a lot of exhortations follow which we have not time now to go

over, but I would like just to refer to "let brotherly love abide". It is a Philadelphian touch. Love among yourselves: the Lord said "By this shall all know that ye are disciples of mine, if ye have love amongst yourselves", John 13: 35. I have a feeling, dear brethren, that a distinctive feature of the end is the closeness of our bonds together.

As our brother quoted the other night: The strongest bond between human hearts is absolute consecration to Jesus (see Mr Darby's Synopsis Vol.3, p.402). That is a fine remark; you will all have read it. Think about it, pray about it, and see that it works. The nearest bond we can have with one another is our attachment to the Person of the Son of God. I believe it is the strength of that brotherly bond that will enable us to maintain the position in the energy and power of life till the Lord comes. It will take the strain. Things will come, as they inevitably do. Let us keep the brotherly bond intact. There is a basis on which to work things through righteously, affectionately and generously, so that we give the enemy no occasion to scatter or divide. Let us keep near to one another. Bear with the word of exhortation. I believe the Lord would help us to see that we cannot afford a shade of distance between any one of us. Think of that letter Paul wrote to Philemon. Think of what he said in Philippians to those two sisters, to be of the same mind. How fair he was! He saw the urgency, the need, that there should not be a shade of variance.

How could there be in the anointed vessel of which we were speaking, the body of Christ?

Well, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and to the ages to come". Let us cleave to Him. He will not fail us. Keeper of Israel, He does not slumber (see Ps 121: 4). He does not sleep. He is available. Let us keep near Him. The chapter later says "But the God of peace, who brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, in the power of the blood of the eternal covenant perfect you in every good work to the doing of his will, doing in you what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for the ages of ages" (vv 20, 21). Oh, what a doxology to finish with! "Brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus": our place is assured with Him in a risen life. How soon

will His coming be! How soon we will hear His shout! Let us comport ourselves becomingly in the few moments that remain, and we shall be with Him, with the Lord for ever. For His Name's sake.

LONDON

18 July 1981

THE INHERITANCE

W.Dickson

Romans 8: 6,17; Judges 1: 1-7

It is certainly one of the most stimulating thoughts to our hearts that, as we have sung and has been expressed in prayer, a day is shortly coming when God is going to display the glory of His grace. This means that not only will the blessed and glorious Person of the Lord Jesus be displayed in accordance with the Father's decree, but the display of the glory of His grace means that those who belong to Him will also have part in that display. We can think of the feelings of the blessed God, we could say reverently the exultation which will enter the heart of God, when He will display the glory of His grace. Who can measure the fruit of the Spirit's work throughout the dispensation? We have a certain contact with an area of it, but who can measure the greatness, the extent, the depth, of the Spirit's work in this dispensation? And yet, marvellous thought! the day is coming when God is going to display it. The Lord Jesus will be in royal power and dignity in the millennium in relation to the nations, and He will also stand in His own distinct and unique relationship to His assembly, His bride, as the hymn says: 'The bride, with Thee in nearness, Adds lustre to the scene' (No.352). You might say, Could that be? Could anything add to the glorious lustre of Christ as He shines forth in all His greatness? But God will display the glory of His grace, and His beloved saints will shine forth with Christ, and there will be with them features which will enhance the glory of divine operations. That is my own impression, that when the glory of His

grace is displayed, there will be features in what is displayed that enhance in the presence of the universe the greatness of what He has done.

I thought, following upon our conversation on Lord's day, to dwell upon this eighth chapter of Romans, one of the choicest chapters in the Word, where the Spirit of God is so much brought before us. It is a study in itself to go over the chapter and dwell upon each significant way in which the Spirit is spoken of. It would enhance the greatness, and also the nearness of that blessed Person to us, if we pondered these various settings in which He is described. The saints are suffering, they are at a time of intense pressure, so much so that there is a point where the Spirit Himself makes intercession for them with groanings that cannot be uttered.

Beloved brethren, most of us have some experience of that. There have been times in our history, as seeking to be faithful to the Lord and to the testimony, faithful to the obligations of fellowship, faithful to the truth as the Lord has unfolded it, and perhaps sometimes in our personal circumstances, when down on our knees we have been unable to say anything, but the Spirit Himself has made intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. How thankful we have been! because oftentimes when we have been most inarticulate, at that time the answer has come. When we could not form our words the answer has come and we have risen from the divine presence calm, assured and steady.

This thought of what is *shared*, which occupied us on Lord's day, is in this verse 17: "And if children, heirs also: heirs of God, and Christ's joint heirs". Think of sharing the heirship with Christ - joint heirs with Christ of the promises! On Lord's day we dwelt a little, as guided by the Spirit, on the purposes of God, but it is a very blessed matter to dwell at times on the promises of God. Scripture is full of the thought of the promises of God, and the thought of heirship relates to the promises of God; and we are joint heirs with Christ in the fulfilment of divine promises. What they are I do not go into in detail, they are so extended and wonderful, but as we await the day of manifestation our spirits are lifted up at the prospect of all that the

Lord is going to come into publicly as the Heir to the inheritance. It was the heir that the Jews cast out. When they saw the king's son coming to them they said: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him and possess his inheritance", Matt 21: 38. They killed the heir but the inheritance did not come to them. Saints of this dispensation: the inheritance is ours! and as we wait we are Christ's joint heirs to share these promises of God. "If indeed we suffer with him": I would just refer the brethren to Mr Darby's note: *Lit.* 'If we co-suffer that we may be co-glorified' but this is hardly English. If we co-suffer with Him, if we share in His sufferings, we share in His glory. He will not be alone in the day of display but we will be co-glorified with Him and there will be a fit answer to all the sufferings. Oh, beloved brethren, it is a time of suffering. We perhaps would like to have things easier, we would like to have some assurance that there might be the relief of certain pressures upon us, but we must ever be steadied in this thought that it is a time of suffering but with the prospect of the glory ahead of us.

Now I wanted to speak of Judges because the passage deals with the inheritance. "And it came to pass after the death of Joshua that the children of Israel asked Jehovah, saying, Which of us shall go up against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?" There had been the loss of a certain distinctive leader - Joshua. He represents the spirit of leadership in the saints that goes into the inheritance.

We have known something about that historically and we know something about it currently. There may be in our places an absence of a Joshua, in other words no distinctive leadership. But the glory of the work of God comes out in this, that despite the absence of that distinctive leadership the children of Israel had still a desire for the inheritance. Often when we approach the book of Judges we say, Well, things are going to be pretty poor from now onwards. But it starts with this wonderful thought that the children of Israel, despite the absence of Joshua, had a desire for the inheritance. Beloved brethren, are you as desirous in this city for the inheritance as you were at the time when you had a distinctive leadership? That is a challenge. We were speaking on Saturday

about getting the mind of God. Immediately they asked God as to whether they should go up and obtain the inheritance they obtained His mind (v 2), as if to say, that that is one exercise in regard to which the mind of God is perfectly clear, that is, He wants His beloved people to go forward in energy into the inheritance. Then this beautiful touch: Judah says, I am going to ask my brother to come up with me, I want my brother to share it with me. That is a fine thing. And he took Simeon up. Why did he not take Asher up? Why did he not take Naphtali up? Why did he not take these nice, gracious brothers up? But he took Simeon. What influence have we, as sharing things with our brethren, to take up the most difficult brother with us. Jacob had to say of Simeon in Genesis 49: "Instruments of violence their swords" (v 5). That was the kind of brother he was. After the wilderness history perhaps there was some formation in him which made it possible for Judah to say, Come up with me. Oh, beloved brethren, things in the assembly are shared, the inheritance is shared, shared on the principle of the brotherly link. They went up together "into my lot". Dear brother, dear sister, have you a lot in the inheritance? It is fine to have your own lot in the inheritance and be able to say to your brother, Come up with me into my lot, and to secure it as helped of God so as to share it together.

As they went up they met these enemies and there was this king, Adoni-Bezek, and they captured him. His name is very suggestive; I suppose it would mean a man who was full of himself.

We will never go into the inheritance together, like Judah and Simeon did, unless we overcome the man that is full of himself.

They took him but they did not kill him; in other words they secured him on the principle of grace and they brought him. to Jerusalem and he died there. Do you know what was said in this city about this passage? - What better place to die than in Jerusalem? It is the grace of the dispensation that would overcome what a brother has been in harshness and hardness and difficulty amongst the brethren. There was a certain governmental situation attached to the man, as he had treated others God had requited him; and there are certain

matters governmentally, beloved brethren, which we have to leave with God. It is our responsibility to manifest the blessing that lies in Jerusalem. The Spirit would remind us that, as the days grow darker and numbers grow smaller, we are to share things on the principle of grace and by making way for the glory of Christ. I am sure that would be one of the things that will be displayed in the glory of God's grace, that there was a brotherly relationship secured which made way for His own choicest thoughts regarding the inheritance. For His Name's sake.

NEW YORK

12 May 1981

CHILDREN'S ENJOYMENT OF THE SNOW

The deep snowfalls of the early days of the year may by now be almost forgotten. The fact, however, that God in ancient time asked Job if he had "entered into the storehouses of the snow" shows that there are treasures of divine wisdom to be gained by thinking more about this wonder of creation. It is said that no two snowflakes are exactly alike although they all have a common pattern. This is also true in respect of believers on the Lord Jesus. Each one of us is distinct from another yet all have some features of Christ by God's work in our souls and spirits - which we often speak of as "new creation". It will certainly require eternity to explore this storehouse!

In Bible lands there were probably few falls of snow for the frolics of childhood, but the mountains of Lebanon were always snow-capped, hence their name which means 'white'. Perhaps in times when snowcold weather did come to Palestine it caused anxiety because only light clothing was generally worn. The "woman of worth" of the Proverbs clad her children in "scarlet" at such times. The word may mean 'dyed wool' or 'double clothing' and typifies the way in which Christian parents give special protection to their children in times of danger to the well-being of their souls.

Something about the snow that will occur to every reader is God's readiness in love to reason with His needy creatures about their sins. Scarlet is a *bright* red and our sins have stood out vividly against us before a just and holy God. Yet by the atoning work of His Son they are made snow-white, just as a fall of snow would cover a scarlet garment. Crimson is a *deep* red. The reference to wool in the verse in Isaiah refers to the fact that this dye so commonly used could never be removed and the wool cleansed as before. But what we never could do God has righteously done in relation to our sins through the shed blood of Jesus.

You would no doubt have been interested in tracing the tracks of birds and animals in the snow. Think therefore for a moment of the day when a man named Benaiah slew a lion in the midst of a pit

on a snowy day. His tracks downwards would be seen, as also those of the lion, but upwards there would be only the tracks of the mighty victor! No doubt this feat meant salvation to many persons in fear and danger. How this endears to us the One who has met the enemy's power by going into death and rising again victorious! Do you know Him as a risen and living Saviour?

J.C.Evershed